Why are some countries democratic and others autocratic? How do institutions and laws differ among democratic countries and how do these differences affect political competition? What about other variables such as ethnic divisions, nationalist fervor and international intervention, and how do these affect the development of political institutions in democracies? The study of comparative politics addresses these and other questions. Thus comparative politics is about analyzing differences and similarities among the political, social and economic features of countries and determining how and why these differences matter.

Objectives: This class introduces methods and topics of comparative politics. The first section of the course provides a brief survey of the comparative method and comparisons of regime types (sociologist Max Weber’s three types—patrimonial, legal-rational and charismatic). The second section narrows the focus to a comparison of the institutions and political behavior in 36 democratic countries and utilizes Arend Lijphart’s book, Patterns of Democracy. This section provides conceptual building blocks for studying institutions of legal-rational states, including voting systems, legislatures, executive institutions, political parties and constitutional design. The third section takes a closer look at how political and social contexts shape new institutions in countries that are undergoing democratic transitions. This section is organized around Jack Snyder’s book, From Voting to Violence. Snyder makes a provocative argument that certain institutional designs and circumstances during the democratization process can promote the nationalist conflicts. The lectures for this section will make mention of the implications of this thesis for institutional design in contemporary cases such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The final section returns to Weber’s broader categories to consider an example of a patrimonial authority. Michella Wrong’s book, In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz explains how President Mobutu of Zaire (present-day Congo) built a personalist dictatorship. This case raises interesting questions about how to manage transitions of these political systems to something resembling a legal-rational framework of formal institutions, if this is even possible. Snyder warns, however, that the legitimacy of impersonal legal-rational institutions appears to be a necessary (if not sufficient) precondition for the consolidation of democratic regimes.

The overall theme of this course is that formal institutional rules of politics matter a great deal. But new rules of politics in countries that suffer serious ethnic tensions or are exceptionally weak in their internal capabilities (so-called failing states) can produce unintended outcomes that may even be contrary to the intent of their designers. What sorts of institutional designs are effective for state building? This issue ought to be of special importance to students in the United States, given official US policy to build new political systems in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia. The stakes are high, for in Iraq the US has deployed a cumulative total of about a half a million of its citizens and on which it has spent about a quarter of a trillion dollars since March 2003.

Course Requirements: Students are responsible for completing all readings listed in the syllabus prior to classes for which they are assigned. Students will be graded on the basis of an in-class midterm, a paper of eight to ten pages, a final, and attendance. Grading will be apportioned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Administered in-class, Thursday, 12 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due during the last class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Sit-down final, Monday, 4 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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I will give details regarding the exams and the paper assignment during the term. You must complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade in this course. Make-ups and incompletes will be given only in exceptional circumstances, and only with my prior approval. You will find brief outlines of lectures here.

**Office Hours:** You can expect to find me in my office at Scott Hall 240 during the following hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:00

I will happily make an appointment if scheduled hours are inconvenient. My phone number is 467-1574 / 491-5794 and e-mail is reno@northwestern.edu.

**Required Readings:** Readings listed in the class calendar are to be completed in advance of the class meeting for which they are required. Class lectures and discussion will assume familiarity with these readings. Articles and book chapters are available at electronic reserve and via links provided on the electronic version of this syllabus.

There are three required texts for this class (in order of assignment):

- Michela Wrong (2002) *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in the Congo.* Perennial.


**CLASS CALENDAR**

**I. Huge Processes and Giant Comparisons**

**19 September:** [Hippocrates’ Birthday—Greece] Fallacies of reasoning when making comparisons (false correlations, reading history selectively to affirm pre-conceived theories and the problems of the unexpected killer asteroids—or Twin Towers—pose for analysis and prediction)


**21 September:** [Just Say No to PowerPoint™ Day—Evanston] The classical categorization of political types by Max Weber (a German sociologist & political economist, 1864-1920, pronounced vā ber, not “Web-ber”), focusing on legal-rational, patrimonial, and charismatic patterns of authority

II. Comparing Institutions and Performance of Thirty-Six Democracies

26 September: [Second Day of National School Bus Safety Week—USA] Lijphart provides a framework of majoritarian and consensual systems against which to evaluate democracies. He then elaborates on the majoritarian ("Westminster") model and the consensual model. Riker shows how rules matter for outcomes.


28 September: [St Wenceslas Day—Czech Republic] Lijphart explores the extent of democratic governance and then discusses the variables that he uses for his comparison. We start with an examination of the role of party systems and how this choice shapes political behavior. Pay attention to the issue of effective parties and how to calculate this figure. He then moves to cabinets. How do party systems influence cabinet types?


3 October: [The day after Yom Kippur] Executive—legislature relations: Note Lijphart’s index of executive dominance. Then move on to electoral systems, paying attention to the roles of electoral thresholds and malapportionment in shaping representation through electoral rules. What is Duverger’s Law?


A map of the Canada’s 2006 federal election results will come in handy for class on this day. Also check out the electoral technologies available in Russia at [http://www.nikkolom.ru/centr_Home.htm](http://www.nikkolom.ru/centr_Home.htm).

5 October: [Proclamation of the Republic Day—Portugal] Interest groups [pluralist and corporatist], federal-unitary divisions of power, Parliaments and Congresses, and the challenges of writing constitutions. Don’t forget central banks too! The focus, however, will be on constitutions.


10 October: [The day after Canadian Thanksgiving] Lijphart wraps up his comparison along two consensus – majoritarian axes. Which variety of democracy is best able to manage economies, control violence, and be of the highest quality, however Lijphart defines that. A consensus man to the last, he offers his recommendations. Why do African democrats (and plenty of others) defy his advice?


12 October: [No Holiday for You] Midterm exam in class.

III. Contemporary Policy Challengers: Democratic Institutions and the Problems of Ethnic and Nationalist Conflict

17 October: [Australia celebrates 50 years of electricity!] Links between democracy and nationalist conflict: Can democracy promote conflict instead of mitigating it? How do social structures of societies influence the performance of institutions?


19 October: [Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (scheduled)—Congo] Elite persuasion in democratizing states: Snyder discourses on the necessity of having elite groups on board.


24 October: [Eid ul Fitr ﺪﻌﻴ، end of Ramadan] The Weimar German case: Elections that are the end of democracy? We will consider Snyder’s argument from the perspective of electoral design. Did Nazis win elections because they were popular or because of a particular set of electoral rules?


26 October: [Blessed Rainy Day—Bhutan] Other varieties of nationalism: Britain, Revolutionary France and Serbia


31 October: [Halloween—USA export to France] Post-communist nationalism and democracy


2 November: [All Soul’s Day--general] Third World nationalism & Snyder’s conclusions


IV: A Return to Weber’s Broad Categories and Patrimonial Politics in Congo

7 November: [Великая Октябрьская социалистическая революция--Russia] Back to Weber’s categories: Applying the lessons of the classical categories – recent and contemporary patrimonial regimes, including gold-plated presidents-for-life (Turkmenistan and Zaire-Congo)

Is Dear Comrade Kim Jung Il (whose father now officially serves as President for Eternity, Great Leader Kim Il Sung) a patrimonial or a charismatic leader? Listen to The Song of the Dear Comrade Kim Jung Il as you ponder this question.

9 November: [Nobody’s Holiday] Mobutu’s strategy of rule and the use of insecurity to control troublesome elites. Was Mobutu behaving rationally, given the dangers from unruly elites that Snyder highlights? Which to choose: dizzy worms and uncoordinated government or a coup d’état?


*** Special screening of the film Mobutu: King of Zaire at 7:30pm in the video viewing room in the Main Library. We will see the second in a three-part series. Screen time is about 55 minutes.

14 November: [Children’s Day—India] The cultures of patrimonialism and its legitimation and its limits: Is patrimonial politics incompatible with the contemporary organization of global society?


16 November: [The day after Shichi-go-san—Japan] Post-patrimonial war: Is this the inevitable end to patrimonial regimes? Should one expect similar wars at the demise of other personalist dictatorships?

Michela Wrong (2002) The Inseparable Four to the bitter end, 251-319.

21 November: [World Hello Day]

Discussion in preparation to study for the final exam

Thanksgiving vacation starts on Wednesday, 22 November
WCAS reading period begins on Monday, 27 November

The final exam for this course will take place at noon to 2:00pm, Monday, 4 December

It will be administered in Fisk 217 [the lecture hall where this course meets]. Please plan accordingly as you make travel arrangements. (You may check your entire exam schedule at: http://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/registration/4240/4240exam.pdf.)
You are to write an essay that explains how Iraq’s government should design its political institutions to accomplish an end to its conflict. You may have heard that Iraq has had a tough time lately. It exhibits many of the problems of elite resistance that Snyder wrote about in his book. The pre-invasion and occupation period suffered under the personalist and patrimonial rule of Saddam that bore some resemblance to the type of regime that Wrong wrote about in her book about Mobutu of Zaire. Lijphart’s book shows how rules and institutional designs influence political behavior. But as we can see from Iraq’s recent history, promoting order and democracy there is not as easy as writing a nice constitution. One lesson of this class is that written laws are more authoritative in some circumstances than in others. Here you are going to have to devise some strategy—an especially clever institutional design, for example—to deal with problems such as ethnic polarization, major violence and disorder, and the formation of militias under the control of various elite groups.

The web can help or hinder the researcher. While you should rely heavily on your course reading material and notes for this project, you can find easily accessible useful information about the travails of reform in Iraq at the following sites:

- The International Crisis Group’s Iraq site: https://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1275&l=1

As you think about what institutions would help mitigate this conflict, recall Liphart’s Patterns of Democracy. Think about how majoritarian or consensus institutions along the lines that Liphart wrote about (i.e., party systems, electoral systems, cabinets, constitutions, etc) would aggravate or mitigate conflict. Also recall Snyder’s cases in his From Voting to Violence. Snyder found that democratic institutions may produce unanticipated and undesirable outcomes (i.e., violence) if improperly conceived and implemented. Snyder is sensitive to the consequence of the social makeup of countries as he looks at the impact of institutions on conflict.

This assignment does not mean that you have to conduct a huge amount of outside research. We will not object to a cursory investigation into the details of Iraq’s situation. You should, however, focus on formulating the institutional design that would be most appropriate for mitigating violence and helping this country in its transition to a more peaceful and democratic governance. If you find yourself carrying a foot-high stack of books from the library, you are probably not using your time wisely. Again, focus on the institutional design and your explanations for why these institutions would be most appropriate. You also could observe how alternative institutional designs would aggravate conflict as a way of arguing your point. Much of the inspiration for your argument can be found in course readings up to our case study of Congo (the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz book).

This paper should be eight to ten pages long. I do not care what citation form you use, so long as it contains full bibliographic information, but I do insist that you are consistent in whatever form you use. Please, no fonts for the blind. The paper is due in class on Tuesday, 21 November.