

Department: Political Science

Course No: 143

Credits: 3

Title: Introduction to Non-Western Politics

Contact: Jennifer Sterling-Folker

Content Area: CA2-Social Sciences and CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 International

Catalog Copy: POLS 143 Introduction to Non Western Politics. 3 Credits. A survey of institutions, ideologies, development strategies, and the political processes in nonwestern culture.

Course Information: a. Briefly describe in 2-3 sentences the course, stating course goals and objectives: This course introduces students to politics in non-Western countries through a survey of institutions, ideologies, development strategies, and political processes that exist in the non-Western world. Its goal is to acquaint students with non-Western traditions and assist them in understanding the politics of non-Western societies. In addition, it encourages students to appreciate the range of experiences in the world that relate to the issues of democracy, political violence, and economic development.

b. Describe the course requirements (Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.): The course requirements include four exams and multiple in-class writing exercises based on films shown in class. The latter involve five in-class writing assignments based on the documentaries and movies shown in particular class sessions (such as "Africa's Street Children," or selections from the movie "Gandhi"), and the writing assignments ask students to analyze the films in the context of course themes. Each writing assignment is worth 5% of the student's final grade, with the lowest score dropped from the final average. Each exam is worth 20% of their grade. Exams are a mixture of short answer and short essays based on the readings and class lectures.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc. to be covered: The central themes of the course are democratization and economic development, and the course focuses on understanding how and why different countries have dealt with these issues in different ways. The course provides an overview of the tremendous variety of non-Western societies available for study, and then focuses on particular countries for contrast and comparison. The specific countries focused on for in-depth comparison can vary from semester to semester, but generally includes the most important countries in their respective regions, such as Brazil, India, Japan, and Nigeria.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: 3. Acquire critical judgement: The course encourages students to acquire critical judgment by requiring students to repeatedly consider and write about the impact of democratization and industrialization on the non-Western world. Students are asked to consider how different societies have responded to these challenges by, for example, comparing Brazil, which is the largest and most significant country in the developing world, to Japan, which is the only economic superpower to emerge out of the non-Western world. Such a comparison forces students to consider why and how these nation-states have achieved particular levels of democratization and development, and in what ways these nation-states are both similar and different in their institutions and cultures. In so doing, students begin to see nuances not only between nation-states that comprise the non-Western world, but also in the very concepts of democratization and development. In so doing, they begin to develop a critical analytical understanding of how these concepts can and should be applied. The course also forces students to critically consider whether labels such as "West" and "non-West" are even appropriate or descriptively accurate terms for the subject matter under consideration.

4. Acquire moral sensitivity: The course seeks to develop moral sensitivity and moral awareness of their era and society by encouraging students to reflect on the ways in which democratization and economic development can disrupt traditional societies and values and at times lead to political violence or exploitation. The use of film throughout the course is meant to provide students with a tangible sense of the horrendous conditions that exist in some non-Western societies. Particular case studies are chosen in order to forcefully illustrate the plight of many (but not all) of the countries that comprise the non-Western world. Nigeria is a particularly good case study in this regard, as it is a tragic example of a country that has repeatedly been unable to take advantage of its many blessings--notably vast reserves of oil -- due to a combination of internal institutional dysfunctions and interference from outsiders. By focusing on such cases, students develop an understanding of the substantial social, economic, and political injustices that exist in some areas of the world.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: The course begins by asking why democracy appears so hard to establish and sustain and why people resort to violence to resolve domestic political conflicts. The course uses these themes to repeatedly stress the diversity of cultures and experiences in the world. It does so by asking students to consider the fact that while Western societies differ dramatically amongst themselves, the non-Western societies differ even more dramatically amongst themselves. The case studies that are examined in-depth represent different approaches to the problems of promoting democracy and economic development. They also illustrate the different levels of success that have been achieved in promoting these goals. In so doing, the course amply illustrates that there is tremendous diversity in the human cultural experience, and it underscores the variety of political, economic, and social conditions that exist in both the Western and non-Western world.

CA2 Criteria: 1. Introduce students to theories and concepts of social science: The course exposes students to theories of democratization and development, both of which are central topics of study in political science and also have practical applications in numerous societies throughout the globe. The course explores all of the concepts related to democratization, including democratic consolidation, electoral systems, and party systems, and it examines both market and non-market based approaches to development. It examines these topics in a comparative context, so that the topics of democratization and development are defined, analytically examined, empirically examined, and ultimately problematized in both contexts. In so doing, the course exposes students to the complexities and nuances of social scientific theory and practice.

2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including the ethical problems social scientists face: The course relies on a combination of historical analysis, qualitative case-study analysis, and quantitative analysis. Students will learn about the comparative method as well as issues such as cross national analysis, the appropriate use of case studies, cross-sectional and time series analysis. The course begins with an introduction of basic concepts necessary for analysis and then applies them systematically to particular country cases studies. Throughout the course, the cases are systematically compared to one another and to examples drawn from Western societies in order to illustrate course themes and the advantages of methodologically comparing and contrasting cases. Ethical issues are raised in the context of the international interface between Western and non-Western societies and how the dominant Western culture is at times imposed on non-Western world in inappropriate ways. In addition, students are introduced to the ethical issues of Western scholars doing research in non-Western societies, and in particular the possibility that they may influence these societies in unexpected and negative ways.

3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment: The course pays particular attention to how institutions structure incentives for individual and group behavior in the economies, societies, and political systems of the non-Western world. It explores how the failure or breakdown of both traditional and newly introduced or revised institutions can lead individuals and groups to define private solutions to collective problems. And it examines how this can frequently lead to perverse social consequences and even political violence. In so doing, the course demonstrates in a tangible way to students the extent to which individuals, groups, and social institutions influence one another and produce unexpected outcomes when radical institutional change is promoted within established societies.

4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political or economic groups and social issues at the societal, regional, national and international levels: The course provides tools for students to comparatively analyze social issues by providing basic concepts and theories that help account

for poverty, inequality, and political violence. These are all examined from a methodology that is basic to the study of comparative politics. This comparative methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques, ways to operationalize key concerns, examine tables, and find and assess a wide variety of types of data. The students are taught these analytical tools with the goal and expectation that they will be able to utilize these skills in order to examine other case studies drawn from the non-Western world.

CA4 Criteria: 1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values and/or modes of creativity: The central point of the course is to acquaint students with the diversity of experience in cultures outside of the United States. The course is designed to demonstrate that different cultures in different regions have had their own unique responses to the promotion of democracy and economic development. These responses are always informed and shaped by the given societies' own unique histories and traditions. The course also highlights the different levels of success that non-Western societies have had in achieving their goals, and it encourages students to understand how different cultural, social, and institutional contexts condition the ease or difficulty of the democratization and development challenge. By purposefully and consciously comparing and contrasting the experiences of the non-Western world with that of the Western world, the very nature of the course encourages students to appreciate the tremendous variety of experiences and values that comprise the contemporary global system.

3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups: At the same time, the course also highlight similarities among the non-Western world, by showing how the underlying challenges are often very similar across cases. A comparison between India and Nigeria, for example, illustrates that both are grappling with similar internal and external pressures, yet their responses and the political, economic, and social outcomes have been very different. Nigeria remains political and economically threatened, while India has one of the world's largest viable democracies despite on-going poverty. By comparatively exploring what is similar and what is different with regards to democratization and development within nation-states such as these, students begin to see larger patterns in the themes of democratization and development. In addition, while the relative strength of democracy and the degree of economic development are the two issues that help distinguish Western societies from non-Western societies, in fact many dynamics that appear distinctive in foreign cultures have important analogues in our own culture, and these are continually highlighted throughout the course.

International: 1. The course focuses on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States: The very nature of the course involves examining diversity and multiculturalism outside of the United States, as it focuses on the ways in which the non-Western world has sought to develop and democratize. The types of countries on which it focuses, such as Brazil or Nigeria, illustrate the tremendous diversity that exists in the non-Western world with regards to how these countries have attempted to grapple with the implementation of democracy and economic

development.

2. The course focuses on cultural continuities and transformations over time and place: One of the primary challenges that non-Western societies face as they attempt to democratize and industrialize is the potential incompatibility of democratic electoral systems or industrialization with traditional structures, institutions, and values. Central to the course is the examination of the ways in which the non-Western world has sought to meet these challenges, by merging traditional political, economic and cultural systems with new ideas, social practices, and institutions. In so doing, each non-Western nation-state creates its own unique political and economic system, even as it shares similarities with other democracies and economically developed states. Thus the countries that comprise the non-Western world are living embodiments of how cultural continuities and transformations can merge in the same time and place to simultaneously create similarity and dissimilarity in global politics.

Role of Grad Students: Every semester this course is taught by Professor Kingstone, a regular faculty member in the department at Storrs. Select graduate students who are concentrating in this field serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs), who either grade for a faculty member or, if advanced in their studies, teach their own sections. All political science TAs are required to attend the Teaching Institute's roundtables on pedagogy offered prior to the start of Fall semester. International students are additionally required to take teaching tests and to attend a three-day training session at the Institute. Every Fall the department sponsors a TA information session to offer advice and discuss potential problems they may encounter. The department offers roundtables on pedagogical issues throughout the academic year. Finally, the appropriate faculty member, Department head, and the Department's Teaching Mentor supervise the TAs work throughout the semester.