Politics of the Developing Areas – South Asia

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar will focus on key challenges facing the state in developing societies, with a special focus on South Asia. We will start with a broad focus on historical institutional development and the influence of history upon contemporary development. We will then shift to South Asia specifically and work through the major political and economic problems faced by countries in this region and survey the comparative research that examines these problems. This course also introduces the politics of South Asia and describes the region’s colonial legacy and contemporary political institutions. The course covers all South Asian countries, but we will emphasize the more populous countries in the region, paying the greatest attention to India, followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh. Students will develop substantial regional knowledge and learn to think critically on the major puzzles and policy issues facing the region. Students will apply this knowledge to important overarching questions: What is the relationship between development and democracy? What is the role of history in shaping political outcomes? Does the concept of democracy change in the developing world?

COURSE TOPICS

This course will cover the following content areas:

1. The influence of the colonial legacy the region has inherited upon institutional development.
2. The fundamentals of South Asian political systems, including institutions, ideology, regimes, economics, and ethnic divides.
3. Challenges to the effective consolidation of democratic institutions South Asia now and into the future.
4. The many ways in which the region’s diversity—whether through caste, religion, language, or gender—has influenced politics
5. Primary areas of research on South Asia, including colonization, nationalism, democratization, economic development, conflict, and international political economy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how history, institutions, ideology, regimes, economics, and ethnic divides effect the political institution of South Asia.
2. Describe and distinguish between the different forms of government across South Asia and their sources of legitimacy.
3. Identify the various factors that guide the development of contemporary domestic and regional politics in the region.
4. Discuss the actors and factors that influence and guide the development of democracy: political parties, interest groups, the media, the military, public opinion, political participation, and civic engagement.
5. Develop and improve communication, collaboration, research, writing and critical thinking skills.
COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the primary institutions, powers, and process of democratic development
2. Communicate and usefully critique key research and concepts in comparative politics with your classmates by identifying key assumptions, providing alternatives, and assessing implications.
3. Gather and assess complex sources of information and communicate your understanding effectively to your classmates.
4. Formulate research questions to address key discussions within comparative politics and develop sound empirically-based answers to those questions that are presented in a well-organized, clear, and logical arguments.

GRADING

Discussions (40%)
Opinion Paper (20%)
Research Paper (30%)
Research Presentation (10%)

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Discussions: This is a political science course, and I want to encourage the respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives. To encourage discussion in this online course, each student will be expected to post every Sunday by 11:59 pm a 300-word response to the assigned readings for that week (except on weeks when a paper is due – see schedule of assignments below). Please note that these discussions constitute 40% of your final grade. These responses must critically engage each of the reading and listening assignments – what do you find interesting, what can you criticize, what more do we need to know? And always explain why. You will also need to post a thoughtful response to at least one other student – do you agree/disagree with their response, and why? For each discussion, I will give each student a grade, ranging from a 0-10. A 10 would be well-thought out and critical response to the readings and to a fellow student. An 8 would be an attempt at a response to both, but with little critical thought or criticism of the readings and fellow students. Your two lowest discussion board grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Opinion Paper: You will need to write at least 800 words answering one of the provided questions. Each question has multiple parts, so make sure you answer all of them thoroughly. Your opinion is important, but it must be based in evidence. So, use the lectures, use the readings from class, and do some research of your own to back up your opinions. Make sure you cite everything you use. A grading rubric is posted on Canvas.

Research Paper: The research paper will need to be at least 1500 words on a topic of your choice. I have provided a list of topics to choose from, but you are encouraged to suggest a new topic you are interested in if you discuss it with me first. Your opinion is important, but it must be based in evidence. Make sure you cite everything you use in APA format. I will also read any drafts sent to me up to a week before the final paper is due. A grading rubric is posted on Canvas. This is a critical thinking assignment and therefore the elements of critical thinking are reflected in the grading rubric.

Research Presentation: You will present the results of your research paper near the end of the
semester in a 5-minute video uploaded to Canvas. Each student will need to both post one presentation and watch and critique one other student’s presentation. You can then incorporate this feedback into your final research paper.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Week 1: Due January 19th**
- **Module A: Building a State**
  - Watch: Lecture A
  - Assignments: Discussion 1

**Week 2: Due Jan 26th**
- **Module B: Institutional History**
  - Read: Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), Chs. 3, 4, 6, 10, course website
  - Watch: Lecture B
  - Assignments: Discussion 2

**Week 3: Due February 2nd**
- **Module C: Institutional Development**
  - Watch: Lecture C
  - Assignments: Discussion 3

**Week 4: Due February 9th**
- **Module D: Institutional Consolidation**
  - Watch: Lecture D
  - Assignments: Discussion 4
Week 5: Due February 16th
- Module E: What is South Asia and Why Does It Matter?
  - Read:
    - Lyall, Jason. “Here are the Five Things You Need to Know about the 2015 Fighting Season in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 2016, course website
  - Watch: Lecture E
  - Assignments: Discussion 5

Week 6: Due February 23rd
- Module F: Colonialism and Colonial Legacies
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture F
  - Assignments: Discussion 6

Week 7: Due March 1st
- Module G: Independence and the Partition
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture G
  - Assignments: Discussion 7

Week 8: Due March 8th
- Module H: Authoritarianism versus Democracy in the Postcolonial States
**Read:**

**Week 9: Due March 15th**
- Module I: Religious Politics and the Hindu-Muslim Divide
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture I
  - Assignments: Discussion 8

**Week 10: Nothing due March 22nd for spring break**

**Week 11: Due March 29th**
- Module J: Contemporary Indian Politics
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture J
  - Assignments: Discussion 9
Week 12: Due April 5th
- Module K: Contemporary Pakistani Politics
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture K
  - Assignments: Discussion 10

Week 13: Due April 12th
- Module L: Gender in South Asia
  - Read:
    - “Despite Being a Woman,” *The Economist* (June 13, 2015), course website
  - Watch: Lecture L
  - Assignments: Discussion 11

Week 14: Due April 19th
- Module M: Democracy and Authoritarianism Today
  - Read:
  - Watch: Lecture M
Week 15: Due April 26th
  • Module N: Economic Development
    o Read:
    o Watch: Lecture N
    o Assignments: Research Presentation Due

Week 16: Due Monday, May 4th
  • Assignments: Research Paper Due