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COMPARATIVE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

COMM 330 - Fall 2009

Course Description

This course examines the links between media and political systems based on a comparative approach. We will identify and analyze the specific patterns of political communication that characterize countries from Europe and the Americas. This broad focus will allow a detailed comparison of political communication processes in a variety of contexts, from the postindustrial democracies of Western Europe and North America to the new emerging democracies of Latin America.

After introducing the main features of the comparative method, the course examines the political and media systems from different parts of the world. By identifying basic models of media and politics interaction, the course stresses how the political and social contexts of different regions are central to understanding the political role of the media. The course concludes by considering whether globalization and the Internet are changing the nature of contemporary processes of political communication.

Course Goals and Objectives

The central goal of this class is to provide conceptual tools that will enable students to critically evaluate the role of the mass media in contemporary representative democracies. More specifically, students will learn how to identify different models of media and politics interaction and evaluate how broader social, economic, and cultural forces shape processes of political communication in the contemporary world.

Our objectives to reach this central goal include learning how to:

- Distinguish the different configurations of media and political systems from different parts of the world.
- Identify the main patterns of interaction between media and politics that characterize specific models of political communication.
- Analyze how broader social, economic, and cultural forces shape models of political communication.
- Conduct research and gather data in library archives to apply the analytical frameworks of the course in the development of a specific case study.

Textbook

Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Available through Tulane Bookstore.

Blackboard

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and other information. It will also be used for online discussions. The system can be accessed at < <http://tulane.blackboard.com> >. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Required texts

Besides the main textbook, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

Attendance

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. Arriving late or leaving early is considered equal to ½ absence and repeated occurrences will affect your final grade. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a “WF”.

Use of laptops and cell phones

The use of cell phones and pagers is prohibited during class hours, unless the professor has given previous authorization for emergency situations. Chatting, e-mailing, internet browsing, or any activity not related to official class activity will affect your participation grade negatively and may result in other penalties. Laptops are permitted solely for the purpose of taking notes, but students who want to use them need to submit a written request in advance to the professor. If you are authorized to use a laptop, you will be required to submit your notes to the professor as an email attachment at the end of the class. The quality of the notes will not affect your grade, but the authorization to use the laptop can be suspended if they are not considered sufficient.

Evaluation

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which will cover the first two units (Parts I and II). A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be on the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled dates for the exam;

2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 12-page (cover page and references excluded) final paper, spaced 1.5, and with font size 12. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. To have an effective participation, students should complete the assigned readings prior to the sessions for which they are listed in the syllabus and be ready to discuss them. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) Readings summaries: Students should bring a one page long summary of the reading/s assigned for each session. Summaries should include all the author/s’ main arguments and will be due in the beginning of class. They can be typed or hand-written and should include the student’s full name and the date of the session. Summaries will be graded as “sufficient” and “insufficient” and only the former will satisfy the requirement. If you deliver all summaries and they are graded “sufficient,” you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible “F” (50 points);

5) Country report: Students will be required to develop a report about political communication in a specific country. The written report should be five-page long (cover page, tables, figures, and references excluded), spaced 1.5, and with font size 12. Students will also prepare an oral presentation of the report. Oral presentations should include make use of visual support softwares (such as PowerPoint) and should also include specific questions for discussion. Students will be required to post their written reports in Blackboard three days before the scheduled date of the oral presentation (see below). More specific guidelines for the written and oral components of the report will be given later;

6) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the course's online discussions, which will take place in the "Discussion Board" area of Blackboard. There will be five discussion forums, which will be scheduled in the following way:

- Forum 1: Comparing media and political systems = September 1-17.
- Forum 2: Country reports from the polarized pluralist model = October 6-11.
- Forum 3: Country reports from the democratic corporatist model = October 20-25.
- Forum 4: Country reports from the liberal model = October 27-November 1.
- Forum 5: Country reports from Latin America = November 10-16.

The first forum will be devoted to readings and topics of the first unit of the class. Each student will be required to create at least three postings in this forum. One of the postings has to be an original thread and the other two postings have to respond to two different threads created by two different classmates. You cannot post more than one message per day and your first posting has to be created in the first four days of discussion (September 1-4). Whether you post more than these three messages is entirely up to you. New threads have to propose specific questions for discussion. They can also include attachments or external links to encourage debate.

The other four forums will be devoted to the discussion of country reports. Each report author will create a new thread, including the full report as an attachment. In the subject line of the thread, the report authors should identify the respective country. The other students will be required to read the reports and to post at least one message about each report. Postings have to present reasonably detailed analyses of the reports (minimum of 200 words), raising questions and/or presenting recommendations for the respective authors. Country report authors will act as moderators of each thread, responding to classmates' postings individually or collectively.

There are no major restrictions on the contents of the postings, as long as they present serious and thoughtful contributions to the debate. Every student should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates' arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective forum; 3) add a new "thread" (a new topic, with a subject title) to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to an existing thread. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click "reply" to comment on someone's posting.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	20 %	Participation	15 %	Country report:	15 %
Final Paper	25 %	Discussion board:	15 %	Readings summaries:	10 %

Grading scale

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

Academic dishonesty

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. This course adheres strictly to the Code of Academic Conduct of the Newcomb-Tulane College, available at: < <http://college.tulane.edu/code.htm> >

Course Schedule

PART I MEDIA AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS COMPARED

Aug 25 (Tue) – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.

(No readings).

Aug 27 (Thu) – The comparative method.

* Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumler, “Comparative research: the extending frontier”. In D. Swanson and Dan Nimmo (eds.), *New Directions in Political Communication*. London: Sage, 1990, pp. 305-315.

* Hallin and Mancini, “Introduction”, pp. 1-17.

Sep 1 (Tue) – Political systems in majoritarian democracies.

* Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999 (chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-30).

(First forum of the discussion board begins!)

Sep 3 (Thu) – Political systems in consensus democracies.

* Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (chapter 3, pp. 31-47).

Sep 8 (Tue) – Political systems in delegative democracies.

* Guillermo O'Donnell, “Delegative democracy”. In G. O'Donnell, *Counterpoints*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, pp. 159-173.

Sep 10 (Thu) – Media systems: postindustrial nations.

* Pippa Norris, “The rise (and fall?) of the television age.” In: *A Virtuous Circle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 90-119.

Sep 15 (Tue) – Media systems: Latin America.

* Chappell Lawson and Sallie Hughes, “Latin America's Postauthoritarian Media”. In R. May and A. Milton (Eds.), *Uncivil Societies*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005, pp. 163-196.

PART II MEDIA AND POLITICS: PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

Sep 17 (Thu) – Dimensions of comparison.

* Hallin and Mancini, chapter 2, pp. 21-45.

(Last day for posting messages in the first forum of the discussion board!).

Sep 22 (Tue) – Interactions between media and political systems.

* Hallin and Mancini, pp. 46-75.

Sep 24 (Thu) – The effects of public and commercial media on public knowledge.

* James Curran et al., “Media system, public knowledge and democracy: a comparative study.” *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 24, n. 1, 2009, pp. 5-26.

Sep 29 (Tue) – American and French journalism compared.

* Rodney Benson and Daniel Hallin, “How states, markets and globalization shape the news: The French and US national press, 1965–97.” *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 22, n.1, 2007, pp. 27-48.

Oct 1 (Thu) – MIDTERM EXAM.

PART III
THREE MODELS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION:
WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA COMPARED

Oct 6 (Tue) – The polarized pluralist model.

* Hallin and Mancini, chapter 5, pp. 89-142.
(Second forum of the discussion board begins!)

Oct 8 (Thu) – Country report presentations.

Oct 13 and 15 – No classes. Fall break.

Oct 20 (Tue) – The democratic corporatist model.

* Hallin and Mancini, chapter 6, pp. 143-197.
(Third forum of the discussion board begins!)

Oct 22 (Thu) – Country report presentations.

Oct 27 (Tue) – The liberal model.

* Hallin and Mancini, chapter 7, pp. 198-248.
(Fourth forum of the discussion board begins!)

Oct 29 (Thu) – Country report presentations.

Nov 3 (Tue) – Comparing the three models: journalistic values.

* Wolfgang Donsbach, “Lapdogs, watchdogs and junkyard dogs”, *Media Studies Journal*, Vol. 9, n. 4, 1995.

PART IV
IS THERE A LATIN AMERICAN MODEL?

Nov 5 (Thu) – Latin America and Southern Europe compared.

* Daniel Hallin and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, “Political clientelism and the media: Southern Europe and Latin America in comparative perspective”. *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 24, n. 2, 2002, pp. 175-195.

Nov 10 (Tue) – The case of Brazil.

* Afonso de Albuquerque, “On models and margins: comparative media models viewed from a Brazilian perspective,” unpublished manuscript.
(Fourth forum of the discussion board begins!)

Nov 12 (Thu) – Country report presentations.

PART V
CONCLUSIONS

Nov 17 (Tue) – Is globalization changing political communication?

* Hallin and Mancini, chapter 8, pp. 251-295.

Nov 19 (Thu) – Is the Internet changing political communication?

* Ravia Karakauya Polat, “The Internet and political participation: Exploring the explanatory links.” *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 20, n. 4, 2005, pp. 435-459.

Nov 24 (Tue) – Conclusions. Class evaluation.

Nov 26 (Thu) – No class. Thanksgiving holiday.

Dec 1 and 3 – No class. Work on final paper.

FINAL PAPER DUE: Tuesday, December 8.

Final papers should be uploaded to Blackboard until midnight of December 8. Late papers will not be accepted.