**POL266: POLITICS AND CULTURE**

**LEHMAN COLLEGE, Carmen Hall**

**Spring 2017**

**Instructor:** Sally Sharif

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**Office Hours:** Office Hours: Saturday, 1-2 pm

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As the title suggests, the class focuses on the relationship between culture and politics. Initially, we define what the phenomena we call “culture” consists of. Then we try to investigate the relationship between the two through different socio-political processes: voting behavior, redistribution policies, ethnicity-defining politics, and civil conflict. On each of these topics the course includes case studies of several countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. The relationship between culture and politics is not limited to qualitative studies. In order to understand the burgeoning field of quantitative analysis, we would also review elements of multivariate regressions. The purpose of this part of the class is not for students to be able to carry out independent quantitative research, but for them to have the skills to comprehend the results of statistical analyses in political science. No former knowledge of statistics is necessary.

Various societal and institutional aspects of human life that influences culture have defined what we will talk about each week. After the initial main question of “does culture define and influence politics,” we will discuss how this influence can be demonstrated. Several questions that will be raised in the classroom will be as follows: Does being rich change how we conduct politics? Does being poor do the same? How does income inequality change politics? Is politics done differently in wealthier countries? How does all this influence culture and hence, politics? How do politics differ in countries with different approaches to cultural and linguistic differences? Can identities be constructed? How do minorities influence the majority and their policy preferences? Is ethnic conflict always the cause of civil wars? Does culture determine engaging in or abstaining from rape in the course of a civil war? What determines participation in civil conflict, either on the side of the government or the rebel group?

**Grading:** The following scheme, although subject to change under extraordinary circumstances, will be used for grading:

A: 100-96, A-: 95-91,

B+:90-86, B: 85-81, B-: 80-76,

C+:75-71, C: 70-66, C-: 65-61,

D+: 60-56, D: 55-51,

F: 50-0

**Attendance*:*** *(6%)* To attend the classes is the very initial step to learn and eventually get a good grade. Hence, I expect all students to attend every class. Students MUST attend at least 11 classes (out of 14) in order to pass. Failing to comply with this will result in a fail grade (F).

***Participation:*** *(24%)* Mere existence in the classroom does not guarantee learning. Students need to listen to the lectures carefully and take advantage of the ample opportunities I will provide to discuss the course material. This will include listening to and understanding the lecture, providing insightful comments, and proving a mental existence in the classroom along with the physical existence. You will have to submit your reading reviews on the course weblog ([www.politicsandculture2017.wordpress.com](http://www.politicsandculture2017.wordpress.com)) every week. This will also count as your class participation. I believe in continuous assessment: not participating in class discussions and not submitting reviews will be detrimental to your final grade.

**Midterm I and II*:*** *(2 x 20% = 40%)* For the midterm, I will prepare 6 questions. On Week 5 (11 March), I will randomly draw 3 questions that you will have to answer. The questions in the midterm are meant to test your knowledge of the material we will have read until this week. On week 11 (22 April) there will be another exam on the topics covered between weeks 5 and 11. Studying for these two tests and the feedback you receive from me will prepare you for the final paper.

**Final Paper:***(30%)* Students have to write a 7-8 page (double-spaced) argumentative paper on a topic of their choice about the issues covered in class. Details will be discussed in class. Although the final paper counts as 30% of the grade, not submitting one would qualify you as a Fail.

You will need to provide an outline to me in class on Week 11 (22 April) and present your main findings and claims in front of the class on Week 1 (13 May). Failure to comply with each of these tasks will take your grade down one sign. The final paper is due on 24 May at midnight.

**Plagiarism Policy:** It is very simple. DO NOT try to take credit for the work of others. I can guarantee that consequences of plagiarism will be worse for you than being late for your paper or getting a very bad grade for your paper. Not only will you fail the class, but you will also face disciplinary charges, risking your education completely.

If you are having trouble with assignments, feel free to e-mail me and come to my office to ask for help concerning the material. We have an online database that compares your work with not only all the papers in the pool, collected from all over the world with participating universities, but also compares with the work on the Internet. Moreover, I hold the discretion to question you on your work if I suspect it is not authentic.

**Reading Material:** All the reading material will be provided on Blackboard. Reading the material listed below is compulsory. Coming to class without having read the material would not only undermine your ability to learn, but it would also reduce your chances of participation in the class discussion, thus lowering your grade.

**Week 1 Political Culture: Definition**

*4 February*

* Introduction. Review of the syllabus.
* Daniel Wagner, “American Political Culture Explains Why Trump is still Strong,” *Huffington Post,* 2 December 2015, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-wagner/american-political-cultur_b_8696752.html>.
* Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, “Understanding the Emotional Act of Voting,” *Nature Human Behaviour*1 (10 January 2017), <http://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-016-0024>.

**Week 2** **Civic Culture**

*11 February*

We will discuss the impact of Almond and Verba’s book on political culture and politics. How does culture influence politics? How do we observe this phenomenon? What are the current interpretations of their study done in 1963?

* Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1963). (Page 1-30)
* Walter Russel Mead, “The Paradox of American Democracy Promotion,” *The American Interest*, 9 April 2015, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/04/09/the-paradox-of-american-democracy-promotion/>.

**Week 3 Political Cognition and Patterns of Partisanship**

*25 February*

* Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. (Page 45-52)
* “Political Polarization in the American Public,” Pew Research Center, 12 June 2014, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.
* Mandi Eatough and Jordan Johnston, “Immigrants and Voting: How a Personal Relationship to Immigration Changes the Voting Behaviors of Americans,” <http://politikos.byu.edu/SigmaMag/2016.pdf#page=124>.
* Introduction to regression analysis

**Week 4** **Race, Religion, Immigration, and Political Attitudes**

*4 March*

* Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. (Page 337-374)
* T. Brader, N., Valentino, and E. Suhay, “What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues and Immigration Threat,” *American Journal of Political* Science 52: 4 (October 2008): 959-978.
* The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Behavior, <http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/nesguide.htm>.

**Week 5 Midterm Exam I**

11 March

* Discussion on multivariate regressions

**Week 6 Identity, Ethnic Groups, and Nations**

*18 March*

* Jan-Eric Lane and Svante Ersson, *Culture and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2005). (Page 73-86, 88-99)
* Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Is Being Hispanic a Matter of Race, Ethnicity or Both?” Pew Research Center, 15 June 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/15/is-being-hispanic-a-matter-of-race-ethnicity-or-both/>.
* “Belgium has an Identity Crisis,” *The Economist*, 23 July 2007, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/certainideasofeurope/2007/07/belgium_has_an_identity_crisis>.

**Week 7**  **Race and Welfare Distribution**

*25 March*

* Alberto Alesina and Edward L. Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). (Page 133-154 and 172-181)
* J. Fetzer, “The Evolution of Public Attitudes Toward Immigration in Europe and the US 2000-2010," EUI RSCAS Research Project Reports*,* Report No. 10 (2011).
* Discussion on significance testing

**Week 8**  **Civil Conflict and Participation Factors**

*1 April*

* Richard J. Payne and Jamal R. Nassar, “Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict, and Conflict Resolution,” in *Politics and Culture in the Developing World* (Longman, 2012).
* Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52:2 (April 2008): 436-447.

**Week 9 Civil Wars, Rape, and Child Soldier Recruitment**

*8 April*

* Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When is Wartime Rape Rare?” *Politics and Society 37:1* (March 2009): 131-161.
* Jens Christopher Andvig and Scott Gates, “Recruiting Children for Armed Conflict,” in Scott Gates and Simon Reich, eds., *Child Soldiers in the Age of Fractured States* (2009)

**Week 10 No class: Spring Recess**

*15 April*

**Week 11 Midterm Exam II**

*22 April*

* Final Paper topic due: Present in class

**Week 12 Political Practices that Lead to Civil Conflict**

*29 April*

* Texts to be picked on the basis of student interest

**Week 13** **Ending Civil Conflict: Policy Implications for the U.S.**

*6 May*

* Texts to be picked on the basis of student interest

**Week 15** **Final Paper Presentations**

*13 May*

**Papers Due**:

*24 May*