George Mason University
Schar School of Policy and Government

GOVT 430-001 Comparative Political Leadership
Spring 2020

Meeting Time: Wednesday 7:20 pm-10:00 pm
Meeting Location: East 121
Instructor: Erica Seng-White
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 pm-6:00 pm and by appointment
Office Location: Research Hall 359

Course Overview

Comparative Political Leadership will explore the implications of different leadership approaches across various individuals, organizational contexts and cultures. The first section will look at the implications of individual level characteristics. These include the psychology and socialization of leaders. We will specifically explore these as it pertains to leaders' decision making processes.

The next section will examine the opportunities and constraints that formal political institutions generate for leaders in their decision-making process. This section will primarily focus on domestic institutions. Students will analyze the structures of the various organs of government. We will also explore the process through which individual leaders are selected. The degree of autonomy between the state and society will also be a central component of this section.

The third portion of the course will explore the impact of informal institutions on leadership. Topics in this section explore the process of cultivating legitimacy and collective identity. Leadership outside of formal organizations will also be explored in this section. This will draw heavily on the literature on identities, media and social movements.
The final section of this course will explore different typologies of leadership in diplomacy, intergovernmental organizations and transnational advocacy networks. This incorporates leadership from both formal and informal institutions. This approach will provide students with opportunities to better understand how strategies and solutions to collective action problems are devised across different institutional structures while acknowledging the importance of human agency.

**Course Objectives**

- Analyze leadership from different theoretical perspectives, levels, institutional structures, and cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the implications and limitations of political decisions.
- Further utilize positivist research skills.
- Articulate findings and interpretations of various dilemmas in group work, writing and Speaking.

**Class Discussions, Discussion Groups and Simulations (30%)**: Students will be expected to regularly participate in class discussions. This class wide conversation will incorporate both theory and current events. Students will also break off into assigned discussion groups. Groups will meet in class and will present a summary of their discussion to their classmates. Group members will be responsible for evaluating the contributions of the fellow members of their group. It is essential that everyone comes prepared by completing the required readings and reviewing current events. Students are also encouraged to pose questions both in advance and during the lecture that they would like to discuss as a class.

**Weekly Quizzes (20%)**: There will be a quiz at different intervals throughout the semester. These quizzes will consist of a short writing prompt (no longer than 4-5 sentences). Students will be given fifteen minutes to write their paragraphs. These quizzes will help you parse through the course material to better understand core insights. They will also help you become a faster writer.
Midterm Paper (20%): You will analyze an event in history where a failure of leadership took place. You must (1) generate a plausibly theory for why a leader or leaders are not successful in a general class of an event (2) compare your theory to empirical evidence using a single shot case study. You should devise your theory prior to selecting your case. This paper should be no longer than 15 pages. It must be written in Times New Roman 12 point font with 1 inch margins. You may use any citation style provided you are consistent and I can locate all of your sources. **Deadline: March 18, 2020 by 11:59 pm on Blackboard**

Final Exam (30%): The final exam will include short answer and essay questions. You MUST bring a bluebook and a writing utensil to the exam. This exam will be open book; however, all sources must be hardcopy. I will post a review guide at least 2 weeks prior the exam date. You may not have your cellphone or any electronic device on your desk at any time during this exam period. **The final exam is scheduled for May 6, 2020 7:30 pm-10:15 pm.**

Participation: Attendance and participation are mandatory for this class. You are expected to attend every session unless you have a documented excuse for being absent (ex: a doctor’s note). Perfect attendance is worth three extra credit points. Topics covered during lecture and mandatory readings are fair game for daily quizzes. Your worst quiz grade will be dropped from your final grade.

Required Readings

- Mikhail A. Molchanov and Joseph Masciulli (eds), *Ashgate Research Companion to Political Leadership* (Routledge, 2016).
- Additional readings will be assigned and made available through the Blackboard course site.
- Students are strongly encouraged to visit one of the following sources on a regular basis: - The Washington Post
Schedule of Readings

**January 22, 2020: What is Leadership?**

**January 29, 2020: Core Theories of Leadership**
- Molchanov, “Classical Eastern and Western Traditions of Political Leadership,” *Ashgate*.

*Optional:*
- Elgie, “Positivist Accounts of Political Leadership,” *Studying Political Leadership*.

**February 5, 2020: Psychology**
- Jerrold M. Post, “Personality Profiling Analysis,” *Oxford Handbook*
February 12, 2020: The Act of Leading


February 19, 2020: Selecting Leaders


February 26, 2020: Political Regime Type and Leadership


March 4, 2020: Executive Typologies and Leadership


*March 11, 2020: SPRING BREAK–NO CLASS*

*March 18, 2020: Cultural Contexts and Legitimacy*
• Weixing Chen, “Political Leadership in China in the Twenty-First Century,” *Ashgate.*
• Mojtaba Mahdavi, “Islam/Muslims and Political Leadership,” *Ashgate.*

*Midterm Paper must be submitted by 11:59 pm on Blackboard*

*March 25, 2020: Collective Identities and Leadership*

*April 1, 2020: Gendered Norms and Leadership*
• Patricia Lee Sykes, “Does Gender Matter?,” *Oxford Handbook*
April 8, 2020: Media Influence


April 15, 2020: Social Movement Leadership


April 22, 2020: Diplomacy and Leadership


April 29, 2020: International Cooperation and Leadership

- Shaun Narine, “International Human Rights, Political Leadership and the Problem of Normative Change in the International System,” *Ashgate*.
Final Exam Scheduled for May 6, 2020 at 7:30 pm

Course Policies and Grading

Grades:

93%-100% = A

90%-92.9% = A-

86%-89.9% = B+

83%-85.9% = B

80%-82.9% = B-

76%-79.9% = C+

73%-75.9% = C

70%-72.9% = C-

66%-69.9% = D+

63%-65.9% = D

60%-62.9% = D-

0%-59.9% = F

A Outstanding work; the student has demonstrated a clear mastery of course skills and concepts.
B Good; the student has demonstrated a solid understanding of course skills and concepts
C Acceptable; the student has demonstrated a general understanding of course skills and concepts
D Pass; the student has demonstrated a general understanding of course skills and concepts
F Failure; the student has not demonstrated a sufficient understanding of course material

Students are encouraged to come and speak with the instructor if they have any question about their grades. Please bring your graded assignment to your meeting with the instructor for reference. The instructor will re-grade any assignment but reserves the right to either raise or lower the student’s score based upon the new assessment. Please make sure you have a clear rationale for why your grade should be raised. Students may not submit an assignment for a regrade more than once.

**Course Reading Policy:** All mandatory readings must be completed BEFORE CLASS. Please contact the instructor if you have any questions after reading the course materials.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory. Please make sure that you sign in at the beginning of each class. You must sign-in in order to be eligible to take a pop quiz.

**Late Work Policy:** If there is a documented reason that you cannot submit an assignment on the scheduled date, you must contact the instructor as soon as possible. Every day late will result in a half-grade reduction in the final grade for the assignment. Late work will not be accepted if it is more than a week late.

**Class Discussion Policy:** Students at George Mason University represent a diverse range of experiences. Although we may not always agree with one another, it is important that we respect one another and express said disagreement in a professional manner. Personal attacks and hate speech have no place in an academic setting. Failure to adhere to this requirement will result in a student being asked to leave the lecture and will adversely affect participation grades.
Electronic Device Policy: Students are welcomed to use laptops for purposes of note taking ONLY. Students should keep cell phones out of sight for the duration of the class. All electronic devices must be stowed during quizzes and exams. Students with cell phones on their desks or seats during a quiz or exam will receive an automatic zero.

Academic Integrity: Students are strongly encouraged to review the Mason Honor Code prior to the start of this semester. Never turn in work that is not your own. If you borrow ideas from others, you must give them credit. Failure to do so is plagiarism and is grounds for failing this course. Make sure that all citations and data are accurate. Be honest with the instructor if you are missing assignments and/or exams.

Disability Accommodations: Students will get the most out of this course if they have access to the appropriate tools to better foster their success. Students with a documented disability must reach out to the Disability Services (SUB I 2500) and meet with the instructor to ensure that their needs are met.

Privacy: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was designed to ensure that student privacy rights are protected. This has important implications for our course. In order to enforce this regulation, George Mason University requires that we communicate through your Mason email account. It also requires that the instructor return your assignments to the student and only the student who completed the assignment.