Comparative Politics of South Asian States

Winter Semester 2018-19

Seminar Handout

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1. Important Information
- Seminar time: Mondays 14:15 to 15:45
- Seminar place: SAI 317
- First session: Monday 15 October 2018
- Last session: Monday 4 February 2019
- Lecturer: Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani
- Office: SAI, Room No.409
- Office Hours: Wednesdays 14- 15:30
- Email: zarhani@uni-heidelberg.de
- Seminar Website: https://elearning2.uni-heidelberg.de/ then Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften then Politische Wissenschaft
- Assessment: Attendance, presentation, and essay

2. Course Description
South Asia is a diverse and dynamic region politically, socially, and economically. Over the past several decades, South Asia has seen the rise of India as the largest democracy in the world, emergence, and collapse of authoritarian regimes in Pakistan, democratization in Bhutan, civil war in Sri Lanka, and fragmentation of state in Afghanistan, and economic boom and bust India. How can we make sense of these dynamics and complexities? Why the characteristics and performances of South Asian countries are so diverse and different? As a subfield of political science, comparative politics provides us with conceptual frameworks that facilitate comparison and explanation of what are seemingly quite different.

As an introduction to the comparative politics of South Asia, this course provides a comprehensive and systematic comparative study of major states of South Asia and focus on India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Nepal.

As a comparative politics course, this seminar discusses (i) processes of state formation in South Asia, (ii) classification of states regimes types, (iii) the structure of political institutions, (iv) the role of political actors, and (v) processes and performance.
The initial weeks of the seminar will focus on the definitions, concepts and the methodological concerns surrounding the comparative method as an approach to the study of politics. Subsequently, this seminar compares selected topics across countries: government structure, political culture, political parties, interest groups, election and participation, recruiting political elites, and government performances.

3. **Prior Requirements**

This is an MA level class. What is required is a commitment to South Asia and social science theory. Students are required to go through the readings mentioned just below the titles. This is essential. The supplementary materials are further readings for students who want to learn more about a particular topic. This material will be useful for research students, especially those who wish to present in a particular class.

4. **Organization**

This seminar is based on lectures, student presentations on the required reading, and in-class discussions. The first meeting will be a discussion on how we will run the seminar. The theory lectures will be given in the second session; then, the student presentations will take place in the next sessions based on the required readings for that week.

The second session focuses on the conceptual and theoretical debates in comparative politics. This introduction should act as the basis for oral presentations and then essays.

5. **Course Text**

The seminar will consist of the reading of a selection of the academic literature on the comparative study of the South Asian States, their institutions, structures, and process. There is no single text. No reader. For each session, one or two texts have to be read by all participants. They are the basis for a discussion in the seminar. The course is taught as a political science course; however, the approach is multi-disciplinary, making use of texts from diverse fields of study like public administration, political economy or public policy to highlight the complex nature of the phenomena.

Students are encouraged to ask critical questions and develop interdisciplinary reflections in understanding the different issues. Their respective diverse backgrounds and majors, as well as cultural experience and political knowledge, are highly valued.

6. **E-learning platform**

The seminar “Comparative Politics of South Asian States” is registered in the university eLearning platform. You will find it opening “Fakultät für Wirtschafts-und Sozialwissenschaften” and then “Politische Wissenschaft.” The enrollment key is Zar1819. All course materials and other details will be uploaded there. Students who desire a “Schein” must register on Moodle.

7. **Class Organization and Presentations**

There will be no student presentations in the first two sessions of the seminar, which will provide an introductory framework including a discussion of theories, important terminologies, and review of key concepts. The allocation of presentation themes will be done on 22 October session.
During the rest of the semester, students will be expected to present at least once. Presentations must be between 20 to 30 minutes and should aim at answering a central question. After that, it will be a general discussion. Each session is allotted at least one, core article (or articles) that will act as the basis for the class discussion. All participants are expected to read the assigned article. Presenters are expected to draw on additional information and must provide their colleagues with a handout.

8. Schedule

15.10.2018
Introduction and Organizational issues

22.10.2018:
Comparative Politics, Concepts, Debates, and Theories

*Essential reading*

*Supplementary reading*

29.10.2016
Colonial Past, Institutions, and State Building

*Essential reading*

*Supplementary reading*

5.11.2018
Democratization in South Asia: India and Pakistan

*Essential reading*

*Supplementary reading*

12.11.2018
Democratization in South Asia: Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

*Essential reading*

19.11.2018
Class and Politics in the South Asian States (With Focus on Bangladesh and Pakistan)

**Essential reading**


26.11.2018
Political Conflicts and National Unity in the South Asian States (1)
(Caste and Language)

**Essential reading**


**Supplementary reading**


3.12.2018
Conflicts and National Unity in the South Asian States (2)
(Religion and Politics in South Asia)

**Essential reading**


10.12.2018
Militaries of South Asia

**Essential reading**


**Supplementary reading**

17.12.2018

**Party Politics in South Asia**

*Essential reading*


*Supplementary reading*


7.1.2019

**The Weak States in South Asia: Afghanistan and?**

*Essential reading*


14.1.2019

**Subnational Comparison in South Asia**

*Essential reading*


*Supplementary reading*


21.1.2019

**Mass Politics in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh**

*Essential reading*

28.1.2019
State Bureaucracy and Service Delivery

Essential reading


Supplementary reading


4.2.2019
State, Institutions, and Development in South Asia: Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka

Essential reading


9. Assessment and Submission Dates

Students wishing to obtain a “Schein” or Credit Points for the seminar would be required to:
- Attend in 80% session, be familiar with the core reading texts and actively participate in discussions. (2 CPs)
- Hold a presentation on one of the topics of the seminar and prepare a handout for this presentation, including, but not limited to, the core question, main points in a bullet-form and a selected bibliography. (2 CPs)
- Submit an essay (2 CPs)

In addition to regular participation and a seminar presentation, those taking the course for credit are required to submit a seminar paper (5000-6000 words) (by March 30th, 4 pm. The deadline cannot be extended. Only soft copies will be accepted. The essay must be submitted along with a properly filled in *Scheinformular*. The Cover page of the *Hausarbeit* should give the contact address of the author, indicate the Fächerkombination and the Fachsemester.

10. Teaching Support and Student Feedback

As always, student feedback is essential to the success of the seminar, and your comments are welcome at any time. Please contact me if you have any difficulties with this seminar or if you wish to discuss your work and progress. My Office Hour: Mondays 14–15:30, Room 409.

11. Seminar Evaluation

Student feedback is essential to the success of the seminar, and your comments are welcome at any time. Near the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which enables the Department to monitor the lecture and addresses any apparent problems or difficulties.
Please also contact me in the case of difficulties or if you wish to discuss your work and progress. In particular, please do not hesitate to inform me if a book or journal is not available in the library.