WESTERN EUROPEAN POLITICS

Professor Hiram José Irizarry Osorio

Course description:
This course is a comparative study of how democratic institutions are structured and how they function, particularly with regard to the regulation of conflict. By comparative we mean that we will be addressing European political issues across different points in time and across different countries. Three main topics/concepts will be analyzed throughout the entire quarter: democracy, development, and the state. Democracy is a form of institutionalizing conflict, but democratic regimes vary with regard to the ways they structure the arenas within which conflict is expressed. Presidential vs. parliamentary systems, as well as fragmented multi-party systems vs. majoritarian two-party systems, for example, are extremely important distinctions that have important consequences for the nature of politics within a society. Hence, too, are the nature of political parties and the dynamics of party systems. While this course will focus primarily on Western Europe, its overview of political institutions and policy processes applies to established democracies in other world regions (especially Eastern Europe, Latin America and East Asia), as well as to new democracies emerging in the aftermath of authoritarian rule.
**Abridged Course Syllabus for ALBA Website**

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Class Format:**
The course is heavily based on assigned readings and class discussion. There is very little lecture, and much more class discussion. Students will be responsible for completing the reading assignments for each day of class, participate in class by answering questions posed by the instructor, by raising questions or comments regarding the course’s readings, and/or reacting to questions/comments raised by other classmates. In general, students are responsible for ALL the information sources used in this course.

**Form of assessment:**
- **Class Discussion Papers** (50%): Each student will write a 5-page reaction paper criticizing and analyzing the readings pertaining to a preselected day. These papers are not summaries of the assigned readings. The discussants must pose questions, concerns, doubts, and conclusions that the assigned readings provoke to them. This assignment’s worth is 20 points and it represents 50% of the final overall grade. Each student will be a Class Discussant twice during the quarter (i.e., 10 points for each time; thus, each Class Discussant responsibility’s worth is 25% of the final overall grade.

- **Research Paper** (40%): This assignment’s worth is 10 points and it represents 40% of the final overall grade. The final paper will consist of 10 to 15 pages.

- **Presentation in class** (10%): Each student will present his or her final research paper in class. This assignment’s worth is 10 points. The in-class presentations will take place at the end of the term. Each student will prepare a brief document outlining his or her paper and present it in-class. This outline will highlight the most important points in the student’s paper. Your in-class presentation should approximately last 10 minutes.