

PLS 140 Introduction to comparative politics

Week 1 – August 19
Basic concepts in CP

Dr. H el ene Thibault
Fall 2016

Quiz answers

Which one of these topics is NOT considered to be a topic of comparative politics?

- A- Political economy
- B- Parliamentary politics
- C- Second World War
- D- Ethnic violence
- E- Political parties

Four characteristics of the state

- Territory
- Nation/Population
- Sovereignty
- State apparatus/bureaucracy

Examples of wrong answers

- Army
- Laws/Constitution
- Government - What is the difference between government and state? Ex: Belgium.
- Language
- Human rights
- National symbols
- Economic system
- President

Which of these countries does NOT have a liberal economic model?

A- United States

B- Hungary

C- Cuba

D- Poland

What is a parliamentary/constitutional monarchy?

- A system of government in which a monarch shares power with a constitutionally organized government.
- The monarch can have a formal role but his/her intervention in politics and policy-making is insignificant.

Which of the following countries is NOT a parliamentary monarchy?

- A- Canada
- B- Germany
- C- Australia
- D- Norway

Norwegian royal family





What is politics?

- Politics is the struggle for power.
- Power to decide who (individuals or groups) has the authority to make decision for the larger community.
- Politics is not limited to parliamentary games.
- Everything is political! Environmental, gender issues, education, history, etc.

Tension between freedom and equality inherent to politics

- **Freedom:** a person's ability to act independently. Refers to concepts such as: freedom of speech, religion and civil liberties.
- **Equality:** distribution of material standards/wealth and benefits within a community.

USA vs USSR

What is comparative politics?

- The study of how at different times, utilizing different modes of governance and institutions, different polities around the world deal with the need to balance freedom and security.

Main concept in CP: **Institutions**

- Formal or informal organizations that are self-perpetuating.
- Embody norms or values central to people's lives and thus not easily dislodged or changed.
- They set the stage for political behavior.
- Understanding the differences among institutions is central to the study of CP.

Formal institutions

- Organizations based on officially sanctioned rules.
- Examples?
 - > Army, bureaucracy, laws, parliaments.

Informal institutions

- ◉ Unwritten and unofficial rules.
- ◉ Examples?
 - > cultural norms, corruption, working etiquette, clan politics.