COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This class explores some important aspects of contemporary Greek politics and society. In the first part of the course, we focus on today’s Greek political system, comparing and contrasting it with the US system. After that, we place the current political system in a historical perspective, tracing the development of the Modern Greek state, from the Independence War in the 1820s to the economic and social crisis that broke out in 2009 and is still raging today. This historical overview will allow us to better understand the origins of recurring political problems and long-term social issues, such as clientelism, the role of family dynasties in Greek politics, Greece’s ambivalent feelings toward its Western allies as well as the special ties between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek State.

After the midterm, in the last part of the course, we shall focus on how Greeks relate to their state and state laws. Is it true that Greeks see their own state as an enemy of sorts? If so, why? What concrete examples of such a supposedly antagonistic relationship can we detect in everyday life? Can we, as a class, devise ways of “measuring” how law abiding Greeks really are? Working in small teams, and after choosing a specific area of investigation, students will be guided to first design a research project, and than collect, process and analyze raw data. Ideally, we should be able to present our findings to the whole CYA community at the end of the semester.

In case we face unexpected problems with this class research project (I am doing it for the first time), we shall focus instead on the impact that mass emigration from Greece (until the 1970s) and (after 1990) large-scale immigration and refugee inflows have had not only on Greek politics and society, but also on Greek national identity.

By the end of the course, students are expected to have developed a sound, history-based understanding of the main challenges facing today’s Greece. Even though this course is not focusing in particular on the Greek crisis, students will have acquired the basic tools for understanding its causes, and possible outcomes.
CLASS REQUIREMENTS

According to the Program’s rules, students are expected to attend all course sessions as well as a full-day field trip by bus around the Greater Athens area, which is scheduled for Friday, October 13. Please make sure not to organize any travel abroad during that weekend as attendance is required.

Attendance is compulsory at CYA. Please take note of this school policy when planning your weekend travels in Greece or abroad. According to the Program’s rules, unexcused absences may lead to a lowering of the final grade. You are expected to always come to class prepared to actively participate in discussions based on the assigned readings.

The final grade will be calculated in the following way:
- 20% based on short written assignments and class tests.
- 15% based on overall class participation.
- 35% based on the midterm exam.
- 30% based on your active contribution to the class project about law abidance in Greece (in case the project cannot be carried out, a final term paper of 10-15 double-spaced pages is required and will be due on Thursday, December 14 by 5pm).

The midterm exam will consist of a set of questions to which you have to answer in a short-essay format.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Given the rapid and dramatic changes of the last few years, most books written about Modern Greek politics and society are, to different degrees, outdated. Even the most recent books, published over the last few years, analyze political scenarios and make predictions that have already proved short-lived or mistaken. Recent articles published in academic journals are either too technical for an introductory course like ours, and/or already superseded by the latest developments. Out of necessity, we shall often have to navigate this changing Greek reality using less academic resources and a more eclectic variety of sources.

For the historical background, and as reference textbooks, we shall rely mostly on:

Students taking the course at a higher level will be required to do additional readings, mostly from the following books:


For background to the political science part of the course, we shall rely on a standard textbook


We shall also use online Greek media available in English, as well as selected articles from the international press and European research centers. These articles will be assigned and made available by email or on Moodle as we proceed. The reading load will normally be in the range of 2-3 hours per lesson.

Perhaps the best Greek media in English is the daily newspaper *Kathimerini*, which is published inside the international edition of the *New York Times* (printed in Greece). The newspaper is available at the CYA library, as well as online
www.ekathimerini.com

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Monday, Sept 4**
*Introduction to the course: overview of the readings, assignments and requirements.*

**Wednesday, Sept 6**
*A crash introduction to current issues in Greek politics and society in a comparative perspective. Its government, party system, and the main political, economic and social issues.*


**Monday, Sept 11**
*Walk around an Athens neighbourhood, looking for signs of the eight-year-old economic and social crisis.*
• Background readings:

**Monday, Sept 18**
*What kind of democracy is Greece today? How does its parliamentary system work? What are the main differences between the Greek parliamentary system and the American presidential one?*

• Wikipedia. Entry “POLITICS OF GREECE”. ONLY Sections 1, 2 and 3.

**Wednesday, Sept 20**
*In this lesson we shall examine Greek voting systems and look at how they have affected over time the make-up of parties, parliaments and governments. We shall do this by taking once again a broad comparative perspective, and relying to a great extent on your knowledge of American politics and the recent presidential election. In particular, we shall address questions linked to: direct vs. indirect elections; proportional vs. majority electoral systems; factors determining voting turnout; party models and party leadership selection.***

• Wikipedia. For the Greek electoral system, see entry on “PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION”. Read ONLY Sections 1.1 through 1.7; plus section 2.2 (Minimum Thresholds); and subsection 4.1.1. (Closed Party List) and 4.1.2 (Open Party List)
• Wikipedia. For the electoral system used (among other countries) in the USA, see entry “FIRST-PAST-THE-POST VOTING”. ONLY sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

**Monday, Sept 25**
*In this class we continue to discuss Greek politics in a comparative perspective. We pay attention to two fundamental differences between the Greek and American systems: 1) the fact that Greece is a unitary, centralized country (as opposed to the US federal system); and 2) the fact that it is part of the European Union project (and in particular of the so-called Eurozone and the border-free Schengen Area).***

• Kenneth Newton and Jan W. van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 5, pp. 72-85 only.
• Wikipedia. For the Greek system, see entry “UNITARY STATE”.
• For the USA, see entry “FEDERATION”, only subsections 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1.
Wednesday, Sept 27  
**1st class test**

Presentations about Greek parties. Early on students will be divided into 5 groups, and each group will make a 20-minute presentation on a specific party (or grouping of smaller parties), namely: (1) The ruling coalition of leftist SYRIZA and conservative-nationalist Independent Greeks; (2) the Main Opposition Party, center-right New Democracy; (3) the ultra-nationalist, extreme-right wing Golden Dawn; (4) the center-left parties (the Socialist Party and “The River”); (5) the Communist party of Greece (KKE).

Suggested readings will be assigned early on to each group separately, but you are encouraged to do some independent research and prepare a basic bibliography. Each group will write a short report (maximum 4 pages) to be shared with the rest of the class.

PART 2  
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO CONTEMPORARY GREECE

Over the next four weeks, we shall focus on the political and social history of Greece, from independence to the outbreak of the current crisis in 2009, with a view to understanding the most important long-term forces and issues still at play in today’s Greece.

Monday, Oct 2

*In this class, we shall discuss the main issues related to the formation of “modern Greece”. In particular, the role of the Greek diaspora in the independence movement; the main features of the new Greek state (a monarchy under an ‘imported’, German dynasty; an ‘eastern’ society called to shed its traditional culture and quickly adopt ‘modern, western ways’); as well as its peculiar international status (the issue of the ‘Protecting Powers’ and Greece’s international ‘dependency’).*

Required reading


Additional recommended reading:


Wednesday, Oct 4

Visit to the Greek Parliament in session.

Required reading:
Monday, Oct 9
As we continue to look at 19th century Greece, we now focus on three broad issues: 1) the huge challenge of building a ‘modern’ nation-state along Western European models out of an impoverished and small corner of the “non-European” Ottoman Empire; 2) the role of nationalism and ‘irredentism’ in the construction of a modern Greek national identity; and 3) Greece’s transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy (formation of political parties; creation of new institutions; the persistent issue of ‘clientelism’ in Greek politics and society). While addressing these issues, we shall try to assess to what extent they are still playing a role in contemporary Greece.

Required reading:
• Richard Clogg, Concise History of Greece, Chapter 3, “Nation Building, the “Great Idea’ and National Schism, 1831-1922”. Only up to the rise to power of Eleftherios Venizelos in 1910.

Recommended reading:
• Thomas Gallant, Modern Greece, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 31-74. You should pay special attention to the section on “Nationalism and Identity”, pp. 67-74.

Wednesday, Oct 11
In this class we focus on the 35-year of turmoil that rocked Greece between the outbreak of World War One and the end of the Civil War in 1949. We look in particular at the role of Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos (Greece’s dominant political figure in the first half of the 20th century) as he clashes with the monarchy over the issue of whether to enter the Great War and, if so, on which side. We also look at (1) the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and the challenges posed by the sudden territorial expansion of Greece, which after 1913 included significant minority populations (Muslims as well as Slavs and Albanians); the so-called Great Catastrophe and the forced exchange of minorities between Greece and Turkey of 1922-24; the filo-fascist regime of Ioannis Metaxas; the catastrophic destruction the second World War; and finally the civil war between Nationalists and Communists.

Required reading:
• Richard Clogg, A Concise History of Greece, last part of Chapter 3.

Additional recommended readings:
• Thomas Gallant, Modern Greece, Chapters 5.

Friday Oct 13
FULL-DAY FIELD TRIP AROUND GREATER ATHENS.

Mon, Oct 16
Discussion of main topics developed during the field trip.

Required readings:
PART 3. DO GREEKS RESPECT LAWS?
It is often said that Greeks are an unruly people. That no matter who is in
government, they tend to obey only those laws that they do not find objectionable or
inconvenient. Is that indeed the case? As explained in the opening section of this
syllabus, we shall try to devise empirical ways to test the often-heard claim that
Greeks are an unruly people, too difficult to govern. As we design and carry out our
class project, we shall be reading a selection of chapters from Iannis Palaiologos’
The 13th Labour of Hercules, a recent book on the current crisis which highlights
many aspects of the complex relationship between Greek citizens, the law, and the
state.

There will be a short written assignment for each of these five chapters.
Wednesday, Nov 8
Greens resisting the authority of the State: Exploring the four-month ‘popular insurgency’ against the construction of a large waste-management unit in the municipality of Keratea.

- Yiannis Palaiologos, The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis, Chapter 1, “The Keratea Troubles”.

Monday, Nov 13
The Greek State and Greek tax payers: Tax evasion, social justice, and how to rebuild a sense of fair play.

- Yiannis Palaiologos, The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis, Chapter 2, “A Taxing Issue”

Monday, Nov 15
The ‘Client State’ and its pensioners: The painful reform of an unsustainable pension system

- Yiannis Palaiologos, The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis, Chapter 4, “Pensions, Retired”.

Monday, Nov 27
The Greek state and its most radical discontents: The rise of Golden Dawn, extreme right-wing nationalism, and anti-immigration xenophobia.

- Yiannis Palaiologos, The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis, Chapter 9 “Nightmares from Weimer”.

Wednesday, Nov 29
Greek youths and the state: students, the education system, radical movements, the 2008 riots.

- Yiannis Palaiologos, The 13th Labour of Hercules: Inside the Greek Crisis, Chapter 10, “Out with the Old”.

Friday, Dec 1
Finalization of the findings of the class project on attitudes towards the Greek state and law abidance. Preparation of an executive report.

Monday, Dec 4 and Wednesday Dec 6
Conclusions: Where is Greece heading? A class debate.