

University of Illinois at Chicago
Introduction to Comparative Politics
Political Science 130
Spring 2010

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Lecture: T/TH: 11 - 11:50 p.m.

Office: 1170A BSB
Office Hours: T/TR 12 – 12:30 p.m.

Location: 2BH 304

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Discussion 20082 – Fri - 10 - 10:50 a.m.
Discussion 16195 – Fri - 11 – 11:50 p.m.

Office: BSB 1113
Office Hours: 12 – 1:00 p.m.

Location: 2EPASW 2217
Location: 2EPASW 2433

Course Description

Welcome to comparative politics - the methodical study of countries. Every country, including the United States, has a story to tell about its political system, culture and values, as well as socio-demographic and economic trends, and place in the world. Our mission in this course is to understand the peculiarities, similarities and differences that exist among the countries of the world.

We begin with a general overview of politics and government within the broader political science field and the comparative tradition. We then examine the working of government shaped by the political culture, institutions and processes in individual societies. The balance of our time will be spent case studying countries. We will explore what makes some countries democratic exemplars and economic powerhouses and others basket cases.

Finally, we will learn how certain countries have transformed over time and what explains this transformation. In doing so, we will rely on information from varied sources. The overall goal is for students to broaden their global perspectives and develop a capacity for independent thought.

Reading

Almond, Gabriel, A., G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Russell J. Dalton, and Kaare Strom. Updated 9th ed. 2010. *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, NY: Pearson-Longman.

Supplemental materials will be used from time to time at lecture and discussion.

Method of Instruction

This course will be taught through lecture and class discussion. The instructor provides the lecture, based on the text, his knowledge, ideas and thoughts. Class discussion supplements the instructor's effort. Here the TA breaks down the lecture in a way that allows feedback and facilitates contribution from the students. The TA may give pop quizzes in addition to published rubrics where she finds them necessary and apply them to the participation grade. Audio-visual and other instructional aid (i.e., overhead projector, maps, videos, etc) will be utilized from time to time at lecture and discussion where available and helpful.

Course Requirements

Performance in this course will be based on the following:

1. Attendance/Participation. Attendance at both lecture and class discussion is mandatory. Random attendance may be taken at lecture and the TA will track the number of times you missed class discussion. Both will be taken into consideration when calculating your course grade.
2. As for participation, beginning the second week, you will write a short (1-page) reflection on the week's reading and bring it to the Friday discussion to guide your contribution. The paper will highlight the main points in the reading and how they help you understand comparative politics. Participation will also be determined by your general attitude toward the course.
3. Examinations. There will be TWO examinations (Midterm and Final) intended to test how well you are following the course. Each exam will draw from the text, lectures, class discussions, and handouts.
4. Research paper. The goal of this final assignment is for you to appreciate countries of the world by their individual elements. To this end, you will write a 7-10 page paper comparing TWO countries selected NOT from the reading or those used in lectures (there are more than 200 countries in the world, including the 193 official members of the United Nations!). Your paper has two parts. First, you will profile these countries by their political history and culture. Second, you will compare their transformations and challenges in areas such as healthcare, education, judiciary, women/rural development, administrative structure or globalization and how it defines their place in the world. Your conclusion should suggest ways of dealing with these challenges. Be warned: cutting corners by relying wholly on the internet for information will be penalized. You are encouraged to seek information from varied sources including books, newspapers, journals and other written sources. Substandard English will similarly set you back in points. Most computers these days have grammar and spell-check function: find and use them! Before you embark on this project you will submit for approval to your TA the TWO countries you have chosen. Further details on this assignment will be provided at lecture and class discussion.

Grade Composition

Attendance	= 10 percent
Participation	= 20 percent
Midterm Exam	= 20 percent
Research Paper	= 30 percent

Final Exam = 20 percent

Grading Scale

Based on weighted scores in the above rubrics, the final grade will be determined as follows:

A = 90 – 100 percent

B = 80 – 89 percent

C = 75 – 79 percent

D = 65 – 74 percent

F = Below 65 percent

General Policy

On Attendance:

For the goal of this course to be realized, you need to be here and on time. I consider habitual late-coming disrespectful and it tells me you are not serious about the course. Academic accommodations will be given to students with documented disabilities, per university regulations. Such students should inform their TA of their condition early in the semester. Medical emergencies must be validated by an MD.

On Assignments:

Assignments are due on deadlines. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized accordingly. No exceptions.

On Academic Dishonesty:

A word of caution: Don't plagiarize or use a surrogate to do your work. Great variance between the skills shown in class and those displayed in take-home assignments will trigger an investigation that may lead to serious consequences for the student.

On Class Decorum:

Cell phones, pagers and related gadgets capable of setting off and distracting the class must be completely turned off before you enter the class. While a cup of coffee or a bottle of soda may be allowed, chewable items (including gum) are forbidden.

On Course Information:

This syllabus is your primary source of written information for the course; consult it regularly. If you lose the copy given to you in class ask your TA for a replacement or print one online.

Course Outline & Calendar

Note: This calendar does not demarcate specific topics for each class meeting. Topics will be covered cumulatively; that is, we will pick up from where we left off the previous meeting.

Week One

1/12 – Tuesday - Introduction and Course Overview. What is Comparative Politics? Why study it? What are we comparing? Issues, themes, concepts and notions in comparative politics.

Classifying countries, i.e., 1st, 2nd and 3rd Worlds; Consolidated, Transitional and Authoritarian regimes; Defining political systems & ideologies, i.e., Democracy, Authoritarianism, Totalitarianism, Marxism, Communism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Fascism, Anarchism, Islamic fundamentalism, etc.

Read (by Thursday class meeting): Almond et al, Chapters 1 - 2

Week Two

1/19 – Why countries and their people are the way they are – political culture and values versus political participation and interest aggregation.

Read: Almond et al, Chapters 3 - 4

Week Three

1/26 – Need for government; Normative versus empirical roles and functions of government; Elements of participatory democracy; Comparative political and policy processes.

Read: Almond et al, Chapters 5 – 7

Week Four

2/2 – Case study: (Consolidated democracy) Britain.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 8

Week Five

2/9 – Case study: (Consolidated democracy) France.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 9

2/12 – Friday – Midterm Exam (at discussion session)

Week Six

2/16 – Case study: (Consolidated democracy) Germany.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 10

Week Seven

2/23 – Case study: (Consolidated democracy) Japan.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 11

Week Eight

3/2 – Case study: (Consolidated democracy) India.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 17

Week Nine

3/9 – Case study (Consolidated democracy) United States.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 19

Week Ten

3/16 – Case studies: (Transitional democracies) Russia & China

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 12 – 13

3/19 – Friday - Research paper proposal due (at discussion session)

Week Eleven

3/22 – 3/26 - SPRING BREAK

Week Twelve

3/30 – Case study: (Transitional democracy) Mexico.

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 14

4/2 - Friday – Research paper due (at discussion session)

Week Thirteen

4/6 – Case study: (Transitional democracy) Brazil

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 15

Week Fourteen

4/13 – Case study: (Transitional democracy) Nigeria

Read: Almond et al, Chapters 35 - 36

Week Fifteen

4/20 - Case study: (Authoritarian regime) Iran

Read: Almond et al, Chapter 16

Week Sixteen

4/27 – Course review/closing

Final exam guide handed out (at discussion session)

5/3– Monday – Final Exam in Lecture Hall 2BH 304