

# **POLS 120:**

## **Introduction to Comparative Politics**

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### **Course Description:**

This course offers a broad overview of comparative politics, first looking at what comparative politics means as a discipline, then investigating some of the key concepts in comparative politics, and finally moving to practical application by investigating areas of the world and the politics of particular countries as case study examples.

### **Textbooks:**

*Available in the campus bookstore or online*

- Gabriel A. Almond, G. Bingham Powell, Kaare Strom, and Russell J. Dalton.  
*Comparative Politics Today: A World View*. Updated 8<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Christian Soe. *Annual Editions: Comparative Politics*. 23<sup>rd</sup> edition.

You are expected to read the assigned materials prior to coming to class. Five reading quizzes will provide added incentive to stay current on your readings. The syllabus is subject to change, and additional readings may be put on library reserves or Learnlink.

### **Grades:**

Attendance and class participation	5%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Article Reviews (2 at 10% each)	20%
Country Study Notebook	25%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	20%

**Course Policies:**

1. Attendance is mandatory. Sometimes events occur which keep you from attending class. You are allowed two free absences. After this, I will deduct one percentage point from your attendance grade for each additional absence. If you do not use your free absences, they will count as extra credit towards your final grade.
2. Reading – you should come to class having read all of the material. The lectures will parallel the readings, but will not substitute for the readings. Additionally, to provide added incentive for staying current on your reading assignments, there will be a series of reading quizzes (some announced, some unannounced).
3. Country Study Notebook – at the beginning of the semester you are to select two countries from S. America, Africa, and Asia (areas which we do not adequately cover in this course). You will have periodic assignments where you will be required to gather specific information on these countries. At the conclusion of the course, you will summarize the collected information into a short paper.
4. Exams – you will have a midterm and a final exam. The final exam will include some information from the first half of the semester by necessity (we cover concepts in the first half, and examples in the second half, and it is not possible to test the examples without including some information about the concepts).
5. Honor Code – I expect you to understand the honor code and to abide by it. Honor Code violations will not be tolerated. Plagiarism on any assignment is a clear violation of the honor code.
6. Article Reviews – I will provide two articles that supplement our course materials. You will write a short (1-2 page) reaction paper to each article. We will discuss this more when I assign the first article for review.

## **Course and Reading Schedule:**

**Section 1: Introduction** – What is comparative politics? What are we comparing? How do we make comparisons?

Th – 1/19 – Introduction

Tu – 1/24 – CPT Ch. 1: Issues in Comparative Politics

Th – 1/26 – CPT ch. 2: Comparing Political Systems

Tu – 1/31 – CPT ch. 19: United States (country study)

Th – 2/2 – AE ch. 19: The Great Divide

**Section 2: Socialization and Participation** – What does political culture mean? Does it matter? How do citizens act in different countries? How do they interact with their governments?

Tu – 2/7 – CPT ch. 3 – Political Culture and Political Socialization

Th – 2/9 – AE ch. 11 – Public Opinion: Is There a Crisis?

Tu 2/14 – CPT ch. 4 – Interest Articulation

Th 2/16 – AE ch. 13 – Interest Groups; and

AE ch. 14 – Women in National Parliaments

**Section 3: Institutions** – What are democracies and non-democracies? How do political parties operate in different settings? What are the similarities? What are the differences? What does the term ‘electoral systems’ mean?

Tu 2/21 – CPT ch. 5 – Interest Aggregation and Political parties

Th 2/23 – AE ch. 12 – Political Parties: Empty Vessels?; and

AE ch. 21 – The Case for a Multi-party US Parliament

Tu 2/28 – CPT ch. 6 – Government and Policymaking

Th 3/2 – AE ch. 17 – Judicial Review; and

AE ch. 18 – Referendums

Tu 3/7 – AE – ch. 16 – What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not

AE – ch. 38 – Democracy’s Sobering State

\*\* Review for midterm\*\*

**Th 3/9 – MIDTERM EXAM**

**Tu 3/14, Th 3/16 – No Class – SPRING BREAK**

## **Section 4: Current Topics and Country Studies**

Tu 4/4 – European Union

Choice of:

A. England

a. CPT ch. 8 – England

b. AE ch. 1, 3 (England chapters)

B. France

a. CPT ch. 9 – France

b. AE ch. 4-6 (France chapters)

C. Germany

a. CPT ch. 10 – Germany

b. AE ch. 7, 9 (Germany chapters)

Th 4/6 – AE ch. 22 – A Difficult Birth

AE ch. 23 – What the EU Constitution Says

AE ch. 25 – Europe's Quiet Leap Forward

Tu 4/11 – Russia – CPT ch. 12

Th 4/13 – AE ch. 26, 27 (Russia chapters)

Tu 4/18 – China – CPT ch. 13

Th 4/20 – AE ch. 31, 32, 33

Tu 4/25 – Middle East – CPT ch. 16 – Egypt

Th 4/27 – AE ch. 36, 37

Tu 5/2 – Last Day of Class \*\* Review for Final Exam\*\*

**Tu 5/9 – FINAL EXAM 2pm – 5pm**