

POLS-120: Comparative Politics Fall 2016

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 – 4:00 or by appointment

NOTE: If I'm in my office, the door will most likely be open. If the door is open, feel free to knock or stick your head in! I might be able to chat with you then and there. If not, I can at least get a sense of what's going on and we can make an appointment to chat about it at a later date.

Introduction:

This course introduces the comparative study of modern political systems. It outlines the major concepts and methods of comparative political analysis. It then applies these methods to the study of political institutions in democratic and non-democratic countries, as well as the challenges that these regimes confront. The focus of the class is on simultaneously learning about how the game of politics is played in different countries while also discovering *how* differences in the 'rules of the game' influence political outcomes in those countries. The course is divided into three sections. Section one introduces students to the scientific study of politics and develops a rationalist theoretical framework that will ground our analysis of political systems around the world. Section two focuses on exploring how political conflicts between competing groups are managed by the political institutions (parties, legislatures, etc.) of modern, western democracies. Section three explores how democratic and non-democratic regimes manage to the problem of ethnic conflict.

Evaluation:

Grades will be determined in the manner described below.

Current Events Presentation 15% (Rolling Deadlines)

Fidelity Checks 15% (Rolling Deadlines)

Exam 1 20% (3 October)

Exam 2 20% (7 November)

Final Exam 25% [Cumulative] (13 December, 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM)

Participation and Attendance: 5%

Participation and Attendance

Every unexcused absence in excess of the third will result in one 'minus' in the final grade for the course (For example: A student with a B+ in the course and with four unexcused absences will receive a B for their final grade, a student with a B+ in the course and with five unexcused absences will receive a B for their final grade and so on.). Students with six or more unexcused absences will be referred to academic affairs for possible withdrawal from the course.

Absences are excused for valid medical reasons *with documentation provided* by the student health center or another healthcare provider (i.e. an email saying 'Sorry I missed class today. I had a really bad headache.' will not result in your absence being excused).

Absences can also be excused for participation in school sponsored events (e.g. if you are attending an academic conference or participating in a varsity athletic event) so long as advance notice of the absence is given at least one week prior to the date of the event.

Students are expected to contribute actively to the debates and discussions in class. Discussion will focus

on helping the students apply the concepts covered in lecture and will use activities such as simulations and debates to accomplish this goal. These activities will largely be based on the reading materials provided, but they may also require additional light reading, typically in the form of news items relevant to the issue being discussed, which will be forwarded to you by the instructor. It is vital that you arrive ready to talk about and debate the theoretical issues and questions that have been raised by the readings and during lectures.

Your daily participation will be evaluated on a scale from zero to three points, with scores being recorded electronically by the instructor immediately after each class session. Your final participation score will be calculated as a percentage of all available points.

Fidelity Checks

Over the course of the semester there will be at least five 'fidelity checks.' These are short quizzes covering the assigned reading material for the day, although they may also contain 'review' questions from previous reading assignments. This portion of your grade will be calculated by dropping your *two* lowest fidelity check scores and taking an average of your remaining scores.

Exams

There are three exams in this course. Exam 1 and Exam 2 are non-cumulative.

- **Exam 1 (3 October)** will cover material from 24 August through 30 September
- **Exam 2 (7 November)** will cover material from 5 October through 4 November
- **Final Exam (13 December, 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM)** will cover material from the entire semester

All exams will contain a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. The final exam is cumulative.

Please note the following guidance regarding final exams provided by the office of Academic Affairs:

- Students must obtain permission from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to take an exam earlier or later than scheduled. Permission may be granted for medical reasons or for participation in educational programs.
- You may NOT receive permission to alter your exam schedule for the following reasons: Taking an earlier flight/ride, vacation schedule, weddings (other than your own), graduation, job schedule or having more than one exam on one day (see conflict exam info below).
- Conflict Exam Period - If a student has three (3) exams on the same day, the student may work with his/her professor to reschedule one exam during the Conflict Exam Period.

Course Textbook and Materials

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*, 2nd Edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press). (**Hereinafter CQG**)

The textbook can be purchased through the Oxford College bookstore, and is also available via online retailers such as Amazon.

Other Materials

Readings not from the textbook are denoted with an asterisk (*) and available on the course Canvas site. NOTE: The schedule of topics and assigned readings is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

A Note on Technology in the Classroom

Laptop computers and cell phones are **prohibited** in class, without special permission from the instructor (which will be given only in case of documented disability). Please silence and put away all electronic devices prior to the start of class.

Reading and Discussion Schedule

24 August – First Day of Class

- What is comparative politics?
- What are political institutions?
- Political knowledge inventory

26 August – The *science* in political science

- Reading 1: King, Keohane and Verba, *The Science in Social Science* pp. 3 – 19 and 28 – 33*

29 August – The *science* in political science, part II

- Reading 1: Almond and Genco, “Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics”*

31 August – The comparative method and the value of ‘small-N’ research

- Reading 1: Arend Lijphart, *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method**
- Reading 2: James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, *A Tale of Two Cultures**

2 September – Game Theory and comparative politics

- Reading 1: CGG, Chapter 3
- Reading 2: Neil de Mause, *The NFL’s Stadium Game is Heading Overseas**

5 September – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

7 September – Defining democracy, a conceptual debate

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 741 – 765
- Reading 2: Coppedge et al, *Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy*, pp. 353 – 261*

9 September – American Democracy and American Exceptionalism

- Reading 1: Lori M. Poloni-Staudinger and Michael Wolf, *American Exceptionalism**
- Reading 2: Stephen M. Walt, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism**

12 September – The civic culture and democracy

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 217 – 229 and 248 – 259 (skip box 7.5)
- Complete civic culture survey (link on Canvas) **no later than noon on 9/11***

14 September – Social capital and democracy

- Reading 1: Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work, Civic Traditions in Modern Italy**

16 September – Social Media, Social Capital and College Life

- Reading 1: Sebastián Valenzuela et al, *Is There Social Capital in a Social Network Site?**
- Reading 2: Keith Hampton et al, *Social Media and the ‘Spiral of Silence’**

19 September – Electoral Rules, Part I – The possibilities

- Reading 1: CGG, Chapter 13

21 September – Electoral Rules, Part II – Choosing (and changing) the Rules

- Reading 1: Carles Boix, *Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies**
- Reading 2: Handout on the 1959 voting system referendum in Ireland*

23 September – Electoral System Design Simulation

- Reading 1: Handout/simulation rules*

26 September – Political Parties & Party Systems I

- Reading 1: Wolfgang C. Müller, Political Parties in Parliamentary Democracies*

28 September – Political Parties & Party Systems II

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 611 – 653

30 September – Executives: Presidents and Parliaments

- Reading 1: CGG, 457 – 465

3 October – **EXAM 1**

5 October – Executives and Government Formation I

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 465 – 499 & 522 – 524
- Reading 2: Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, Divided Government: American is Not “Exceptional”*

7 October – Executives and Government Formation II, Simulation

- Handout/Simulation Guidelines

10 October – NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

12 October – Legislatures I

- Reading 1: Gallagher et al, Chapter 3: Parliaments*
- Reading 2: Handout: John Major and the Maastricht Treaty*

14 October – Legislatures II

- WATCH: Prime Minister’s Questions (link provided on Canvas)*
- Reading 1: Shaun Bevan and Peter John, What Drives UK Prime Minister’s Questions? (excerpt)*

17 October – Veto Players: Federalism I

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 673 – 691

19 October – Veto Players: Federalism II

- Review reading from 10/17

21 October – Veto Players: Courts as Veto Players

- Alec Stone Sweet, Governing with Judges (Excerpt)*

24 October – Types of Dictatorship I

- Reading 1: Paul Brooker, Non-Democratic Regimes*
- Reading 2: Jose Antonia Cheibub et al, Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited*

26 October – Types of Dictatorship II

- Review reading from 10/24

28 October – Authoritarian Elections

- Reading 1: Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, Elections Under Authoritarianism*

31 October – Sources of Legitimacy in Non-Democratic Regimes I

- Reading 1: Paul Brooker, Non-Democratic Regimes*

2 November – Sources of Legitimacy in Non-Democratic Regimes II

- Review reading from 10/31

4 November – Sources of Legitimacy III

- Reading 1: Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities*

7 November – **Exam 2**

9 November – Transitions to Democracy I

- Reading 1: CGG, pp. 277 – 290
- Reading 2: Paul Brooker, Non-Democratic Regimes*

11 November – Transitions to Democracy II

- Review readings from 11/9

14 November – Democracy vs. Dictatorship, Does it Make a Difference?

- CGG, Chapter 9

16 November – Digging Deeper: The Institutional Origins of the Democratic Peace

- Reading 1: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, Domestic Explanations of International Relations
- Reading 2: Seung-Whan Choi, Legislative Constraints: A Path to Peace?

18 November – Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict

- Reading 1: Elaine Denny and Barbara Walter, Ethnicity and Civil War*

21 November – Institutional Solutions to Ethnic Conflict I – Consociational Democracy

- Pippa Norris, Ballots Not Bullets: Testing Theories of Ethnic Conflict, Electoral System, and Democratization*

23 – 25 November – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

28 November – Institutional Solutions to Ethnic Conflict II - Federalism

- Reading 1: CGG, 801 – 805
- Reading 2: Donald Horowitz, The Many Uses of Federalism*

30 November – Institutional Solutions to Ethnic Conflict III - Partition

- Reading 1: Brendan O’Leary, Debating Partition: Justifications and Critiques*

2 December – Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ireland – Background

- Reading 1: Mari Fitzduff and Liam O’Hagan, The Northern Ireland Troubles: INCORE Background Paper
- Reading 2: Richard English, Armed Struggle

5 December – Managing Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ireland, a Simulation Approach

- Reading 1: Simulation Guidelines and Handout

13 December – FINAL EXAM, 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

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