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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
and by appointment

PS 0300: Comparative Politics
Spring 2012
Cathedral of Learning 206
Tuesdays 6:00pm – 8:30pm

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of comparative politics. In so doing, it addresses the variety of political institutions, economic arrangements, and forms of social organization found across the world. The course is organized into two sections. In the first, we will study the theory of comparative politics. In this section, we will consider the possible array of political institutions, development, social cleavages, and economic organization. In the second section, we will apply the substance from the first section to country case studies of advanced industrial democracies (the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan), developing countries (Mexico and Nigeria), post-communist countries (Russia), and non-democracies (China).

Required Text

Sodaro, Michael J. 2007. *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. 3rd Ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

Requirements and Evaluation

Attendance (taken in class daily)	10%
Country Briefs (due in class each Tuesday from January 24 to April 17)	5%
Country Report (via email 5:00pm April 27)	25%
Exam 1 (in class February 14)	20%
Exam 2 (in class March 20)	20%
Exam 3 (in class April 24)	20%

Assignments

Reading

I have assigned weekly readings from your textbook that are intended to prepare you for the week's lecture. It is imperative that you read the assigned pages if you expect to do well in this course. I reserve the right to substitute a pop-quiz on the readings in lieu of an attendance sheet at any time.

Country Briefs

Throughout the semester you will be asked to focus on a single country that will be the subject of your weekly briefs and your final country report. You may **not** choose the United States or any of the country case studies to be covered in this course. Your country selection will be due on **Tuesday January 17**.

Each Tuesday you must submit a one-page brief on a **current domestic** political event in your selected country. The first brief will be due Tuesday January 24 and the final brief will be due Tuesday April 17.

Please choose your country wisely, considering the availability of information on that country in order to avoid finding out that there is a dearth of information on your chosen country. A major challenge faced by comparativists is the lack of information available on a country of interest and, once selected, lack of coverage will not provide sufficient reasoning for changing your country selection.

Acceptable sources for your weekly briefs include:

- Major news pipelines (such as *Reuters* and *Agence France Presse*)
- Most major national (United States) press (such as the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*)
- Some other English-language press (including *The Financial Times* and the *Economist*)
- Domestic press from your selected country in the native language if you speak that language or English-language version, if available (please do not use Google Translate or any other web translation service for this purpose)
- Reputable online news sources (e.g <http://news.bbc.co.uk>)

If in doubt about a news source, please consult with me directly. Wikipedia is **not** an acceptable source, though you are encouraged to mine Wikipedia for references to the original source material.

Be sure to cite all sources.

Country Report

Your final paper will be a country report prepared on your chosen country. In this paper, you will provide a general overview of the politics of your country in comparative context, and you should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The report should be 10 pages at minimum and 15 pages at maximum, excluding your reference list.
 1. I will stop reading at page 15.
- The report will be due via email at 5:00pm on April 27
- You must cite all sources.
- Grades will be weighted relative to the difficulty of the assignment. That is, I will expect a more detailed paper on a Western European country than on a sub-Saharan African country.
- The paper should include the following sections (suggested length of each section in parentheses):
 1. An introduction to the country (1-2 paragraphs)
 2. An overview of the major political and institutional characteristics of the country (4-5 pages). This section should include discussion of the institutions, **not just a list of institutions**. For example: What are the outcomes of a majoritarian

- electoral system? What would we expect to differ if the electoral system was proportional? In short, explain the **significance** of these institutions. As a guideline, consider two points about each institution:
- What is the general outcome of an institution?
 - How does a particular institution work in the society and context under study? Is this a good institution for that society? Why or why not?
3. The country in comparative context (3-4 pages). In this section, you must select one of the countries that we have studied in class to compare to your country. You may select a similar country and compare, or a dissimilar one and contrast. This section is at the heart of what comparative politics is about. This is your opportunity to demonstrate exactly how much you have learned throughout the course of the semester. At a minimum, you should:
- Defend your selection of the comparative case. Why have you selected these cases? Are they similar or different?
 - Compare/contrast the major institutional features.
 - Explain why these differences exist.
 - Discuss what this comparison can tell us about comparative politics. E.g. how generalizable is this to other countries?
 - **NOTE:** if it makes more sense to you, you may combine sections 2 and 3 under the condition that **all** of the elements of both sections are covered.
4. Current Issues (2-3 pages). Based on your weekly country briefs discuss the current issues facing your country. Don't just focus on the specific examples, but rather on the big picture. For example: if your weekly briefings followed anti-government riots, discuss the underlying lack of democracy and/or democratization process. Use the contents of your briefs as **evidence** for that current issue.
5. Reference List (no page limit)

Policies

Attendance

I expect you to attend class sessions. There are 11 class sessions excluding the introductory and exam periods. You must attend 9 sessions to get full credit for attendance (meaning that you get 2 "free" misses). Starting with an attendance record of 8 sessions, the attendance grade is the percent of classes you attended. If you do not intend to stay for the whole class, please do not sign in. As attendance counts towards your grade, doing so constitutes a violation of academic integrity. Additionally, do not have a colleague sign in for you during an absence. This also constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

All of your work must be your own. While I strongly encourage you to study in groups and discuss the contents of this course outside of class, you must be the sole author of your projects and assignments. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Country Briefs
- Country Reports
- Exams

- Attendance Sheet Sign-Ins

Plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will result in an automatic grade of zero for the assignment in question, and may result in failure of the course dependent on the severity of the offense.

Technology

I have no problem with you using laptops in my classroom and, in fact, encourage the use of laptops **if** it will help you for **class purposes** (e.g., for taking notes). That said, if you are liable to become distracted or a distraction to your classmates by using your computer, you should not use your laptop. I reserve the right to prohibit the use of laptops **at any time** if I find that they are becoming a distraction.

I do, however, have zero tolerance for cell phone use during class time. Those texting, checking emails, or checking Facebook (READ: any activity that is not class related) or whose phone rings audibly in class will **not** receive credit for attendance for that class session.

Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both the professor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union (412-648-7890), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Make-Up Exams

Make-up exams will only be given in the case of a legitimate and appropriately documented absence.

Late Assignments

Assignments submitted within 24 hours of the stated deadline will be penalized 10 percentage points. For example, a paper that would have received an 86% if submitted on time will receive a 76%. Assignments submitted more than 24 hours after the stated deadline will receive a grade of zero.

Class Schedule

While exams will take place as scheduled, the course outline is subject to change. You will be notified of any changes in class.

Course Outline

Week 1: January 10, 2012

Topic(s): Welcome
 Course Introduction

Part I: Theory of Comparative Politics

Week 2: January 17, 2012

Topic(s): The Study of Comparative Politics
 Political Culture

Read: Sodaro Chapter 1
 Sodaro Chapter 2
 Sodaro Chapter 12

Due: Country Selection

Week 3: January 24, 2012

Topic(s): Political Ideology
 Political Cleavages
 Political Parties

Read: Sodaro Chapter 13
 Sodaro Chapter 5
 Sodaro Chapter 11

Due: Country Brief 1

Week 4: January 31, 2012

Topic(s): Executive-Legislative Relations
 Elections
 Federalism

Read: Sodaro Chapter 8
 Sodaro Chapter 6

Due: Country Brief 2

Week 5: February 7, 2012

Topic(s): Political Economy
 Development and Under-Development
 Exam Review

Read: Sodaro Chapter 14
 Sodaro Chapter 15

Due: Country Brief 3

Week 6: February 14, 2012

Exam 1

Part II: Country Case Studies

Week 7: February 21, 2012

Topic(s): United Kingdom

Read: Sodaro Chapter 16

Due: Country Brief 4

Week 8: February 28, 2012

Topic(s): France

Read: Sodaro Chapter 17

Due: Country Brief 5

Week 9: March 6, 2012 – No Class (Spring Recess)

Week 10: March 13, 2012

Topic(s): Germany
Exam Review

Read: Sodaro Chapter 18

Due: Country Brief 6

Week 11: March 20, 2012

Exam 2

Week 12: March 27, 2012

Topic(s): Japan

Read: Sodaro Chapter 19

Due: Country Brief 7

Week 13: April 3, 2012

Guest Lecturer: Alejandro Trelles

Topic(s): Mexico

Read: Sodaro Chapter 22 (pp. 702-733)

Due: Country Brief 8

Week 14: April 10, 2012

Topic(s): Nigeria
 Russia

Read: Sodaro Chapter 23 (pp. 762-783)
 Sodaro Chapter 20

Due: Country Brief 9

Week 15: April 17, 2012

Topic(s): Russia (cont.)
 China
 Exam Review

Read: Sodaro Chapter 21

Due: Country Brief 10

Week 16: April 24, 2014

Exam 3