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

### **PS 0300: Comparative Politics**

Spring 2014

Cathedral of Learning 221

Mondays 6:00pm – 8:30pm

#### **Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce students to comparative politics, which is the study of domestic politics. As such, the course will cover 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 theories 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. The purpose of this section is to understand how these institutions function in practice. The first set of country cases will consist of Western European advanced industrial democracies (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany), as many of the theories of comparative politics were derived from the study of these countries. The second set of country cases has been chosen to study the degree to which these theories apply outside of the Western European democracies by considering a non-European advanced industrial democracy (Japan), developing countries (Mexico and Nigeria), a post-communist country (Russia), and a non-democracy (China).

#### **Contact**

Please contact me using the gmail address listed above as opposed to my Pitt email address.

#### **Required Text**

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

Note: The textbook is available in the bookstore. If you choose to purchase this book elsewhere, please ensure that you purchase the third edition.

#### **Requirements and Evaluation**

Attendance (taken in class daily)	10%
Country Briefs (via email <i>before class</i> each Monday specified in course outline)	5%
Country Report (via email 5:00pm April 25)	25%
Exam 1 (in class February 17)	20%
Exam 2 (in class March 24)	20%
Exam 3 (in class April 21)	20%

#### **Grading Scale**

A+	= 98-100	C+	= 78-79
A	= 93-97	C	= 73-77
A-	= 90-92	C-	= 70-72
B+	= 88-89	D+	= 68-69
B	= 83-87	D	= 63-67
B-	= 80-82	D-	= 60-62
		F	= ≤ 59

## 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 **Monday January 13**.

Each Monday in which there is a regularly scheduled class you must submit a one-page brief on a **current domestic** political event in your selected country. The first brief will be due **Monday January 27** and the final brief will be due **Monday April 14**. While I encourage you to keep up with the domestic events in your country each week in the semester, there will be no brief due on exam days or holidays. Please submit your brief to me *via email* (to my gmail address) **before class**.

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. I am happy to help you in your selection process.

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 using the Chicago Manual of Style.

### Country Report

Your final paper will be a country report prepared on your chosen country and will be due *via email* (to my gmail address) at **5:00pm** on **Friday April 25**. In this paper, you will provide a general overview of the politics of your country in comparative context. The paper should include the following sections:

1. An introduction to the country.
2. An overview of the major political and institutional characteristics of the country. 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.

3. The country in comparative context. 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:
  - a. Defend your selection of the comparative case. Why have you selected these cases? Are they similar or different?
  - b. Compare/contrast the major institutional features.
  - c. Explain why these differences exist.
  - d. Discuss what this comparison can tell us about comparative politics. (e.g., How generalizable is this to other countries?)
4. Current issues faced by your country. 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.

Many of the concepts that you must address in this paper will be foreign to you at this stage. However, within the next few weeks, you should have a strong grasp on each of these concepts, as we will cover the major theoretical concepts of comparative politics in the first section of the course. More detailed instructions will be provided at the end of the first section of the course.

## **Policies**

### Attendance

I expect you to attend class sessions. There are 10 class sessions excluding the introductory and exam periods. You must attend 8 of these sessions to get full credit for attendance (meaning that you get 2 "free" misses). Starting with an attendance record of 7 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, and 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. For further information, please refer to the University's academic integrity policy: <http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>

### 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 (such as illness) 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	Topics	Read	Due
Week 1: 6 Jan 2014	Course Introduction		
Part I: Theories of Comparative Politics			
Week 2: 13 Jan 2014	Study of Comparative Politics Political Culture Political Ideologies Political Cleavages	Sodaro Chapters 1-3 Sodaro Chapter 12 Sodaro Chapter 13	Country Selection
Week 3: 20 Jan 2014	No Class (In observance of Dr. Martin Luther King’s Birthday)		
Week 4: 27 Jan 2014	Systems of Governance  Political Parties	Sodaro Chapters 4-7 and 9 Sodaro Chapter 11	Brief 1
Week 5: 3 Feb 2014	Executive-Legislative Relations Elections Federalism	Sodaro Chapter 8	Brief 2
Week 6: 10 Feb 2014	Political Economy Development Exam 1 Review	Sodaro Chapter 14 Sodaro Chapter 15	Brief 3
Week 7: 17 Feb 2014	Exam 1		
Part II: Country Case Studies			
Week 8: 24 Feb 2014	The United Kingdom	Sodaro Chapter 16	Brief 4
Week 9: 3 Mar 2014	France	Sodaro Chapter 17	Brief 5
Week 10: 10 Mar 2014	No Class (Spring Break)		
Week 11: 17 Mar 2014	Germany Exam 2 Review	Sodaro Chapter 18	Brief 6
Week 12: 24 Mar 2014	Exam 2		
Week 13: 31 Mar 2014	Japan Nigeria	Sodaro Chapter 19 Sodaro Chapter 23 (p 723-783)	Brief 7
Week 14: 7 Apr 2014	Mexico  Russia	Sodaro Chapter 22 (p 702-733) Sodaro Chapter 20	Brief 8
Week 15: 14 Apr 2014	China Exam 3 Review	Sodaro Chapter 21	Brief 9
Week 16: 21 Apr 2014	Exam 3		
25 Apr 2014	Country Report Due at 5:00 pm via email		