

Political Science 100: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Winter Quarter 2007

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What is politics? What do people try to get through politics? How are peoples ruled? Who rules? Who doesn't? Political Science 100 gets at these questions by introducing students to the basics of politics and political science. This course adopts a conceptual and analytic approach to comparative politics, examining first the relationships between societies and their politics, then examining the role of various political institutions and constitutional forms in shaping politics and political interactions, and finally examining different kinds of political actors and the roles they play in different political systems. In the process of examining these phenomena, the politics of particular countries are examined in detail.

Goals

The presentation of this course, and the evaluation of students' efforts in it, will be tailored to the following aims:

- Students will acquire an understanding of the basic elements of politics and policy-making.
- Students will develop their powers of political and social analysis, with an emphasis on logical argument and the effective use of evidence in drawing conclusions.
- Students will develop their faculties in writing and speaking about politics and political phenomena.

The University extends the course and any requirements associated with it because "International Issues courses help students become educated, productive, and principled citizens of their nation and the world" and "Courses in social science help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions." OSU's aims in offering the course, therefore, are that

1. Students exhibit an understanding of political, economic, cultural, physical, and social differences among the nations of the world, including a specific examination of non-Western culture.
2. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.
3. Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.
4. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

Please note that none of these goals involve the advancement of anyone's political or policy opinions (including those of the instructor). While I encourage political activity and the fulfillment of one's citizenship duties outside of the classroom, a political science course is not a proper forum for the airing of one's personal politics.

Course Design

In keeping with these goals, there are two major components to this course.

- The first is the mastery of basic information about politics and political science. This information is presented through a set of readings and through in-class lectures/discussions. Mastery of this information is evaluated through quizzes, exams, and writing assignments.
- The second component of this course is individualized research into the basic workings of a particular state's politics. In the first week of class, each student will select a country to study, other than the USA. Thereafter, students will learn about the politics of that country, by researching its basic political characteristics and by following political news from that country for the remainder of the quarter. This component is evaluated through a series of news quizzes and three short papers in which students describe their country's politics using the concepts learned in class.

Students need to come to class prepared to learn and participate—which means, at minimum, having read the assigned materials and thought about the questions for that day on the syllabus.

Assignments and Evaluation

Quizzes, 20% of final grade: Throughout the quarter there will be a series of quizzes, of two types: some will cover current events in a particular foreign country, and others will address reading assignments. Quizzes will be administered on randomly (but not arbitrarily!). The two lowest quiz grades will be thrown out. Those remaining, weighted evenly, will constitute 20% of the grade. *Make-up quizzes* are available only for those students with valid excuses for being absent (illness, deaths-in-the-family, etc.). Those wishing to make up a quiz must inform me of their absence by no later than the start of the relevant class, and must at the same time request a make-up quiz provisional on one being given (e-mail notification is preferred). If the instructor accepts the request, the make up will be given at 9:30 AM at my office on the day of the next regularly scheduled course at which the student expects to be present. Instructor may request that documentation for the excuse be provided prior to the make-up. An example current events quiz is provided in syllabus appendix A.

Mid-term, 1 February, 20% of final grade: In class on 1 February, students will take a mid-term examination covering course materials from readings and in-class discussion encountered to that point. A study guide will be provided. Those needing a make-up final must contact the instructor no later than the beginning of the exam, and be prepared to provide supporting documentation for their excuse. Except in truly exceptional circumstances, the make-up exam will be given within one week of the regularly scheduled exam. Delaying the administration of the exam beyond a week may incur the application of lateness penalties.

Final Exam, 12 March at 9:30 AM, 25% of final grade: In the normal room but at this different time, students will take a final examination focused mostly on readings and in-class material from the second half of the term but with some cumulative components. Students needing to reschedule the exam must contact the instructor at the earliest possible moment.

Three 1-page country papers, due 30 January, 15 February, and 6 March, respectively, 15% of final grade: Students will apply concepts from class to a particular country. Grading is based on proper use of concepts, factual correctness of information, and writing quality. Further instructions are in syllabus appendix B. Five percent (5%) of credit is lost each day a paper is late, to a limit of

40% or 8 days. Proper citation and style, including special annotated bibliographies (see appendix B), are not optional and absences or improprieties will influence grading.

One 2-page persuasive essay on institutions, due 27 February, 10% of final grade: Students will address one of the questions found in syllabus appendix C. Grading is based on the quality and effectiveness of argumentation, effective use concepts and of factually correct information, and writing quality. Five percent (5%) of credit is lost each day a paper is late, to a limit of 40% or 8 days. Proper citation and style, including bibliographies, are not optional and absences or improprieties will influence grading.

Participation, 10% of final grade: Participation consists of being an active, professionalized student. The principal means one demonstrates this is by being an active participant in class-room discussions, which are opportunities for questions and comments that demonstrating knowledge of assigned readings and active consideration of them. Those who are uncomfortable with in-class discussion can demonstrate these qualities through visits to office hours, e-mails, etc. While attendance does not determine this grade, chronic non-attendance limits the degree to which it is possible to make these judgments, and will thereby negatively influence the evaluation of participation. A provisional evaluation of participation will be made available around the middle of the term.

Readings

There is one text available for purchase,

Frank L. Wilson, *Concepts and Issues in Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Comparative Analysis* (Second Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Other readings may be found through the university library databases. If on campus, typing in the persistent link should get you to the article, if not, you may need to log-in to off-campus access via the university library site (lib.ohio-state.edu), click on “databases”, select the appropriate database, and search by publication and date.

Grades

Grades are assigned to both individual pieces of work and cumulatively. The grade scale I use for both is below (note that “g” refers to the numerical grade you receive). I do not usually curve grades, but reserve the right to do so if I deem it necessary. All material is graded on its own terms, rather than through comparison with other students’ work. For the cumulative grades, I do not round: what you get is what you get.

100>g≥93: A	90>g≥88: B+	80>g≥78: C+	70>g≥68: D+	60>g: E
	88>g≥83: B	78>g≥73: C	68>g≥63: D	
93>g≥90: A-	83>g≥80: B	73>g≥70: C-	63>g≥60: D	

The numbers, of course, have a substantive meaning as well. My meanings are based in the university rules (see the Board of Trustees Website, <http://trustees.osu.edu/rules8/ru8-21.html>), but are more specific to the assignments I give:

“A,” “A-“ The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives in an excellent manner. This means that you met all of the basic requirements at an at least uniformly good level AND some in a very good (or better) level.

“B+,” “B,” “B-“ The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives in an above-average manner. This means that you met all of the basic requirements, and at least some at a good level or better.

“C+,” “C,” “C-“ The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives in an average manner. This means that you met the basic requirements.

“D+,” “D” The instructor judged the student to have satisfied the stated objectives in a low but acceptable manner. You fulfilled at least some, but perhaps not all requirements.

“E” The instructor judged the student not to have satisfied the stated objectives. Few, if any, requirements were fulfilled.

Cheating and plagiarism are, of course, unacceptable, and appropriate action will be taken if it is suspected. Proper citations and standards of integrity are not optional. If you have questions about what this means, please ask the instructor.

Note on disabilities:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and affected students should contact the instructor to inform him of their needs as soon as possible.

Changes to the Syllabus:

In the event that there is a need for there to be any changes to the syllabus, an e-mail will be sent to all students' name.xx@osu.edu e-mail accounts (as maintained by the registrar's list), and will be mentioned in class at two class meetings. Changes become effective immediately after their second mention in class, or the sending of the e-mail, whichever comes last.

Cancellation of Class: In the event that the instructor needs to cancel class, an e-mail will be sent to all students' name.xx@osu.edu e-mail accounts (as maintained by the registrar's list) prior to class time.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings

Section 1: The Nature and Foundations of Politics

Thursday 4 January

True Intro/Politics: The interaction of people and institutions; and the comparative method
No Assignment

Tuesday 9 January

Politics, Power, Legitimacy and Authority
What is politics? What is power, and how does power work?
Wilson 2-14

Thursday 11 January

The State
What is the state? Why does the state matter? What different kinds of states are there? What alternatives are there to the state?

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 17 (“On the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth”). Available, for instance, at Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3207>

Tuesday 16 January

Desires and interests: The fodder of politics

Why are there political conflicts? How do political conflicts grow out of individual and social desires, interests, and commitments?

Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 50 (1943), pp. 370-396. Available at: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

Recommended: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Thursday 18 January

Conflict within the state: cleavages

How and when do a state's particular conflicts shape its politics? What kinds of cultural cleavages exist that affect the shape and character of states? Who is fully "in" the state and who is not?

Wilson 40-52

Robert Mnookin and Alain Verbeke, "Bye bye Belgium?" *International Herald Tribune*, 20 December 2006.

John Lloyd, "Ireland's Uncertain Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, (Vol. 77, No. 5, (Sept/Oct 1998) pp.109-122.

Optional: Chaim Kaufmann, "Separating Iraqis, Saving Iraq." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4, (Jul/Aug 2006), pp. 156-160.

Tuesday 23 January

Economic Cleavages

What kinds of economic cleavages exist that affect the shape and character of states?

Wilson 30-39;

"A Tale of Two Frances," *The Economist*. 4/1/2006, Vol. 378 Issue 8471, p22-24

Thursday 25 January

Political Culture

What else affects how people relate to their political system and how people address these conflicts?

Wilson 22-6

Tuesday 30 January

Mid-term

How much do you know?

Section 2: Political Institutions

Thursday 1 February

Intro to political institutions/Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems

Section Question: How do institutions, in themselves, affect the shape and character of politics within a state? Day question: how do democratic institutions differ? Why do they differ? How do these differences affect policy and governance?

Wilson 154-163

Tuesday 6 February

Electoral Systems

What are the different ways people can vote? What are the pros and cons associated with these different systems?

Wilson 55-75; (cont'd next page)

Electoral Reform Society Website:

<http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/votingsystems/systems2.htm>

<http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/votingsystems/systems3.htm>

<http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/votingsystems/systems4.htm>

Thursday 8 February

Non-Democracies

What are non-democracies like? Considering the different types of non-democracy, where are their similarities and differences from democracies? What are their particular strengths and weaknesses? Why might some people prefer non-democratic/less than fully democratic systems?

Wilson 138-51

Joseph Kahn, "In Graft Inquiry, Chinese See a Shake-Up Coming" *New York Times*, October 4, 2006 (Wed). Section A, Page 1, Column 3.

"Toughs at the Top: The Last Personality Cults," *The Economist*, December 18, 2004.

Tuesday 13 February

Federalism Vs. Unitary States

How do unitary and federal systems differ? What are their relative strengths and weaknesses? Do semi-federal systems address these weaknesses effectively? What conditions make one system or the other more desirable?

Wilson 164-9

Section 3: Political Actors

Thursday 15 February

Interested Actors: The Political Party

Section Question: How do people interact with political institutions, in the context of their interest, ideas, and commitments? Day Question: What is a political party? How do political parties differ from state to state? What different kinds of political parties are there? What roles do political parties play in different systems?

Wilson 79-96;

Tuesday 20 February

Interested Actors: Political Party Systems

Many parties versus few: why do different countries have different numbers of parties, and what does it matter? What affects the number of political parties?

Wilson 97-104

Thursday 22 February

Interested Actors: Interest Groups

What are the roles of interest groups, like business associations and labor unions? How are they organized, across different states? How do they relate to other social and political actors?

Wilson 105-118

Tuesday 27 February

Government Actors (politicians, military, bureaucrats--i.e., the rulers) and State Strength

Who are these people? How did they come to hold these positions? How do they relate to one another? How does the government relate to non-governmental actors? Who really rules? What determines who rules?

Wilson 123-137, 171-182

John L. Thornton, "China's Leadership Gap," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 85, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2006) pp. 133-40.

Thursday 1 March

Civil Society Actors and Social Movements

What is civil society? Who are civil society actors? When are they able to influence government policies?

Wilson 118-121;

Tuesday 6 March

Changing Systems: Revolution

When does change come to a political system? What problems are encountered when a state tries to change its political system? When are these problems greater or lesser?

Wilson 202-218

Thursday 8 March

Not a State and Not Not a State: Governance in the European Union

What is the EU? How is it governed? How is it like a state and not like a state? Is it the future?

"Europe in Twelve Lessons", particularly lesson 4, "How does the EU Work," and also lessons 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7. Found at:

http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/index_en.htm

Final Examination: Monday, 12 March, 9:30-11:18 AM

Syllabus Appendix “A” Current Events Quizzes

One part of your research into another country’s politics is following the political news from that country throughout the quarter. As described in the syllabus, you will be periodically quizzed about events in those countries. The form that will be used (subject to minor change) is reproduced at the end of this appendix.

Not all news sources are of equal quality and thus suitable to this assignment. You are to use only the best quality news sources, generally derived from national broadsheet newspapers or national broadcasters. This is because these sources are the most likely to report in greatest depth and with greatest reliability. To help you in this, I have prepared a discussion of generally acceptable news sources available through the internet. Not all quality journalism attempts to be entirely unbiased, however, (this is generally a question of national journalistic culture) so in my discussions I try to note when you might be alert to these biases. Sources other than those noted need to be approved by me before used in a quiz. I would prefer that you not use local papers like the *Columbus Dispatch*, tabloid papers like the British *Daily Mail*, or the *USA Today*, due to the superficiality of their coverage of events in other countries (and, in the case of the tabloids, their journalistic unreliability).

All those listed are available on-line. Not all are in English—think of this as an opportunity to make use of the foreign language you studied in high school or college. Some are free, some require free registration, and some require subscription. Some of those requiring subscription may be available through Lexis-Nexis Academic, a database available through the library.

General News Sources:

The *Economist*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Times* (of London), *Le Monde* (of Paris), and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Notes:

The *Economist* has a strong Europe-North America focus, and is probably the best English-language newsmagazine; it is certainly the most influential. The American papers tend to focus on the US and those places where the US has strong interests—US, Western Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. The *Los Angeles Times* has a stronger Asia-Pacific focus than the others. Because the *Wall Street Journal* has such a tight business focus, I do not recommend it for political coverage. *The Times* focuses on the UK, Europe, and generally on the old British Empire (where there are stronger British interests)—so it has more coverage of English-speaking Africa, South Asia, the British Caribbean, and the old Dominions (Canada, Australia) than US papers do. *Le Monde* (available only in French) focuses on France, North Africa, Francophone Africa, the Middle East (with a greater emphasis on the Arab states and particularly Lebanon, a formerly French colony, than is evident in the major English-language press), and sometimes has better coverage of Russia and central Asia than other European/North American news sources. The BBC covers pretty much everything, though not in as great a depth as the newspapers might, nor with the same level of detail.

Regionally Focused News Sources:

Europe: In addition to the general sources noted above and the country-specific papers noted below, the German papers (though usually un-translated) tend to cover central European countries, including Scandinavia, in greater depth than the North American, British, or French press. All of the Northern European countries (the Low Countries, Scandinavia) have multiple quality papers.

Africa: Beyond the papers of the former ruling colonial powers, the South African press is probably the best source for African news coverage, owing to its relative sophistication and, importantly, to its press freedom.

Middle East: The Israeli *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post* cover the Eastern-Mediterranean-rim countries fairly well, and have complete English editions. Lebanese, Jordanian, and Egyptian papers also cover the region effectively, though the Egyptian press is subject to heavy government pressures, the Jordanians subject to less overt pressures, and the Lebanese papers are deeply implicated in intense domestic political struggles. *Al Jazerra* and *Al-Arabiya*, Arab satellite television stations with substantial English translations on their websites, cover most of the Arab world fairly effectively—though paradoxically, their coverage of their home bases is said to be less good. The Iranian press is independent but subject to tremendous government pressures; its social coverage is generally better and less pressured than its political coverage, which one should not expect to challenge the ruling powers, particularly when translated into English.

Latin and South America: Most countries have good national papers, but additional coverage can be found in the Spanish, Mexican, Argentine, and Brazilian press.

North America: The American papers tend to ignore Mexican politics unless there is either an on-going election or an assassination, and to forget completely that Canada exists. Best to go to the national papers themselves.

South Asia: The all-India English-language papers provide the best and deepest coverage of South Asia, though the India-Pakistan antagonism can sometimes cloud coverage of Pakistan.

South East Asia: I have no strong advice to give for this region; one might consult the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Singapore's *Straits Times*, and *The Australia* for English-language coverage, as may some Indonesian outlets.

East Asia: The best regional coverage can be found in the Japanese and Hong Kong papers; the NYT and the LAT sometimes have excellent investigative reporting on China, as well.

News By Country

Argentina	<i>La Nacion, La Prensa</i>
Australia	<i>The Australian</i>
Brazil	<i>Jornal do Brasil, Folha de Sao Paulo, O Estado de S. Paulo, O Globo</i> (all Portuguese) <i>The Globe and Mail</i> (Centrist but Liberal-party leaning), <i>The National Post</i> (centrist? rightist?), <i>The Toronto Star, The Montreal Gazette</i> (English), <i>Le Devoir</i> , (French, sovereigntist) <i>La Presse</i> (French, federalist)
Canada	<i>Le Figaro</i> (French, center-right), <i>Le Monde</i> (French, center-left), <i>L'Humanite</i> (French with a small English site; Communist/Socialist); Radio France International (has English translations)
France	<i>Deutsche Welle</i> (national broadcaster with English site), <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i> (German) (conservative/right-leaning), <i>Sueddeutsche Zeitung</i> (classical liberal) (German), <i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i> (left leaning), <i>Berliner Zeitung</i> (German, center-left); <i>Der Tagesspiegel</i> (liberal)
Germany	<i>The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Hindu</i> (all centrist, elite-oriented English papers)
India	<i>Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner</i>
Ireland	<i>Haaretz</i> (dovish, Labor-leaning), <i>Jerusalem Post</i> (hawkish, Likud-leaning)
Israel	<i>Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, La Repubblica</i>
Italy	

Japan	<i>The Mainichi Daily News, The Asahi Shinbun, Nihon Keisai Shinbun, and Daily Yomiuri</i> (sometimes "Shimbun"); Yomiuri is biggest in the world but translates little, Mainichi translates more, Asahi is most prestigious, and Nihon Keizai focuses on business; NHK (the national broadcaster) might also be useful
Mexico	<i>El Universal, Reforma</i> (possibly rightist), <i>La Jornada</i> (center-left),
Pakistan	<i>The Dawn</i> (government controlled/heavily censored)
Peoples' Republic of China	<i>Peoples' Daily</i> (government controlled/heavily censored); the <i>South China Morning Post</i> from Hong Kong, however, operates under press freedom
Russia	<i>Pravda, Izvestia, Novya Gazeta</i> (most free?)
Singapore	<i>Straits Times</i> (heavily supervised by the state)
South Africa	<i>Mail and Guardian, The Sunday Times</i> (of South Africa),
South Korea	<i>Jong Ang Ilbo</i> (has English Translations) (generally right leaning/tends toward the Korean Grand National Congress Party)
Spain	<i>El Pais, El Mundo</i> (Spanish)
United Kingdom	<i>Financial Times</i> (think European Wall Street Journal), <i>The Times</i> (generally centrist, non-partisan), <i>The Telegraph</i> (right-leaning), <i>The Guardian</i> (moderate left-leaning/'an unofficial organ of the Labor Party'), <i>The Independent</i> (further left-leaning), <i>The Scotsman</i> (Scottish focus but fairly conservative); BBC (government broadcaster)

Name

Date

Describe a piece of political news from your focus country that has occurred in the past 7 days. Succinctly describe what happened, who the key actors were, and why it matters. Up to 5% extra credit available if you convincingly connect it to a topic covered in class within the past 7 days.

Source of information:

*Grading is based on the veracity of the description and the effectiveness of the explanation of political significance. Unsuitable sourcing may negatively influence the grade.

Syllabus Appendix “B” Country Papers

1 page each, due **30 January, 15 February, and 6 March.**

General Comments:

There are two educational purposes for these papers. First, they are opportunities for you to apply the ideas from class to the real world, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the politics of a particular country. Second, they are opportunities for you to gain experience in effectively collecting and summarizing information from reputable sources, and using analytical concepts as a means of better understanding and organizing that information.

This being the case, I am again very interested in the sources you use. **To this end, I am requiring that you provide an annotated bibliography. After each citation, you are to justify why you used that source, and the degree to which the information it provides should be trusted. In using your sources, start from a posture of skepticism rather than trust.** In particular, I encourage you to shy away from two kinds of sources: websites created by private organizations or individuals which present materials not published in any other form, and encyclopedias. Websites in this category often have incomplete or biased materials, and are much more prone to factual errors, because there is no one involved in the preparation of the materials with an interest in ensuring veracity. They may also be produced by people or groups with axes to grind or agendas to advance, neither of which are particularly good for information quality. I encourage you to avoid encyclopedias because, while the information is generally ok, there are better sources. And, you are in college, and as a matter of principle, it’s probably best that you come to use sources other than those you used in grade school.

The CIA world fact book (online) is acceptable, as is the Handbook of Political Risk (see library reference). Newspapers, particularly those described in appendix A, are fine, as are books (including the Library of Congress Country Studies series, though they may be out of date in some cases), the websites of state governments and international organizations, and quality journals and magazines. If you have questions, ask. My primary advice is to make acquaintance with the library.

Paper 1: Due 30 January

Describe the most important cleavage(s) in your focus country, and identify at least one set of political conflicts or decisions that are influenced by these divisions.

Paper 2: Due 15 February

Describe the principal government institutions in your focus country, and categorize it in terms of democracy/dictatorship, unitary vs. federalism, presidential vs. parliamentary, etc. Explain why your categorization is correct.

Paper 3: Due 6 March

Who are the most important political actors in your focus country? Why is it this group of actors, rather than other possibly politically important ones?

Syllabus Appendix “C”
Persuasive Essay on Political Institutions

2 pages, due 27 February.

The educational purpose for this assignment is for you to gain experience writing a persuasive essay about politics framed by a clear argument, transparent logic, effective use of evidence, and sound conclusions.

Pick a question from the list below, and answer it.

- **Which electoral system (single member, proportional representation, etc.) is best? OR, when are the various electoral systems best suited to a country?**
- **Which party system (strong parties versus weak, OR one versus two versus more) is better? OR, when is strong party system better than a weak party system? OR, when does a multi-party system work better than a two or a one party system (and vice versa)?**
- **Which political system (presidential, parliamentary, mixed, etc., etc.) is better? OR, when is a presidential system better than a parliamentary system or a mixed system (and vice versa)?**

In this essay the focus is on your argumentation, but you still need to keep your concepts and facts straight—so if and when you use examples, be sure you’re right and be sure to cite sources. A standard (un-annotated bibliography) will be acceptable for this assignment; the above advice on sources stands.