

Political Science 100
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
WINTER 2006

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-1:00, or by special appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course serves as an introduction to the fundamental concepts in political science and government, presented in an explicitly comparative framework. The objectives of the course are to introduce to undergraduate students a variety of forms of government and politics in a select group of countries. We will examine the different political institutions, processes and issues found within these countries, and analyze how this knowledge can help us address two fundamental questions:

- 1) How are political institutions created, consolidated, and improved?
- 2) How does the role of the state differ both in terms of a) creating economic growth within a nation, and b) improving the socio-economic levels its citizens?

The course will compare politics, institutions, and socioeconomic developments in Germany, Russia, Mexico, and Venezuela. In addition, we will use the United States as a background case against which to contrast our findings. We will learn that every one of these countries, including the United States, have throughout history experimented with a variety of solutions to their political and economic challenges, and that no easy answers or solutions exist as to one "magic formula" regarding a country's political and economic setup.

COURSE STRUCTURE

We will only meet twice a week, and it is therefore very important that you do not miss class. Attendance is mandatory, and will together with participation account for 10 percent of your final grade.

The reading load for this class is not excessive, and you are expected to complete assigned readings ahead of class. Not only will this greatly facilitate class discussion; you will learn that it makes the lectures far more interesting and easier to follow.

This introductory course is organized in a lecture format. However, student participation in class is strongly encouraged. Remember, there is no such thing as a stupid question. The only thing I ask of you is that you are respectful of the opinions of your fellow students, no matter how much you may disagree with their arguments. The world has never been more exciting, and the subjects we will cover in this class are likely to open up for a variety of discussions.

REQUIRED READINGS

Only one textbook will be used:

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, and William Joseph, eds. 2006. Introduction to Comparative Politics, Fourth Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company). ISBN. 0-618-60447-2

This new 4th edition of **KKJ** has been ordered at SBX bookstore, and should be available around Jan. 10 as a paperback. However, you may also want to check e.g. Internet retailers such as www.half.com or www.amazon.com for a possibly better bargain. The second required reading is a **Zip Packet**, consisting of two separate readings, and is available at SBX at a very reasonable price.

In addition to the course book, a few further readings will be required. These readings will be put on reserve in hard copy at the OSU Library. Also, most of them will be made available electronically at the OSU Library's Web site. Go to <http://library.osu.edu/index.php>, then to "Reserves by Course" or Professor, log on, download the readings, and print or read these articles online. This service has been made available in order to reduce the cost of class material; please do take advantage of this opportunity and read these works before class.

In addition to the regular material, we will as a class occasionally address current events in the countries under examination and others. Students are for this reason strongly encouraged to read articles on current political developments in reputable international newspapers. Examples of these include the *International Herald Tribune* (www.ihf.com), the British newspaper *The Guardian* (www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/), and the New York Times (www.nytimes.com).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS - ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The grades for this course will be assigned based on a quiz, a midterm, a final exam, and attendance/participation.

Participation	10%
Midterm	20%
Essay	30%
Final Exam	40%

All exams will be cumulative, though more heavily focused on new material. The quiz and exams will principally be in short answer and essay format.

How to succeed: To excel in this course, you will need to do more than memorize and reproduce information; it will be essential that you make arguments in response to exam questions, and defend your position with evidence. It is very important to note that you will not be graded on the position you take – that is, whether you think me or your fellow peers will agree with you or not. Rather, you will be graded on the strength of your argument, as well as the factual accuracy of your answers. There will be a final essay in this course; specific instructions for the essay will be given later.

To ensure fairness, make-up exams will only exceptionally be administered in cases of a documented emergency or similar unforeseen events. If at all possible, please contact me ahead of time if you can't make it to class or take an exam.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The university rules are quite simple: Do not cheat, and do not plagiarize. Academic dishonesty has become very easy to catch, and you should avoid it at all costs. Infractions will be punished as provided for under university policy. If you are unsure as to what constitutes a violation, please do not hesitate to inquire with me. Details of the university academic honesty policy are available on the OSU website (www.osu.edu).

ASSISTANCE

It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to make their needs known to the instructor and to seek available assistance. Please notify instructor as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of the quarter. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request. Contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, Ph. 292-2880 for additional assistance.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

NOTE: KKJ page numbers refer to the 3rd edition – we will address page changes in due time.

Week 1

Tuesday, Jan 3: **Introduction: Overview of class contents and requirements**

Thursday, Jan 5: **Thematic Class: Introduction to “democracy” and “political economy**

Required readings for this topic:

* KKJ, pp. 5-23.

* Friedman, Milton. *“Capitalism and Freedom”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 1-36. Available via the OSU Library Web Site.

* W. Phillips Shively. *Comparative Governance* (McGraw-Hill, 1996), Ch: “Political Conflict,” pp. 42-63. Available via the OSU Library Web Site.

Week 2

Tuesday, Jan 10 **Thematic Class II.** Friedman’s “Capitalism and Freedom.”

Thursday, Jan 12: **The United States in Comparative Context**

Required readings for this topic:

* Steinmo, Sven. “American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions?” pp. 106-131. Available at SBX and at Library Reserve

* Cohen, Jeffrey. *Politics and Economic Policy in the United States* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), pp. 26-53. Available at SBX and at Library Reserve

Week 3

Tuesday, Jan 17: **The United States in Comparative Context Part 2.** Steinmo. **QUIZ.**

Thursday, Jan 19 **Germany**, Political Institutions and History

Required readings for this topic:

* KKJ, pp. 136-149; 159-184 (covers mostly political institutions)

* KKJ, pp. 149-159; 184-191 (covers mostly political economy)

Week 4

Tuesday, Jan 24 **Germany**, Political Economy

Thursday, Jan 26 **Germany**, and **REVIEW SESSION** for the midterm

Week 5

Tuesday, Jan 31 **MID TERM EXAM.**

Thursday, Feb 2 **Movie: To be announced**

Week 6:

Tuesday, Feb 7 **Thematic class: Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism**

Thursday, Feb 9 **Russia**, Political Institutions and History

Required readings for this topic:

* KKJ, pp. 345-360; 371-395 (covers mostly political institutions))

* KKJ, pp. 360-371; 396-406 (covers mostly political economy))

Week 7

Tuesday, Feb 14 **Russia**, Political Economy

Thursday, Feb 16 **Mexico**, Political Institutions and History

Required readings for this topic:

* KKJ, pp. 463-477; 487-506 (covers mostly political institutions)

* KKJ, pp. 477-487; 506-509 (covers mostly political economy)

Week 8

Tuesday, Feb 21 **Mexico**, Political Economy

Thursday, Feb 23 **Mexico**, wrap-up, and current issues

Week 9

Tuesday, Feb 28 **Cuba**, Political Institutions and History

Thursday, March 2 **Cuba**, Political Economy

Required readings for this topic:

To be announced. Will be made available in hard copy at OSU Library reserve, and via the library Web Site

Week 10

Tuesday, March 7 **Cuba**, wrap-up, and current issues

Thursday, March 9 **REVIEW SESSION. FINAL PAPER DUE**

→ **MARCH 16 FINAL EXAMINATION.** Note **NEW** hours: 1:30-3:18. Regular Classroom ←
(To be confirmed)

In addition, according to GEC guidelines, further learning objectives and goals of this course include:

“Diversity: International Issues courses help students become educated, productive, and principled citizens of their nation and the world

- *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.*

Courses in social science help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions.

- *Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.*
- *Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.*
- *Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making “*