

Political Science 100
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Autumn 2005

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-3:30, or by 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. 2004. Introduction to Comparative Politics, Third Edition. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company). ISBN. 0-618-21446-1.

KKJ has been ordered at SBX bookstore, and should be available at a somewhat reasonable price 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.

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 quite 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.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1

Sept 22: **Introduction: Overview of class contents and requirements**

Week 2

Sept 27- 29 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 Library Web Site.

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

Week 3

Oct 4 **The United States in Comparative Context**

Oct 6 **The United States in Comparative Context Part 2. QUIZ.**

Required readings for this topic:

* Steinmo, Sven. “American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions?” pp. 106-131. Available via the Library Web Site.

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

Week 4

Oct 11 **Germany**

Oct 13 **Germany**

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 5

Oct 18 Germany, and review Session for the midterm

Oct 20 **MID TERM EXAM.**

Week 6:

Oct 25 **Movie: To be announced**

Oct 27 **Thematic class: Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism**

Week 7

Nov 1 **Russia**

Nov 3 **Russia**

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 8

Nov 8 **Mexico**

Nov 10 **Mexico**

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 9

Nov 15 **Mexico**

Nov 17 **Venezuela**

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

Nov 22 **Venezuela**

Nov 24 **THANKSGIVING DAY, UNIVERSITY CLOSED**

Week 11

Nov 29 **Venezuela**

Dec 1 **REVIEW SESSION. FINAL PAPER DUE**

Week 12

Dec 6 **FINAL EXAMINATION. REGULAR CLASSROOM AND HOURS**

(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 “*