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Political Science 100: Introduction to Comparative Politics
Spring 2000

The syllabus for this course is designed to give you a feel for the study of comparative politics by presenting some of the countries and problems that comparative political scientists study. The course is by no means comprehensive, but we will look at a variety of countries in different parts of the world and at a number of different topics.

The things you learn in this course (and on which you'll be tested) will come from three different sources: readings, a group project, and the lectures and class discussions.

Our textbook (*Comparative Governance*) will cover a variety of "themes" in comparative politics-that is, the topics that occupy the minds of people concerned with politics, like what people want from government, what government does, and how different kinds of government work. For each of these themes, we'll read a couple of newspaper or magazine articles that will give us examples of how politics work in the real world in different countries (these articles will be online-I'll give you the details later). The class will spend one to two weeks on each theme.

In addition to examples provided by the readings, each of you will examine one country in detail. I'll be breaking the class up into small groups, with each group taking responsibility for one foreign country. Each group will do research in order to complete a project in three stages: first, you'll identify a problem facing your country and try to explain its causes; next, you'll describe some of the solutions that people are proposing for that problem; and finally, you'll suggest the best way of dealing with the problem. Each stage of the project will require a short paper (5-7 pages), to be written by the group as a whole. Each group will also give a short presentation to the class near the end of the quarter.

A lot of the important information will come from class lectures and discussions. Because of this, coming to class every day is a really **good idea**. I will not take attendance, but if you miss class very often, you will have trouble on the exams --if you do miss a class occasionally, make sure that you got a copy of someone else's notes for that class.

Finally, I expect you to participate in class. This can take the form of questions during lectures or comments during class discussion, as well as participation in group exercises. No question is a dumb one, and no comment is worthless, and I don't expect you to agree either with the authors of the books or with me: the point here is for you to think about ideas and make your own decisions about them. All I ask is that you be polite to one another and give the ideas of others as much honest consideration of you would like others to give your own ideas. Students

who participate in class will receive a small bonus (up to 5%, based mostly on how many days they talk in class) to their final grades; if you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty, but the rest of us will lose a chance to benefit from your thoughts.

You will also have an opportunity to earn up to 2% of the 5% class participation bonus by participating in experiments conducted by researchers in the Political Science Department. I'll give you details about this later.

The purpose of this course is not so much to teach you about foreign countries (although I hope that you'll learn a good bit along the way), but rather to teach you some useful ways to think, talk, and write about foreign countries, so that you will be able to take facts that you read in newspapers or hear on TV and interpret them for yourself and others. Because of this, both the mid-term and final exams will consist entirely of short-answer and essay questions, so that I can be sure that you both understand concepts and can apply them to specific problems. In addition, the group project will be an exercise in critical thinking, and not just research, though a certain amount of research will be required.

Please don't hesitate to call me if you have questions about this syllabus or anything else.

Textbook

Shively, W. Phillips (1999). *Comparative Governance*. McGraw-Hill.

Grading

Grades will be determined by one mid-term exam (25%), a final exam (45%), and the three papers from the group project (10% each). The mid-term doesn't count much toward your final grade, and it will have exactly the same format as the final exam: think of it as a dress rehearsal for the final. The mid-term will take place on Friday, April 21st and will be graded by the 28th. The final exam will be on Wednesday, June 7th, at 11:30am in our normal classroom; graduating seniors will have to take the exam ahead of time, so please meet with me as soon as possible if you're graduating this quarter. The papers for the group project will be due at the end of class on Wednesday, April 12th; Monday, May 1st; and Friday, May 19th. Late papers will be penalized at least one-half of one letter grade (more if they're egregiously late). All work will be graded within one week after the date on which it is turned in. A bonus of up to 5% will be added to the final grade for class participation.

Academic misconduct, in the form of cheating or taking credit for the work of others, will not be tolerated. If an idea is not your own (or if you know that someone else came up with the idea before you did), be sure to include a citation noting the source of that idea; if you quote someone else's words directly, use quotation marks. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct or how you should cite someone else's work, please ask me before you turn in your assignment—even if it means asking in the middle of an exam.

Schedule

Theme 1: Why and How Do We Compare Countries? (Monday, 3/27 to Friday, 3/31)

Shively, Chapter 1 (read by Wednesday, 3/29)

Theme 2: The State Monday, 4/3 to Friday, 4/7)

Shively, Chapter 2 (read by Monday, 4/3) Online articles (read by Wednesday, 4/5)

Theme 3: How the State Keeps the Support of Citizens (Monday, 4/10 to Wednesday, 4/19)

Shively, Chapter 3 (read by Monday, 4/10) Online articles (read by Friday, 4/14)

(The first group project paper is due on Wednesday, 4/12.) Mid-term Exam

(Friday, 4/21)

Theme 4: Organizing Politics (Monday, 4/24 to Wednesday, 5/3)

Shively, Chapter 4 (read by Monday, 4/24) Online articles (read by Friday, 4/28)

(The second group project paper is due on Monday, 5/1.)

Theme 5: Governmental Institutions (Friday, 5/5 to Monday, 5/15)

Shively, Chapter 5 (read by Friday, 5/5) Online articles (read by Wednesday, 5/10)

Theme 6: Politics and the Economy (Wednesday, 5/17 to Friday, 6/2)

Shively, Chapter 6 (read by Wednesday 5/17) Online articles (read by Monday, 5/22)

(The third group project paper is due on Friday, 5/19. Beginning on Monday, 5/22, you'll give group presentations in class, two groups per day.)

(Remember that Monday, 5/29, is Memorial Day.)

Final Exam (Wednesday, 6/17 at 11:30am)