

POLITICAL SCIENCE 100
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-10:18
133 Caldwell Lab

Winter 2006
Call number 16766-5

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why are some countries democratic and others not? How do political institutions and political culture influence conflict and the quality of political life? How can we compare politics in a variety of countries? This course provides an introduction to the comparative study of domestic politics in countries around the world. The priority of this course is to teach about some basic theoretical problems in the study of politics generally, and how they apply to the real world. This should help you to identify interesting questions about politics in specific countries, to make systematic comparisons across countries, to see patterns of behavior across cases, and to explain these patterns.

Rather than taking a country-by-country world-tour (that is what encyclopedias are for), you will be introduced to some of the most important concepts, theories and issues in the political science sub-field of comparative politics. This will allow you to apply the concepts to a variety of real world cases.

The course is structured into three main sections: (1) key concepts and themes; (2) political actors; and (3) decision-making. In the first section, we will familiarize ourselves with the basic methods, concepts and themes that are the foundations of comparative politics. In the second part of the course, we will learn about the actors who work in the political realm. The third section covers the various ways that governments make decisions. We will conclude this course by looking at the exciting topic of political change through revolution, reform and democratization.

This course can serve as a foundation for political science majors as well as for non-majors interested in politics.

* If my office hours do not fit into your schedule, please do not hesitate to arrange an appointment for another time. I also encourage you to make use of e-mail communications, as I rarely work in my office except for office hours. It is my policy to get back to you within 24 hours of your e-mail correspondence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

There are two main sets of learning objectives for this course: (1) developing critical thinking skills and (2) acquiring knowledge about political phenomena around the world.

Skill Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be better able to: engage in critical reasoning; respectfully participate in meaningful political debates; orally articulate your reactions to controversial topics; and understand and make reasoned judgments about the political phenomena you observe around the world. You will learn how to analyze political events in a variety of settings, drawing on the theoretical explanations provided in the class.

Knowledge objectives

At the end of this course, you should be able to: identify, recognize and describe the major theories and concepts of comparative politics; discuss how various political regimes and events differ from each other; and understand how “textbook” concepts apply to the real world.

In addition to these objectives, there are also university-mandated goals and objectives that we will pursue this quarter:

Diversity: International Issues

Goals/ Rationale:

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

Learning Objectives:

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.

Social Science

Goals/Rationale:

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

Learning Objectives:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.
2. Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.

3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

READINGS

There is one **required** text for this course. It is available at campus area bookstores. You may also wish to look for used copies at web sites such as www.bestbookbuy.com or www.half.com.

Wilson, Frank L. 2002. *Concepts and Issues in Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Comparative Analysis*. **Be sure to get the 2nd edition.**

New copies are around \$49, but many used copies are available, and these cost considerably less (I have seen them for as low as \$18).

In addition, you are required to follow news stories in a country of your choosing (other than the U.S.). This will serve as the basis for the current event “quizzes,” which I explain later in this syllabus. If you are not sure whether your news sources are acceptable, please ask me. Some acceptable sources for news are listed below.

The New York Times: www.nytimes.com

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: www.rferl.org

CNN: www.cnn.com

The Economist: www.ECONOMIST.com

The Times (London): www.the-times.co.uk

The Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/index.shtml>

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Although I will ask a lot of you in this course, you may also expect a lot from me. It is my responsibility to help you learn. To this end, you may expect me to be prepared for class, start and end lessons on time, keep and hold appointments, promptly return your calls and e-mails (usually 24 hours or less), and fairly grade your assignments in a timely fashion (usually one week or less). I will also do my best to make class interesting and relevant by showing you how the topics we cover play out in the real world. Above all, it is my responsibility (with your help), to create a respectful atmosphere that is conducive to a safe learning environment.

STUDENT REPONSIBILITIES

Preparation, Attendance and Participation

As with most classes, the best way to succeed in this course is to come to class every day. ALL assigned readings should be read *before* that day's class, and you should be ready to discuss them. Also, **please bring your book or detailed reading notes with you to every class**. We will have discussion exercises nearly every day, and you will find it difficult to follow along if you do not have the reading assignment in front of you. Regular attendance, participation and reading are essential for success in this course.

Attendance is not recorded and participation per se is not graded (see section on "Professionalism" later in the syllabus), but this is not a free card to skip class. Trust me when I say that I will find a way to get each and every one of you to participate. If you miss class or refuse to participate, that is your choice, but your grade (and more importantly, your understanding of the topics) will probably suffer. You may miss a quiz and receive a zero; you may miss important handouts and other information; or you may miss the opportunity to share your own viewpoints or learn from your classmates.

Moreover, lectures do not simply repeat what you have read. During lectures, I will cover information not found in your books. You will be responsible for this material on the exams.

Course Requirements

- 1) Current Events "Quizzes": 15% of your final grade (7 quizzes, drop 2; 3% each)
There will be seven unannounced current events "quizzes" throughout the quarter. **There will be NO make-ups for the quizzes**, but your two lowest grades will be dropped. If you are absent and miss one, consider this one quiz you will drop. If you miss more than two, I am sorry, but you will receive a zero for any subsequent quizzes missed, *no matter how valid your excuse*.

These quizzes will be short essay responses (no more than one page). In the beginning of the quarter, you will be asked to pick a country of your choice (other than the U.S.) and to follow that country's news throughout the quarter. On each quiz, I will ask you to briefly summarize one news story from that country and to tell me why that story is important to our understanding of comparative politics.

So that there are no surprises, I have attached a sample quiz at the end of the syllabus. Each quiz will follow this format *exactly*. It would be a good idea to take some time before each class to plan how you would answer the questions.

- 2) Test 1: 35% of your final grade
The first test will be held in class on **Monday, February 13**. It will cover all of the readings, lectures, film and discussions up to the date of the exam. The exam will be multiple choice. You will use a scantron sheet, so please bring a #2 pencil.

3) Test 2: 40% of your final grade

The second test will be held on **Wednesday, March 15, at 7:30 am in our regular classroom (please note the time change)**. It will cover the readings, lectures, film and discussion since the last test. It is NOT cumulative, but mastery of the previous section can only help your performance on this test. The format of the second test is exactly the same as the first test.

4) Professionalism: 10% of your final grade

This portion of your grade is similar to a conventional participation grade. Indeed, class participation will be a factor of this score. However, I recognize that not everyone feels comfortable talking in large groups. I would like to encourage everyone to participate in class, but if public speaking just isn't your thing, you won't be penalized as long as you are prepared, respectful, alert and attentive. If you don't like talking in class, feel free to talk to me before or after class, or in my office, or send me an e-mail if you have any questions or comments you'd like to share. To help me gauge your preparation for class and your level of participation, I may periodically assign short in-class writing assignments and/or ask you to turn in notes from your group work.

I assume that you will want to get your money's worth from this class and will attend all classes. I also assume that you will not disrupt class through tardiness or walking out early and will therefore attend classes on time and stay for the entire session. I also ask you to turn your cell phones off in class. If you are tired and wish to sleep, please remember that the classroom is not the right location for a nap. For most of you, I'm sure, this professionalism grade will be an easy way to earn 10%.

Be advised that this score is largely based on my subjective judgment. Therefore, the best tactic for a high score in this area is to make sure I know who you are. Pay attention in class, turn in interesting work, and share your thoughtful reactions to lectures and discussions.

Grading:

Current Events "Quizzes" (7).....	15%	(3 % each; lowest 2 scores dropped)
Test 1.....	35%	
Test 2.....	40%	
Professionalism.....	10%	

Grades will be given following the +/- format of the university. The grading scale is as follows:

A (94-100)	B+ (87-89.9)	C+ (77-79.9)	D+ (67-69.9)
A- (90-93.9)	B (84-86.9)	C (74-76.9)	D (60-66.9)
	B- (80-83.9)	C- (70-73.9)	E (59.9 and below)

No extra credit assignments will be given.

Make-up Exams:

If you miss class, please arrange to get the notes from another student. While I am happy to discuss the class lectures with any student, I will not provide you with the lecture notes you have missed.

In the interest of fairness to all students, NO incomplete grades or make-up exams will be given except in the case of properly documented (e.g., doctor's note) personal illness, injury or bereavement. There are NO EXCEPTIONS, and whenever possible, you must let me know in advance if you will miss an exam.

If you think you will need an exception to this, ask yourself whether it would be fair to the other students to have special rules just for yourself. Please come see me if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

Recall that make-up quizzes will NEVER be given, but you will drop your 2 lowest scores.

Academic Honesty:

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be accepted. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct and handled according to university policy. For more information on university policies, see <http://www.osu.edu/offices/oa/procedures>. Please consult me if you have any concerns.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities should let me know their needs during the first week of the quarter. I am more than happy to provide course materials in alternative formats upon request. Please see me or contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880 for further assistance.

Graduating Seniors:

University policy has changed, and there will no longer be separate senior exams. Seniors will take their last test at the same time as the rest of the class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

PART ONE: CONCEPTS AND THEMES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Wed 1/4 Course Introduction and Overview

Mon 1/9 Methods and Key Concepts in Comparative Politics

Wilson 1-15

Wed 1/11 The Background to Comparative Politics: History, Culture & Geography

Wilson 16-29

Mon 1/16 NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

Wed 1/18 Society and Politics: Economics and Social Cleavages

Wilson 30-54

PART TWO: POLITICAL ACTORS

Mon 1/23 The Citizen; FILM: “In the Name of the Father”

Wilson 55-64; 69-77 (SKIP section on electoral systems – we will get to this next class period)

Plot summary of film from imdb.com:

“A small time thief from Belfast, Gerry Conlon, is falsely implicated in the IRA bombing of a pub that kills several people while he is in London. Bullied by the British police, he and four of his friends are coerced into confessing their guilt. Gerry's father and other relatives in London are also implicated in the crime. He spends 14 years in prison with his father trying to prove his innocence with the help of a British attorney, Gareth Peirce. Based on a true story.”

Wed 1/25 Finish and discuss film
Review your notes on social cleavages and on the citizen.

Mon 1/30 Electoral Systems
Wilson 64-68

Wed 2/1 Political Parties and Party Systems
Wilson 78-104

Mon 2/6 Interest Groups; Political Elites
Wilson 105-122

Wilson 123-137

Wed 2/8 The Military and Politics
Wilson 138-152

Mon 2/13 ***** **TEST 1** *****
Please bring a #2 pencil.

PART THREE: DECISION-MAKING

Wed 2/15 Constitutions: Functions and Ideology
Wilson 154-156

Mon 2/20 Constitutions: Horizontal Separation of Powers
Wilson 156-164

Wed 2/22 Constitutions: Vertical Separation of Powers

Wilson 164-170

Mon 2/27 The Bureaucracy and The Courts

Wilson 171-182

Wed 3/1 Political Change

Wilson 202-218

Mon 3/6 Political Change, cont.; FILM: “Goodbye Lenin”

Review Monday’s class notes and Wilson 202-218

Plot summary of film from imdb.com:

“East Germany, the year 1989: A young man protests against the regime. His mother watches the police arresting him and suffers a heart attack and falls into a coma. Some months later, the GDR does not exist anymore and the mother awakes. Since she has to avoid every excitement, the son tries to set up the GDR again for her in their flat. But the world has changed a lot...”

Wed 3-8: finish and discuss film; catch-up day

Wed 3/15, 7:30-9:18 am

***** **TEST 2** *****

Please bring a #2 pencil.

PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE!!!!

