

PSC 260.02
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
MWF 11:00-11:50
238 Curry Building

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Introduction:

This course offers an introduction to concepts and theories relevant for the study of comparative government. Its central purpose is to analyze the similarities and differences among political systems. This course starts with an overview of concepts useful for understanding political systems before applying them to comprehend the principal forms of government in the modern world. It concludes by considering why countries become democratic through a case study of Uruguay.

Learning Objectives:

Students who complete this class will practice:

1. using evidence to describe or explain individual behavior or social conditions, contexts, or institutions;
2. deploying the theories of the social and behavioral sciences to analyze individual behavior or social conditions, contexts, or institutions;
3. interpreting events and trends from alternative national or cultural perspectives;
4. analyzing differences and similarities among nation-states;
5. writing effective arguments, ones whose conclusions are clear and well-defended.

Course Requirements:

The class requires students:

1. To take four tests (the first of which is worth 10 percent of course grade and the rest of which are worth 15 percent each for a total of 55 percent of the class grade).
2. To write a term paper worth 25 percent of the class grade. The second appendix has more information about this assignment.
3. To keep (a word processed) log of *The New York Times* that focuses on the domestic politics of foreign countries (20 percent of the class grade). For 2 days of each week during 10 weeks of the semester (or a total of 20 entries spread throughout the semester), the student will record the author, title, and date of his or her articles on foreign domestic politics. See the first appendix for more on this assignment.

No assignment can be turned in handwritten.

Course Policies:

This course assumes you have done the reading and regularly compare your notes on the texts and from classes. Please respect the following rules in class:

- Turn off your cell phones, both in the class and when you visit me during office hours;
- Use laptops only for note-taking;
- Be punctual and do not leave a class before it is over;
- Listen attentively while others speak in class;
- Give me at least a couple of days to respond to e-mail messages.

Students who have missed more than 4 sessions will be withdrawn from the class. For every day a written assignment is past due, it will drop a letter grade.

University policy requires that you obtain certification from the Office of Disability Services (EUC, Suite 215; 334-5440) if you have a disability that merits accommodation.

Books for Purchase:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (multiple editions).

Kenneth Newton and Jan W. Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, A Universe: Settling Accounts with Torturers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Course Topics and Reading Assignments:

Class	Dates	Topic and Reading
1-2	Jan. 11 & 13.	What is Politics? What is the State? What is Comparative Politics? Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , Introduction & chap. 1.
3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.	Jan. 15, 20, 22, 25 & 27.	Political Disorder and the State of Nature Readings: Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chaps. 13 & 14 (see module on course readings). What is the Social Contract? Why Does it Exist? Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps vi-ix (or 6-9).
8, 9, 10 & 11.	Jan. 29 & Feb. 1, 3, & 5.	Political Ideologies Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 14.
12	Feb. 8.	1st Exam
13, 14, 15 & 16.	Feb. 10, 12, 15 & 17.	Similarities and Differences Among Political Systems Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 2 & 17.
17	Feb. 22.	2nd Exam
18	Feb. 24.	Meeting with Ms. Lynda Kellam (in the Citilab, Jackson Library).
19 & 20	Feb. 26 & 29.	Direct and Representative Democracy Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk III, chaps ix-xv (or 9-15). Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 81-100.
21, 22, 23 & 24	March 2, 4, 14 & 16. Bib. due on the 4th.	The Separation of Powers, Presidentialism, and Parliamentarism Readings: Federalist Number 51 (see module on course readings). Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 4, 5 & 7.
25, 26 & 27	March 18, 21 & 23.	Electoral Laws and Political Parties Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 12, 13, & 9.
28 & 29	Mar 28 & 30. NYT Log due on March 28.	The Judiciary Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , pp. 79-81.
30 & 31	April 1 & 4	Federal and Unitary Systems Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 6.

32	April 6.	3rd Exam
33, 34, 35 & 36	April 8, 11, & 13. Outline due on the 8 th .	Authoritarian Systems Readings: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 3. Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 101-49.
37, 38, 39, 40 & 41	April 15, 18, 20, 22 & 25.	Political Reform and Democratization Readings: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 18 Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 150-236.
42	April 27.	Conclusion – Term papers Due
	Monday, May 4, 8-11 a.m.	Final Exam

Appendix 1 – Guidelines for *The New York Times* Log

Articles should focus on the domestic politics of foreign countries. Entries should not discuss the articles that examine the relations between countries (e.g., international relations).

Entries should be reflective and identify what the reader learned and how it relates to class themes. Simply summarizing events and trends the article describes is unacceptable. The Blackboard site for the class will offer several examples of how to construct a newspaper log.

Avoid passing easy judgments on individuals or groups in other countries. It is not a good idea to suggest that President x of country y is poorly informed or has malevolent intentions. Nor is it advisable to say that the political system of country x is a failure because its leaders cannot get their act together. Use the assignment to learn about the internal politics of other countries and to relate them to central class issues.

For each entry, the student should identify the author, title, and date of his or her articles on foreign domestic politics. Discussions should not exceed two or three paragraphs (or not more than one-half of a single-spaced, typed page).

Appendix 2 – Term Paper Assignment

Please write a paper about whether victims of human rights abuses obtained or did not obtain justice in Uruguay. Your paper must assess the strengths and weaknesses of the affirmative and negative responses to this question as it reaches a conclusion of its own. The principal text for this assignment is Weschler's *A Miracle, A Universe*.

This paper must be empirical and analytical. It should present evidence for its central claims. And your paper should defend its conclusions; it is not acceptable to turn in a paper that simply summarizes the facts about human rights abuses in Uruguay or even of the arguments in favor of pro- and anti-government positions. Another way to think about the term paper is to explain how you would have voted in the 1989 referendum in Uruguay. A useful guide for essay writing is the appendix of Stephan Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). This book is on reserve in the library.

Your paper should not exceed 10 double-spaced, typewritten pages (12-pt font with at least 1.0 margins and including a bibliography) and probably should be at least 8 pages long. Please insert page numbers. Use the citation format of the *American Political Science Review* (see <http://uncg.libguides.com/content.php?pid=100907&sid=1079424>). You will lose points if your citations are incorrect. Please cite at least 3 books or articles not on the list of required readings. These should be scholarly materials (articles or books), the results of official or non-governmental

investigations, or legal materials. While students are free to surf the web, they cannot cite materials from the internet for their papers (though using the web to access journal articles or books is fine).

Your paper is due on the last day of class. Please see schedule of classes for other deadlines associated with this assignment (your bibliography must employ the APSA citation format and contain at least 5 relevant items. Your outline must summarize the elements of your argument, not merely present a list of research plans). See the section on course policies for penalties on tardy assignments.

Appendix 3 – Notes on Writing English and for Using the Writing Center

Effective English writing is brief and austere. Several rules worth following include:

1. Always put subjects before verbs and their objects. Do not say: “The presidency was won by the PAN.” It is better to say that, “The PAN won the presidency.”
2. Use strong verbs and avoid adverbs and adjectives. Never use two to make a point. It is much better to say that: “Economic crisis transformed political preferences,” than to say “political preferences about parties were fueled by a dramatic and major economic crisis.” The first is much better (and shorter).
3. Never use the passive voice. Always identify your subject. Never say: “Logit analysis was used in this paper.” It is better to say, “The paper (or “I,” or “my analysis,” etc.) uses logit models.”
4. Avoid past tenses, if you can. The present tense and the active voice make for better papers.

A great and short primer about writing English is William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*. Another book useful for writers is: Paul J. Silvia, *How to Write a Lot*. *The Economist* magazine is also marvelous for its use of the English language. Gary Cox and Robert Bates are two political scientists who write well.

Visit the Writing Center often as part of a more general strategy to improve your writing. Conversations with students and with the Center’s Director suggest that a useful visit starts with a concrete request. It is not a good idea to tell a Writing Center consultant that a professor made me come here. A good paper starts with a proactive stance, one where the writer is looking for help to address one or more issues relevant for her paper assignment. Questions worth raising with the Writing Center or anyone else whose advice you seek include:

1. Is my argument persuasive? Do I have convincing reasons in support of my conclusion?
2. What are the empirical claims of my paper? Do I have evidence for them?
3. Have I organized my paper effectively?
4. Have I filled my paper with unnecessary facts?

It is best not to ask a tutor or friend to spell- and grammar-check your writing. Only raise these issues if you are not sure how to apply the rules for writing good English. Instead, use your visits to the Writing Center to obtain answers to questions like the aforementioned. Finally, write a summary of your session with the Writing Center consultant. Identify the central points of your conversation and review these notes as you draft your paper.