

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Political Science 260

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Office Hours: M,W 9-9:45

and by appt.

Course Outline

Can we really investigate *the entire political process* in several countries? In one semester? How do we go about this? How do we then utilize the information and insights we gather for broader understanding about the problems of governance in general? The study of comparative politics begins with the premise that we can meaningfully analyze countries through comparison.

This course provides an introduction to the theories, concepts and methods of comparative politics. In the first part of the course we will explore what political scientists mean by power, sovereignty, legitimacy, structures, and other terms. In so doing we will establish a framework for analysis, how we will study each country methodically.

We will apply our framework to the six countries of our study while beginning to make generalizations about political processes everywhere based on the results of our investigations. At the same time we will explore some of the big questions of comparative politics. Questions such as: what is the impact of culture on a state's political process, can a democratically elected executive be too powerful, and how, why do authoritarian regimes persist?

Learning Objectives

You will immerse yourself in the actors, institutions and political culture of Great Britain, Germany, Russia, China, Iran and Nigeria. You will explore and develop hypotheses to explain recurring patterns of the political process. You will improve critical, evaluative and writing skills.

Course Requirements

Because discussion will play an important role in this course, *you need to keep up with the readings and be prepared for active participation*. It's a good idea to read a news source every day. There will be several seminar discussions with an accompanying response paper, discussion forum postings, a few assignments, some in-class debates, a test, a mid-term exam, seven, brief response papers and a final exam.

Required Texts

None, instead we will avail ourselves of the copious amounts of material available from academic and scholastic resources

Class Policies

Late work:

All late work will be penalized one letter grade for each day that it is late. Assignments turned in late on the day they are due will be docked half a letter grade. Excuses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances. Written verification, such as a doctor's note, will be required.

If you have an extenuating circumstance, you must let me know ASAP. I will be far less sympathetic to excuses received after an assignment is due.

Exams:

If you cannot take an exam at the scheduled time because of health or personal problems, you may take a make-up exam, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) You must notify me before the exam. If you are going to miss an exam, you will know ahead of time. Send an email, call, do not use carrier pigeons. If you do not let me know before the exam you will receive a zero for that exam.
- 2) No one may take more than one make up exam except under extraordinary circumstances.

Classroom:

You are expected to stay on top of the reading and take the initiative to learn the material. If you do not complete the reading you may fall behind and lose participation points in class. If you know that an assignment will fall at a busy time of the semester, I suggest you start working on it earlier.

If you are active and engaged in class it will be easier to learn and the process will be much more enjoyable!

Please be respectful and exercise decorum during our class sessions. This means, among other things, that cell phones must be turned off, there should be no side conversations, respect your classmates' opinions in class discussions, and please no reading of non-class materials during class.

Use of laptops is restricted to note-taking for class. If I become aware of inappropriate usage (working on other classes, reading online, shopping, etc.), you will get a zero for your participation grade.

Most importantly, please be on time for class. Learning is both an individual and a community experience. If you understand the material well, we need your insights and observations. If you don't understand the material, we need your questions

Consistent lateness is disruptive to the class and will result in a much lower participation grade. *Three absences allowed*, after that there is an **8 point deduction** from your final grade point total for each day over.

I am always available to answer questions or discuss any class-related issues. Please feel free to send me an email, stop by my office during office hours, or make an appointment

when needed. If you have a disability and need any special learning accommodations, please let me know ASAP so arrangements can be made.

Cheating and plagiarism will be punished with a failing grade and a report to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is defined as “stealing and passing off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own or using (another's production) without crediting the source” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). It is a serious act and will be treated as such. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

Special Needs

If you have special needs that will affect your ability to learn in this class, let me know and appropriate steps will be taken to assist you.

Honor

The university's Academic Integrity Policy is available via the web at:
<http://www.uncg.edu80/Leg/Policy/HonorPolicy.html>.

Grading

Discussion Seminars/Participation/Quizzes - 80 points

Response papers – 140 points total

Test – 50 points

Midterm - 100 points

Final Exam - 100 points

Canvas

I use Canvas extensively. You will find another copy of the syllabus, Rubrics for the response papers can be found in the 'Modules' folder. In the discussion forums you will find a, 'Questions for the professor' which I will check everyday, M-F. One forum is for you to get in touch with fellow students, 'Coffeehouse.' There are also some assignments in the forums. Reading questions can be found in the 'Assignments' folder.

Appendix 1: Seminar Discussions/Debates and Papers

Every two countries we will have a semi-formal debate. There will also be a paper associated with these debates. The prompts and rubrics are in the Modules.

You will be graded on substance, style, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Everyone will bring their papers to class and we will have a seminar style discussion in which we will use the article as a launching point for explaining a country's political system.

Good writing is clear and concise. Confused thinking results in confused writing. Give yourself time to understand the material and your own analysis so as to write as clearly as possible. Don't get bogged down in description. You are an analyst, not a tour guide. Do present enough solid material for your analysis to rest on.

The Writing Center is a wonderful resource. And, in the External Links folder, there is a link to the website from Purdue University which also offers good grammatical advice.