

Comparative Politics, POLS 065
Fall 2005: TR 11-12:15: Mer. #235
And TR 2-3:15: Mer. #238
Off. Hrs: MTWR- 3:30-5: by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Comparing and contrasting is a common human exercise. Comparison helps to make sense of societies that are different from our own, and also to obtain deeper insight into our own system of government. The course assumes the importance of government in maintaining order and providing for the meaningful development of society and also the importance of culture and institutions for guiding human actions and influencing the conduct of political activities. Common questions concern who has the power, how different societies use and distribute the power they have, how the struggle between freedom and equality is managed and how these different phenomena are explained theoretically.

Comparative politics, as a term, has two meanings. It refers to a division of the study of political science as well as to a method of studying politics. This course studies both definitions and will help students understand the politics of other countries from a comparative perspective. It will include learning general concepts needed to interpret political relationships and institutions in national polities, and then applying this knowledge to politics in six specific countries, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Iran, South Africa and Russia. Some of the general concepts in comparative politics include the origins of states; the nature of power; political culture; types of political regimes (democracy, theocracy, etc.); political institutions (executive, legislative relations); political economy; causes of revolution, and political development.

Part of the course will be spent discussing these basic concepts of comparative politics and their importance to functioning governments. Questions such as: Who has the power and how is it used, are basic to all societies. All countries have some kind of political culture, and it is important to discuss how this concept applies to different countries. Thus, first students will study topics such as political culture, socialization and political parties, and then they will investigate how these (and other) concepts function differently in specific countries depending partly on the democratic, authoritarian or development status of each country and the strength of other political institutions and relationships.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Comparative Politics-05/06, Annual Editions, Dushkin/McGraw Hill

Roskin, Countries and Concepts, 8th ed. Prentice-Hall, 2004

O'Neil, Essentials of Comparative Politics, W.W. Norton, 2004

COURSE GOALS:

This course is designed to actively engage students in discussing some important political concepts and ways to understand politics/governance in other countries. By the end of the semester students should be able to debate and write about the political concepts of comparative politics and understand relationships between the different countries they study. Students should actively participate in Blackboard and class discussions, and work to think independently and creatively as they discuss these concepts throughout the semester. Important goals for this course include learning to express ideas better in speaking and in writing while at the same time processing new information about the concepts of comparative politics and about politics in countries around the world.

The Course “Objectives and Units” icon on the Blackboard lists separate goals for each concept/country unit as well as assignments and assessment activities, so it should be clear what the course expectations are for each unit. Students may post questions or email the professor via the Blackboard course site as well.

COURSE FORMAT:

The class will consist of a combination of lectures, discussions and group activities to actively engage students in the subject matter. It is **essential** that students do the reading and written assignments **before each class** so they can participate in class and group discussions. Throughout the semester, the Professor will require students to frequently submit written questions covering material from the readings and class lectures. The syllabus clearly states the reading requirements for each unit of study. The course will be Web-Assisted, through Blackboard, and the expectations and extra information for each unit will be posted on the Blackboard course the day before the unit begins (around 6:00 pm) under the Icon labeled Objectives and Info. Units. Lectures will be posted on the Blackboard site after they have been discussed in class (around 8:00 pm on the day of the lecture). There is a copy of the syllabus posted on the Blackboard, and there will be occasional announcements posted via the Blackboard site during the semester. Once posted, both the Unit Objectives and the Lectures will remain available throughout the rest of the semester. Students will have access to the course on the Blackboard via Explorer and will also be assigned a user name and a password during the first week of classes. Many group discussions (10 to 12) will take place on the Blackboard. We can arrange a class at the Library on using Blackboard for students who are new to this type of course if we have enough demand.

The semester will be divided by a midterm exam covering the concepts/theories and countries learned up to that point. We will examine both concepts and countries through assigned readings, group and class discussions and lectures, and by posted discussion questions on the Blackboard. At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned a permanent Blackboard group, consisting of about four to five students per group and listed under the Blackboard (Bb) Group icon. Members of each group will be able to communicate with each other via the Blackboard Discussion format. Discussion questions will be posted on a regular basis throughout the semester, and students are

required to participate in these discussions. Further instructions for the Blackboard discussions are listed on the Blackboard site. There will be in-class quizzes on each country, and there will be a “study guide” for each country as well as class lectures to help prepare students for the country quizzes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: See the Course Outline for Due Dates

- 10%** Attendance and Participation (in both groups and class) Your participation grade will depend on your active contributions to group and class discussions, and your quality oral and written questions. You will be constantly encouraged to share your ideas with your classmates.
- 15%** Paper and Group Work on Blackboard Discussion Question #2, (2-pages). “ A Political Culture Discussion”
Steps/instructions for writing this paper and incorporating the group work and individual interviews into it (More instructions may be found on the Blackboard site):
1. After first answering in writing (on the Blackboard) a question about your own political beliefs (the question is posted on the blackboard site), you will next individually interview a foreign student and ask him/her the same question, and you will then post this answer separately on the blackboard site;
 2. Next you (all students) must discuss your own responses and the responses from the individual interviews with the foreign students, with the other members of your Discussion Board group (this discussion may take place in person or be done via the Blackboard discussion group format;
 3. Students in group discussions compare all your foreign student interviews together, and then compare these responses to the answers of the Americans in the group and;
 4. Based on all the responses, the group members (together) try to come up with some collective thoughts about different cultural views and their possible effects on politics;
 5. Finally, each individual student will write a 2-page report on the results of this exercise on political culture. The report must contain evidence of the group’s discussion and its opinions as well as your own individual opinions about the effects of political culture.
- 15%** Six Country study guides (written and handed in),
six country quizzes & Group work
- 20%** **Midterm Exam:**
(part, short answer (and identification), part, essay):
- 20%** **1 paper (4-5 pages)**
Throughout the semester you will be required to discuss (in writing) 7 to 8 questions I post on the Blackboard’s Discussion Board within each Group Section. I will not grade these discussions as they occur (except for the first paper which is based

on one of the Discussion Questions). You should first respond to each question based on your readings and the class lectures. The questions do not ask for your opinions, but rather your knowledge of the topic. Then, you should try to get some good discussions going in your groups with the other group members, so that you can add additional threads (secondary comments) to each discussion. Each question will be open for discussion for 2 to 3 weeks, and then I will close off the discussion and you will no longer be able to respond to that question. I will then post the next question. Sometimes there may be more than one question open for discussion. You are encouraged to use outside sources (The required texts; O'Neil, Roskin and the *Annual Editions* are especially good to use) to back up your arguments if necessary, but be sure to document these sources if and when you use them! For the paper, you will choose 7-8 of your best first responses as well as several samples of your secondary responses from the Blackboard discussions to evaluate. You will then discuss how your thinking about comparative politics and its theories has developed and evolved over the course of the semester as demonstrated by your own written answers to the various discussion questions. Again, be sure to footnote **and** cite any outside sources you mention in **both**, footnotes or internal citations, **and** a Works Cited section. There is a more detailed discussion of the requirements and expectations for this paper posted on the Blackboard under the Assignments Icon. All first and second year students are required to take one of their two required papers to the writing lab at Howard Hall to be reviewed before it is handed in. The person doing the reviewing must sign this paper, and one signed page must be included with the final version of the paper (either one). See the instructions below (for the second paper) for this requirement. This assignment is designed to get you to rewrite your papers and to check them carefully for good writing style and grammar. Writing is a very important component of this course as learning to write well helps you learn to express yourself better.

20%

Final Exam:

COURSE SCHEDULE: Fall 2005

Aug. 23,25

INTRODUCTION and COMPARATIVE THEORIES:

Introduction and written class survey: What is Comparative Politics? Debates about how we understand explain politics and political behavior? Equality vs. Freedom; Rationalism vs. Constructivism

Readings: O'Neil; Ch. 1 (pp.1-21)

Aug. 30

THE STATE:

Definitions and origins of political organization; Institutionalism and Rules of the Game; the state as a political actor, the modern state and its relationship with its citizens

Readings: Roskin, Ch. 1 and pp. 165-167 (France); O'Neil, Ch. 2 (pp. 22-45).

First Discussion: Introduce yourself to your group on the Blackboard. See the exercise in the Objectives and Information Units Icon on the Blackboard. Go to the Groups Icon and then to your group's name and then to the Discussion Board option.

Sept. 1

SOCIETY AND SOURCES OF POWER AND CONFLICT: THE CONCEPT OF THE NATION AND NATIONALISM:

Society and Politics, Social Cleavages, Ethnic Identity, Quarrels, and Political Elites

National Identity; Nationalism/Patriotism

Readings: O'Neil, Ch. 3 (pp. 46-81)

2nd Question to discuss on the Blackboard course. Talk to an International student.

Sept. 6

POLITICAL CULTURE:

Political Socialization, Political Behavior

and how these are linked?

Values and Beliefs: The Civic Culture study and concept and culture as a political variable. The State/Nation and Identity

Readings: Annual Eds., pp. 206-209, and 222-231; Roskin, pp. 53-63 (Britain), pp. 130-145, 154(France) and pp. 367-381 (Japan)

Sept. 13

POLITICAL ECONOMY:

The State and the Market

Readings: O'Neil, Ch 4 (82-118); Annual Editions, pp. 215-221

3rd Discussion Board question on different kinds of economic systems.

Sept. 15, 20

DEMOCRACY: DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION, POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS AND VOTING

What is democracy? How do citizens institutionalize democracy?

Who participates and in what ways? Women in Politics

Parties, types of interest groups and their bases of support

Different kinds of Electoral (voting) systems (PR and Direct)

Readings: Annual Editions. pp.60-80, 87-102; O'Neil, pp.147-164,

Sept. 22,27

**POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS and POLICY MAKING
CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ADVANCED
DEMOCRACIES**

**Presidential vs. Parliamentary forms of Legislative and Executive
Power and Quasi Systems (France, Russia and South Africa),
Constitutions, Federalism and Centralization**

Readings: O'Neil, pp. 164-175 and Ch. 7 (pp. 176-207); Annual Eds.
Pp. 1-15, 204-205, 210-214

SEPT. 22: GROUP PAPER ON POLITICAL CULTURE DUE

Sept. 29, Oct. 4, 6

ADVANCED DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

The Impact of the Past, Institutions, Political Culture and Patterns of
Interaction and Quarrels

Format for studying the six countries:

Before you begin to study a new country, I will give you a study guide to
complete as you do the readings. Completing the study guide will
greatly help you on the country quizzes, which will be given at the
beginning of the 2nd class after you start a new country.

I will also give lectures on each of the countries and discuss some issues
before you take the quizzes. For much of the class discussions on the
individual countries we will either have full class discussions or you will
be in your small groups with worksheets to complete. In general, the
first day of each country will be a lecture and the second and later days
will be the quizzes and group discussions.

Readings: Roskin Chapters on Britain, pp. 20-93, Annual Editions,
Pp 16-32

4th Discussion questions on the Blackboard

Oct. 11, 13

GERMANY

The Impact of the Past, Institutions, Political Culture and Patterns of
Interaction and Quarrels

Same format as for the study of Britain

Readings: Roskin chapter on Germany, pp. Annual Editions,
Pp 176-259

5th Question to discuss on the Blackboard

October 17, 18

FALL BREAK

October 20

MIDTERM EXAM: Covering the course up to this point.

Oct. 25, 27

A NON-WESTERN DEMOCRACY: JAPAN

Readings: Roskin, Chapters on Japan, Annual Editions, and pp. 57-59

Nov. 1

**AUTHORITARIANISM (theocracies; military gov'ts, theories of
revolution)**

Readings: O'Neil, Ch. 5, Roskin (Brazil's Military, pp. 460-462, 471)

6th Discussion Question on the Blackboard

- Nov. 3** **COMMUNISM/POSTCOMMUNISM**
Markets, Liberalism, social expenditures and social democracy
Readings: Ch. 8 (208-245)
7th Question to discuss on the Blackboard
- Nov. 8, 10, 15** **RUSSIA: A FORMER COMMUNIST COUNTRY NOW IN
TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY**
The Impact of the past, institutions, political culture, interactions,
quarrels and obstacles to democratic development and Transition
Challenges.
Readings: Roskin, pp. 260-337; Annual Editions, pp. 131-154
8th Question to discuss on the Blackboard
- Nov. 17, 22** **A NON-DEMOCRATIC REGIME WITH SOME LIBERAL
TENDENCIES: IRAN and ISLAM**
Readings: Roskin on Iran, pp. 518-549, Annual Eds. Pp.195-200
9th Discussion question on the Blackboard
- Nov. 22** **PAPER DUE (4-5 pages) with footnotes or internal
documentation, and a Bibliography. See requirements section**
If you are a **First or Second year student, you **must** take this
(or the first) paper **to the writing lab** and make some changes to
your first draft. Be sure to **get a signature, but do not wait to go**
until the day before your paper is due. One reason to go to the
Writing Lab is so that you can rewrite your paper and make it
better. If you go to the Lab the day before the paper is due, you do
not have enough time to rewrite well, and the writing lab might be
full. Make an appointment with the Writing Lab before you go!!!
This paper should contain several of your best and previously
written question responses, some of your thoughtful discussion
with your group members, and some in-depth analysis of these
responses. Sample papers will be available on the Blackboard site.
- Nov. 24, 25** **THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- Nov. 29** **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT and TRANSITIONING GOV'TS
(clientelism, etc.)**
Readings: Annual Eds. Pp. 155-161; O'Neil, Ch 9 (pp. 246-280);
Roskin, p. 415 and 467 (Brazil, 3rd World, dependency theory)
10th Discussion question on the Blackboard
- Dec. 1, 6** **PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH AFRICA
(Quiz and discussion)**
Readings: Roskin on South Africa, pp. 482-517;
Annual Editions: pp. 167-174; O'Neil, Ch. 10 (pp. 281-299)
- Dec. 8** **CONCLUDING REMARKS AND EXAM REVIEW**
- Dec. 12-16** **FINAL EXAM WEEK:**

