

PLSC 211: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT

*****Revised Version*****

*Eastern Michigan University
Department of Political Science
Winter 2012*

M/W 3:30-4:45 pm, 421 Pray-Harrold Hall

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Office Hours: M, W 4:45-5:30 pm, or by appointment

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Course website: <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/kharist/plsc211>

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics—that is, the politics and political processes of other (non-U.S.) countries. No prior knowledge of the subject matter is assumed. The course objectives are threefold: to introduce you to the remarkable diversity of political systems around the world today, to explore some of the central questions raised by this diversity, and to consider one of these questions in more depth through a comparison of two countries.

This course has a deliberately contemporary focus. We will be concerned with politics as it is played out around the world today, including some truly astounding transformations in world affairs in recent years. Among these are:

- The rise in prominence of Islamic fundamentalism;
- The collapse of several autocratic regimes in the Middle East, and continuing instability in others;
- The enlargement of the European Union to take in many formerly communist countries in Eastern Europe;
- The rapid growth of the economies of the “BRICs”: Brazil, Russia, India, and China, as well as in Southeast Asia;
- Financial crises and economic recession in Europe and the United States;
- The transition to democracy of nearly every country in Latin America, along with much of Africa and Pacific Asia;
- The weakness or collapse of several states in Africa and Central Asia, alongside political reform and rapid economic growth in others;
- Huge demographic and social transformations, including
 - rapidly aging populations in Europe, Russia, and Japan,
 - continuing population growth in Africa and the Middle East,
 - rapid industrialization and urbanization in South and Southeast Asia and China.

These are developments that will shape the world you live in for decades to come. In this course we will explore these events in more detail, and through them consider some of the big questions that motivate the study of comparative politics.

Course Materials:

*Required Textbooks (note that you want the **third** edition!):*

- O'Neil, Patrick H. 2010. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2010. *Cases in Comparative Politics*, 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

Newspaper Reading

Because we will refer regularly to current events in this course, you are expected to follow the news on a daily basis. Our news source of record will be the *New York Times* newspaper, available for free on campus every weekday, and online at www.nytimes.com.

Additional Readings and Resources

I may occasionally assign others readings. These I will distribute in class or post to my website. I will also post additional resources for your country comparison paper. The website is at: <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/kharist/plsc211>

Course Requirements:

Participation and Attendance

In-class activities will be a mix of lecture and discussion. I expect all students to contribute regularly to class discussion. Regular attendance is therefore a prerequisite for success in the course; missing more than two classes, for whatever reason, will adversely affect your participation grade. If you anticipate needing to miss more than two classes, please come talk to me as soon as possible. In addition, arriving late to class can be disruptive and is an inconvenience to your fellow students and me; habitual tardiness will likewise adversely affect your grade.

Assigned Reading

The majority of assignments in this course are readings from the textbooks, which will cover the topics central to that day's class plan. Because you need to be prepared to contribute to discussion, you are expected to complete the assigned reading before that class. Please plan accordingly.

Quizzes

To check your comprehension of lectures and assigned reading and to encourage you to review course materials regularly, I will administer five reading quizzes throughout the semester. **I will not announce quizzes beforehand!** Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, be designed to take you 10-20 minutes, and will cover materials from the reading and from previous class discussions. **Quizzes cannot be made up**—students missing that day's class or arriving late will be out of luck. However, I know bad days happen—we all have them!—so I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your grade.

Exams

There will be two exams for this course: a midterm and a final. Exams will be a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam will be comprehensive and cover material discussed throughout the course; it will be held during the official final exam period.

Country Comparison Paper

The assignments and activities of the course will culminate in a 5-7 page country comparison paper. You will compare and contrast two countries with similar profiles whose politics differ on one of the “big” themes of the course. This is your chance to explore two countries in more depth beyond the textbook—I encourage you to choose an issue and countries that especially interest you. I will provide more information about the paper in a hand-out distributed during the first few weeks of class.

Grading:

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

- Class participation: 20%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam: 30%
- Comparison paper: 20%

Other Stuff:

Laptops and Mobile Phones in the Classroom

I take a dim view of mobile phones in the classroom—when you arrive to class, please turn them off. Laptops are acceptable only if used for note-taking; if you do use a laptop, I ask that you close all web pages, email accounts, etc. so that you can stay focused on what’s happening around you in the classroom. And when we break into discussion groups, I expect you to put away your computer and join with your peers.

Email

Email is the easiest way to reach me—I check frequently, and will do my best to reply promptly. However, I cannot answer messages instantaneously—do not send me a message 10 minutes before class and expect me to have read it when you arrive to section. I will also send important class announcements via email, so please make sure you have a working email account and check it regularly.

Office Hours

Office hours are for your benefit. I urge you to come to my office hours to talk about any difficulties you may be having with the class or to discuss a topic touched upon in class or in the readings. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, I am quite willing to schedule individual appointments.

Academic Dishonesty

Per the university, academic dishonest includes “all forms of cheating, falsification, and/or plagiarism.” Simply put, don’t do it. If I suspect that you have plagiarized a paper or cheated on an exam or quiz, I will follow university procedures to the letter, up to and including receiving a failing grade for the course and referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Dishonesty has no place in the classroom. If you are not sure what constitutes a violation of this policy, please ask!

Class Webpage

Important class documents and useful links can be found on my personal homepage. I will update the page periodically throughout the semester:
<http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/kharist/plsc211>

Special Accommodations

I am happy to work with students who feel they may require an accommodation for observance of religious holidays, for a disability, or for other kinds of personal issues that may arise over the term. If you anticipate needing a special accommodation, please see me during office hours, preferably early in the term.

COURSE SCHEDULE (JANUARY 9 – APRIL 23)

Week 1: Introduction—What is Comparative Politics?

Mon. – 1/9: Introductions

Weds. – 1/11: What is Comparative Politics?

- Reading Assignment:
 - Ch. 1. in *Essentials of Comparative Politics*

Week 2: States

Mon. – 1/16: NO CLASS: MLK JR. DAY. CAMPUS-WIDE ACTIVITIES

Weds. – 1/18: Development of the Modern State

- Reading:
 - Ch. 2 in *Essentials*

Week 3: Origins of Western Liberal Democracy

M – 1/23: Introduction to Western European Democracies

- Reading: Cases

- UK: Ch. 2 in *Cases in comparative Politics*, pp. 31-39
- US: Ch. 3 in *Cases*, pp. 75-85 (skim)
- France: Ch. 4 in *Cases*, pp. 115-126
- Germany: Ch 5 in *Cases*, pp. 158-169

W – 1/25: Comparing European Democracies

Week 4: Identity and Political Culture

M – 1/30: Nations and Society

- Reading:
 - *Essentials*, Ch. 3

W – 2/1: Nationalism in Europe

- Reading: Cases
 - Ch. 2, pp. 57-62
 - Ch. 3, pp. 99-104
 - Ch. 4, pp. 141-145
 - Ch. 5, pp. 187-190

Week 5: Political Economy

M – 2/6: What is Political Economy?

- Reading:
 - *Essentials*, Ch. 4

W – 2/8: Political Economy in Europe

- Readings: Cases
 - Ch. 2, pp. 65-67
 - Ch. 3, pp. 105-107
 - Ch. 4, pp. 145-149
 - Ch. 5, pp. 190-192

Week 6: Democratic Regimes

M – 2/13: Institutions, Parties, and Elections

- Reading:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 5.

W – 2/15: Models of Democracy

- Readings: Cases
 - Ch. 2, pp. 39-57
 - Ch. 3, pp. 85-99
 - Ch. 4, pp. 126-141
 - Ch. 5, pp. 169-187
- **Paper assignment distributed – in class**

Week 7: Politics in Advanced Democracies

M – 2/20: Advanced Democracies

- Reading:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 7.

W – 2/22: **MIDTERM EXAM – IN CLASS**

2/27 – 3/4:

WINTER BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 8: Non-Democratic Regimes

M – 3/5: Non-Democratic Regimes

- Reading:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 6

W -- 3/7: China: Case study

- Readings:
 - China, Ch. 8 in *Cases*

Week 9: Communism and Post-Communism

M – 3/12: Communism and Post-Communism

- Readings:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 8

W – 3/14: China: case study

- Readings: TBA

Week 10: Less-Developed and Newly-Industrializing Countries

M – 3/21: Development

- Reading:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 9

W – 3/23: Case Study: Brazil

- Reading:
 - Brazil, Ch. 12 in *Cases*
- **PAPER TOPICS DUE – IN CLASS**

Week 11: Political Violence

M – 3/26: Political Violence

- Reading:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 10

W – 3/28: Case study: Nigeria

- Reading:
 - Nigeria, Ch. 14 in *Cases*

Week 12: Special Topic: Contemporary Events

M – 4/2: TBA

W – 4/4: TBA

****FRIDAY, APRIL 6: PAPER DRAFTS DUE BY 5PM****

Week 13: Globalization

M – 4/9: Globalization and comparative politics

- Readings:
 - *Essentials* Ch. 11

W – 4/11: Case study: Globalization

- Reading:
 - Mexico case study in *Cases*

Week 14: Wrap-up

M – 4/16: Special topic: summary of key themes

- Readings: TBA

W – 4/18: Review for final exam

- **FINAL PAPER DRAFT DUE, IN CLASS**

Week 15: Final Exam

M – 4/23: **FINAL EXAM – IN CLASS, 3:30-4:45**

GOOD LUCK ON FINALS, AND ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!!!