

Politics 120: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Instructor: Dr. Matt Lesenyie
Office: Johnson Hall 312
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11:30-12:30
Email: mlesenyie@oxy.edu

The Game Plan

This course is an introduction to political science and the topic of Comparative Politics. What exactly does that mean? Well, in this course we compare and contrast the success (and failure) of democratic political institutions. We will do so by leveraging the comparative method and theory on institutional structure. Using cases that range from established, transitional, and failing democracies we can examine the implications of institutions in these outcomes. By the end of this course you will be able to link institutional rules to democratic outcomes using both political science terminology and plain language. I assume you have no knowledge of government institutions, political science concepts, and research methods. Therefore, this course will be accessible to students from all academic majors.

This course has five objectives. We will leverage political science theories that help us understand: 1) comparative research methods, 2) collective action and coordination problems, 3) how government institutions solve these problems, 4) how territorial economies and resources condition institutional design, and 5) major detriments to democratic performance.

How to Succeed in Comparative Politics

Bring an open mind. Enlightenment. It's the greatest gift you can give yourself. It's also why you came to sit in this room to the exclusion of other classrooms and activities. Don't deny yourself the opportunity to change your mind about strongly held beliefs.

Prepare. Read the assigned readings before each class. I have coordinated readings and lectures so that if you are on schedule, the lecture and reading will synergize. Really fruitful discussions depend on students who have read and thought about the assigned material. Because I will be asking students about the week's readings and concepts, it is integral that you have some familiarity with the assigned readings before we meet.

Participate Political science is about social problems, not solitary ones. Therefore, your participation and that of your classmates will help to enrich your understanding of these problems. Everyone in this course has something to contribute to this learning environment. I expect you will respectfully share your thoughts and ideas with each other. By participation, I mean engaging in conversation, not simply answering questions. My hope is that you will appreciate my Socratic style...it is time worn, old school.

Making the Grade

The final course grade breaks down like this:

Participation – 20%
Research Project – 40%
Midterm – 20%
Final Exam – 20%

The midterm exam date subject to change with advance notice. There are no extensions for any assignment without written medical excuse or prior approval from me. No make-up examinations without prior approval or without a written medical excuse. Late assignments are penalized at 20% per day.

Texts

O’Neill and Rogowski, *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics* (5th edition)

O’Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (6th edition) [**referred to as textbook/Ch.**]

Course Themes and Schedule

What is Comparative Politics?

Textbook Chapter 1 What is Comparative Politics?

January 21-23

Initial meetings

January 28-30

- 1/28 No Class Today. 1.2 King, Keohane, Verba “Designing Social Inquiry”
- 1/30 1.4 John Stuart Mill “Four Methods”

Foundational Elements: The State and Nations

Textbook Chapter 2: pages 30-39; 46-55

February 4-6

- 2/4 2.1 Weber “Politics as a Vocation”
- 2/6 2.4 Krasner “Sovereignty”
- 2/7 Assignment 1 Due @ 3pm

Society

February 11-13

- 2/11 Textbook Chapter 3 p.63-76
- 2/13 Textbook Chapter 3 p.77-95

Democratic Regimes

February 18-25

- 2/18 Textbook Chapter 5 p. 134-148
- 2/20 5.1 Schmitter and Karl “What Democracy Is...and Is Not”
- 2/21 Assignment 2 Due @ 3pm
- 2/25 Textbook Ch5 149-169
5.2 Lijphart “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies”

Nondemocratic Regimes

Textbook Chapter 6 p.172-190

February 27- March 3

- 2/27 6.4 Geddes et. al “Military Rule”
- 3/6 Assignment 3 Due @ 3pm

March 3rd Midterm Review

Midterm Exam March 5th

Communism and Post-Communism

March 17-19

Midterm Wrapper and Mid-Quarter Interview

- 3/17 Textbook Chapter 9 p. 267-275
- 3/19 9.1 Marx and Engels “Manifesto of the Communist Party”

March 24-26

- 3/24 Textbook Chapter 9 p. 276-285; 295-303. Emphasis on 300-301
- 3/24-26 one of the following
9.2 Ekiert “The Illiberal Challenge in Post-Communist Europe”

- 9.3 Hale “25 Years After the USSR: What’s Gone Wrong?”
- 9.4 Balzer “Russia and China in the Global Economy”
- 3/27 Assignment 4 Due @ 3pm

Less Developed & Newly Industrializing Countries

March 31- April 7

- 3/31 Textbook Chapter 10 p. 304-318
- 4/1 Textbook Chapter 10 p. 318-326
- 4/4 10.4 Acemoglu and Johnson “Disease and Development
- 4/7 10.1 Easterly “To Help the Poor”

Political Violence

April 14-16

- 4/14 Textbook Chapter 7 p. 203-219
Weinberg “How Terrorism Ends” excerpt (online)
- 4/16 Textbook Chapter 7 p. 227-232
7.4 Walsh & Piazza “Why Respecting Physical Integrity Rights Reduces Terrorism”

Globalization

April 21-23

- 4/21 Textbook Chapter 11 p. 339-353
11.2 Bourguignon “Inequality and Globalization”
- 4/23 Textbook Chapter 11 p. 358-367
11.3 Ferguson “Populism as a Backlash Against Globalization”
- 4/24 Project Poster Due

April 28-30

Review for Final Exam

Final Exam May 7 at 8:30am – 11:30am