

PSC 260.02
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:15
209 Graham 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 comparative governments, stressing their normative as well as their positive connotations. It then shifts to understanding the principal forms of government in the modern world. This class ends by considering why countries become democratic through case studies of Uruguay and South Africa.

Course Requirements:

The class requires students, first, to take three tests (the first and second of which are worth 20 percent of the class grade and the last of which is worth 15 percent for a total of 55 percent of the class grade). These tests assess students on their grasp of course readings and class lectures and discussions. Second, students will write a term paper worth 25 percent of the class grade. Third, students will 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. Discussions should not exceed two or three paragraphs (or not more than one-half of a single-spaced, typed page).

No assignment can be turned in handwritten. Students should regularly visit the Writing Center for advice and suggestions on drafts of their paper and on the newspaper log. The appendices of this syllabus contain detailed instructions about the production of the newspaper log and the term paper.

Course Policies:

This course will combine lectures with class discussion. Students who miss classes, do not do the readings, and do not review their notes from previous classes will do poorly on assignments. For every day the newspaper log or term paper is late, a student's grade will drop by an entire letter grade. Only documented medical emergencies will be accepted to reschedule missed exams.

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 emails.

University policy requires that you obtain certification from the Office of Disability Services if you have a disability that merits accommodation. Its address is: EUC, Suite 215 and its telephone number is: 334-5440.

Books for Purchase:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Kenneth Newton and Jan W. Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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	Aug. 25 & 27	What is Politics? What is the State? What is Comparative Politics? Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 1-2.
4	Sept. 3	Meeting with Ms. Lynda Kellam (Petty 222).
3 & 5	Sept. 1, 8	Political Disorder and the State of Nature Readings: Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chap. 13. (http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-c.html#CHAPTERXIII) and Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps i-ii. What is the Social Contract? Why Does it Exist? Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps iii-viii.
6-8	Sept. 10, 15 & 17	Political Ideologies Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 13.
9 & 10	Sept. 22 & 24	Similarities and Differences Among Political Systems Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 2 & 16.
11	Sept. 29	1st Exam
12	Oct. 1	Direct and Representative Democracy Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk III, chaps ix-xv.
13-16	Oct. 6, 8, 15 & 20	The Separation of Powers, Presidentialism, and Parliamentarism Readings: Federalist Number 51 (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp). Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 4 & 6.

17-19	Oct. 22, 27 & 29.	Electoral Laws and Political Parties Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 11, 12, & 8.
20	Nov. 3 2nd Exam	
21	Nov. 5	The Judiciary Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , pp. 49-51.
22	Nov. 10 NYT log due	Federal and Unitary Systems Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 5.
23 & 24	Nov. 12 & 17	Authoritarian Systems Reading: Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 81-149.
25-27	Nov. 19, 24 & Dec. 1	Political Reform and Democratization Reading: Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 150-236.
28	Dec. 3 Dec. 15, noon-3pm.	Conclusion – Final papers Due 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 – Research Paper Assignment

Please write a paper about whether victims of human rights abuses got 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 needs to cite relevant material that documents claims about injustice. It also 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. 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 1.5 margins and including a bibliography) and probably should be at least 8 pages long. Please insert page numbers. And please use the citation format of the *American Political Science Review*. You will lose points if your citations are incorrect.

Please cite at least 5 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). Students will have a meeting with Lynda Kellam, a librarian who specializes in political science (and is a political scientist), in the CITI lab across from the checkout desk in the library (see schedule of course topics).

This assignment's due dates are:

- A tentative bibliography with at least 10 sources – September 8.
- An outline of your paper – September 29.
- A 50-word abstract of your paper (on a sheet of paper with your name and email) – October 22;
- Comments on a peer's abstract – October 28. Send your comments and your peer's abstract to me electronically by noon of this day. Please put the course number in the subject line of the email message. In the body of the text, start off with a statement like: "Comments by James Critic on Mariana Superstar's abstract." Do not send attachments.
- Your paper is due on the last day of class.

Please review 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*. *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.