

PSC 260.01
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:45
308 Graham Building

Fabrice Lehoucq
Department of Political Science
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Spring 2008
Office: 220 Graham Bldg
Tel No.: 334-9822
E-mail: Fabrice_Lehoucq@uncg.edu
Office hours: T& TH 3:30-4:30 &
by appointment

Introduction:

This course offers an introduction to concepts and theories relevant for the study of comparative government. A central purpose of the comparative study of government is to understand the origins and differences between 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 a case study of Uruguay.

Course Requirements:

The class requires students, first, to take two tests, each of which is worth 20 percent of the class grade (for a total of 40 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 short research paper, for a total of 30 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 other countries worth 30 percent of the class grade. For 2 days of each week during most of the semester (or a total of 28 entries spread throughout the semester), the student will record the author, title, and date of at least one article 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 handwritten. Students should regularly visit the Writing Center for advice and suggestions on repeated drafts of their term paper and on the newspaper log. The appendices of this syllabus contain more detailed instructions about the production of the newspaper log and this 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 pop quizzes and assignments. There are no make-up pop quizzes. For every day the newspaper log or term paper is late, a student's grade will drop by an entire letter grade.

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, *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 | Date | Topic and Reading |
|--------------|----------------------|--|
| 1-2 | Jan. 15 & 17 | What is Politics? What is the State? What is Comparative Politics? Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 1-2. |
| 3 | Jan. 22 | Meeting with Ms. Kellam, CITI Lab. |
| 4 | Jan. 24 | Similarities and Differences Among Political Systems Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 16. |
| 5-7 | Jan. 29 & 31, Feb. 5 | Political Disorder and the State of Nature Readings: Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chap. 13. (http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan.html#CHAPTERXIII) and Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps i-ii What is Political Order? Why Does it Exist? Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps iii-iv. |
| | | The State and the Social Contract Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk I, chaps v-ix. |
| 8-10 | Feb. 7, 12, | Political Ideologies |

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------|--|
| | & 14. | Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 13. |
| 11 | Feb. 19 | Types of Government Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 2. |
| 12 | Feb. 21 | Direct and Representative Democracy Reading: Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk III, chaps xii-xvii. |
| 13-17 | Feb. 26 & 28 & March 4, 6 | The Separation of Powers, Presidentialism, and Parliamentarism Readings: Federalist Number 51 (http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm). Exam: March 6 |
| 18 | March 18 | The Judiciary Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , pp. 49-51. |
| 19-21 | March 20, 25, & 27 | Electoral Laws and Political Parties Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chaps. 11, 12, & 8. |
| 22 | April 1 | Interest Groups and Social Movements Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 9. |
| 23 | April 3 | Federal and Unitary Systems of Government Reading: Newton and Van Deth, <i>Foundations</i> , chap. 5. |
| 24 | April 8 | Authoritarian Systems Reading: Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 81-149. |
| 25-30 | April 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29 | Political Reform and Democratization Reading: Weschler, <i>A Miracle, A Universe</i> , pp. 150-236. Exam: April 10 |
| 31 | May 1 & 6. | Conclusion |

Appendix 1

Guidelines for *The New York Times* Log

Articles should focus on the domestic politics of foreign countries. They should not discuss the articles that examine the international relations or, put differently, the relations between countries.

Entries should be reflective. They can:

- Explain why the events discussed in the article are new for the reader;
- Identify what the reader learned and how it relates to class themes;
- Offer an assessment of ongoing events in a country. For example, a student might discuss why an election in a country had an unexpected outcome.

In other words, simply summarizing what the events and trends the article describes is unacceptable.

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.

Appendix 2

Research Paper Assignment

PSC 260: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Please write a paper that explains whether and why a democracy (new or old) has addressed major violations of human rights by state officials. Each paper must venture a hypothesis about why a political system has or has not addressed the demands for justice made by victims of human rights violations.

Any democratic country is ripe for study, except Uruguay. Make sure that there is evidence that public officials (typically members of the security forces) did systematically violate the rights of a non-trivial number of people. Bear in mind that "address" may mean that the victims have gotten no justice or that they are unsatisfied with the justice that they have received.

This paper is supposed to be empirical and analytical. It needs to cite relevant material that documents claims about injustice. It also should present evidence for this hypothesis. And your paper should defend its conclusions; it has to make, in other words, a persuasive argument. 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 under 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.

In writing your essay, 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). On 22 January, you 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.

This assignment's due dates are:

- A tentative bibliography with at least 10 sources – 12 February.
- An outline of your paper – 4 March.
- A 50-word abstract of your paper (on a sheet of paper with your name and email) – 20 March;
- Comments on a peer's abstract – 26 March. Send both to me electronically by 5pm 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 6 May.

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 exceedingly 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 my claims? Do I have evidence for my claims?
3. Have I organized my paper effectively?
4. Have I filled my paper with unnecessary facts?
5. Have I asked the tutor or a friend for her overall impressions on my work?

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.