

PSC 260: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Location: SCIE 355

TR 9:30 - 10:45

Instructor: Nicholas Vaccaro

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Office hours: Tues 12:00-2:00

Course Overview

This class provides an introduction to the comparative study of international politics. It begins with an overview of general themes and ideas that are central to the study of government around the world. Following this general introduction, six specific countries are examined in more detail. The class focuses on the issues of democracy and democratization; we will assess differences among established democracies in the industrialized world, and will pay particular attention to the challenges and obstacles to democratization and effective democratic governance in developing countries.

Required Readings

There is one required textbook for this course:

Gabriel A. Almond, G. Bingham Powell Jr., Kaare Strøm, Russell J. Dalton. *Longman Custom Comparative Politics*. Longman, 2006

The additional required readings will be posted in PDF or Word format on the class's Blackboard site under "Course Documents." An approximate schedule of topics and readings is included below. An up to date weekly schedule with precise assignment dates for individual readings (as well as any changes to the readings) will be available throughout the semester on Blackboard under "Announcements."

Assignments and Grading

The course grade will be based on the following assignments and tests. More information on the midterm and final exam (and a short study guide) will be provided prior to the tests.

Midterm exam (20%)

Final exam (30%)

Paper (30%) - A research paper of 8-10 pages on a country not studied in class. Specific topics for the paper will be provided when the paper is assigned.

Quizzes (15%) - Six factual quizzes, one on each of the country case studies. The quizzes will be announced in advance, and will take place on the last day of each country

section. They may include material from both the readings and the lectures. Each student's lowest quiz grade will be dropped from the final average.

Attendance and Participation (5%)

Policies

Makeup exams or quizzes will also only be allowed for students who have made advance arrangements due to an unavoidable conflict, or have a documented emergency.

Requests for extensions on the term paper will be granted only in extreme circumstances, and must be arranged beforehand. Unexcused late papers will be penalized by two points per day, up to a maximum penalty of 14 points.

Outline of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

a. The Comparative Study of Politics

Reading: Almond et. al. Chapters 1-2

b. Ideas, Interests, and Parties

Reading: Almond et. al. Chapters 3-5

c. Institutions and Democracy

Reading: Almond et. al. chapter 6

Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is And Is Not"

Midterm Exam

II. Politics in Advanced Industrial Democracies

a. Country Study: Great Britain

Reading: Michael Sodaro, "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland"

Donley Studlar, "The British General Election of 2005"

News articles

b. Country Study: Germany:

Reading: Russell J. Dalton, "Politics in Germany" (in Almond et. al)
"A System in Crisis, a Country Adrift" from *The Economist*
News articles

III. Politics in Post-Communist and Developing Countries

a. Introduction

Reading: Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, "Toward Consolidated Democracies"
Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm"

b. Country Study: Russia

Reading: Thomas Remington, "Politics in Russia" (In Almond et. al.)
Lilia Shevtsova, "Russia's Ersatz Democracy"
News Articles

c. Country Study: China

Reading: Melanie Manion, "Politics in China" (In Almond et. al.)
Bruce J. Dickson, "China's Ambivalent Reformers"
Peter Hays Gries " Chinese Nationalism: Challenging the State?"
News articles

d. Country Study: South Africa

Reading: Patrick H. O' Neil, Karl Fields, and Don Share, "South Africa"
Andrew Meldrum, "South Africa on Trial"
News Articles

Term Paper Due

e. Country Study: Iraq

Reading: Charles Hauss and Guilan Deneux, "Iraq"
Phebe Marr, "The Land and People of Modern Iraq"
Phebe Marr, "Democracy in the Rough"
Larry Diamond "Iraq and Democracy: The Lessons Learned"
Achmed Hashim "Iraq's Civil War"
News Articles

Final Exam