

POLITICAL SCIENCE 204: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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Office Hours: Thursday 1:00-2:30 (or by appt.)

Spring 2018

Tues. & Thurs. 10:00-11:50

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Objectives and Approach:

This course is an introduction to comparative politics, a field of political science that involves cross-national analysis and area studies of domestic politics in other countries. The course is designed to: (1) teach students to think about politics in systematic, theoretical, and comparative terms, and (2) to foster some knowledge and understanding of the politics of seven selected countries: Great Britain, Russia, Nigeria, Mexico, Germany, China, and Iran. We shall examine each country's social background and political history, the behavior of citizens and groups, how political institutions operate, and its public policy challenges.

Course Assignments and Grading:

10%= quizzes

5% = "who are you?" assignment

10%= class participation

40%= constitutional design paper

35%= final exam

Class attendance is required, and you will be responsible for all lecture materials. You are expected to do the reading for each week and be prepared to discuss the reading in lecture. If you submit an assignment late, half a letter-grade will be deducted for each day that the assignment is late.

-The **final exam** is fairly straightforward: this is an in-class, closed book test that will include both objective and essay questions.

-The **quizzes** are a bit more complicated: five quizzes will be given during this course, none of which will be announced in advance. There will be **no make-ups** for these quizzes, but only four of your quiz grades will count in compiling your course grade. In other words, one quiz is free- you can miss it or fail it, and there will be no penalty to your grade. The quiz questions will be relatively simple, and will be designed to test whether or not you completed the readings assigned for that day.

-The **"who are you?" assignment** refers to the identity that you will be assigned for the constitutional design project. After you receive your assignment, you must go research your new identity, and write up a one page single-spaced document on exactly who you are and most importantly, what are your goals? That is, what do you want? Consider power more than policy- what sort of power do you want? How are you going to get power? If you're going to rebuild the political structure of your country, what are your priorities? If you have not been assigned a specific person (but instead are an anonymous party leader, legislator, etc.), you do not need to make up a specific identity. Instead, discuss the goals of any person who holds your particular position of power.

And note: if your identity has power under the current constitution of your country, do not assume that your power will automatically remain. You are starting from scratch, so you must make sure that you design a constitution that grants your identity power. The "who are you" assignment is a great opportunity to plan out how you'll do that – i.e., to figure out some basic details of what the institutions of the country should look like if you have power.

-And another tip: some of your identities use a lot of false rhetoric- i.e., they say a lot of nice things but their actions totally contradict their words. When considering what your identity wants, focus on actions, not words- don't let false rhetoric guide your goals.

PLEASE NOTE: You must CITE YOUR SOURCES in the "who are you" assignment. If you do not include citations, you will fail the assignment! In addition, at least one of your citations must be a newspaper article. This assignment is due on Thursday, April 12- you must submit a paper copy of your assignment in class (do not email this assignment). Also, if you have an identity that has been designated as "secret," make sure to attach a blank cover sheet on the top of your "who are you" assignment.

- The **constitutional design paper/project** will be explained in full on the day that it is assigned. A brief explanation: students will work in small groups, and will re-design the institutions and constitution of a case study. Each student in the group must turn in a 6-7 page paper on the day that the country is discussed in class. In other words, each student in the group will write their own original paper- no collaboration on the papers will be accepted- but the group will work together on creating and agreeing on a constitution. The completed, signed constitution must be submitted one week before the paper is due.

Academic Honesty: Fair and effective education requires academic honesty, and any violation is a very serious matter. PSU rules concerning academic dishonesty are spelled out in the General Catalog. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments in this course are *individual*, and no collaboration with any other person is permitted. In-class tests are *closed-book*, with no aids allowed. These rules will be strictly enforced. Any academic dishonesty will without exception be reported to the student's dean for disciplinary action.

Books: The following books have been ordered by the PSU bookstore- all readings are required.

1. O'Neil, Patrick, Karl J. Fields, and Don Share. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. Sixth Edition. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2017 (hereafter: Case Book).
2. O'Neil, Patrick. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. Sixth Edition. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2017 (hereafter: Essentials)
3. Clucas, Richard and Melody Ellis Valdini. *The Character of Democracy: How Institutions Shape Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. (hereafter: *Character of Democracy*)

Class Schedule:

Tues, April 3: Introduction and logistics

Thurs, April 5: Political Organization: the state & the government

1. Essentials, Ch.1 and Ch.2

Tues, April 10: Types of States: Non-democracies versus Democracies

1. Essentials, Ch. 6 and pages 134-148 of Ch. 5
2. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 1

Thurs, April 12: What are the rules (institutions), and why do they matter? The Executive

1. Essentials, pages 150-156 of Ch.5
2. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 5

"who are you?" assignment is due

Tues, April 17: What are the rules (institutions), and why do they matter? The Legislature

1. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 6 and pages 106-115 of Ch. 4
2. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 7

Thurs, April 19: How do we choose our legislatures, and why does it matter? Electoral Systems

1. Essentials, pages 157-168 of Ch. 5
2. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 3

Tues, April 24: Political Parties

1. Essentials, pages 156-157 of Ch. 5
2. *Character of Democracy*, pages 87-98 of Ch. 4

Thurs, April 26: Constitutions, High Court, and Civil Rights

1. Essentials, pages 168-169 of Ch. 5
2. *Character of Democracy*, Ch. 8

Tues, May 1: Culture, Ideology, and Ethnicity

1. Essentials, Ch. 3

Thurs, May 3: ****GROUP MEETINGS****

Tues, May 8: Citizen Involvement: Interest Groups & Violence

1. Essentials, Ch. 7
2. *Character of Democracy*, pages 99-105 of Ch. 4

Thurs, May 10: After the rules are made, what do governments do? What are the challenges that they face? Advanced Democracies

1. Essentials, Ch. 8

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Writing workshop

****Bring typed introductory paragraph of your paper****

Please note: if your identity has been designated as “secret,” please do not write your paragraph about your true identity. Instead, so as to learn about the ideal form of an intro paragraph, pick another person from your country and write your paragraph as if this person is your identity.

Tues, May 15: After the rules are made, what do governments do? What are the challenges that they face? Communism & Developing Democracies

1. Essentials, Ch. 9
2. Essentials, Ch. 10

Thurs, May 17: Case Study- The United Kingdom

1. Case Book, Ch. 2

Tues, May 22: Case Study- Mexico

1. Case Book, Ch. 11

Thurs, May 24: Case Study- Germany

1. Case Book, Ch. 5

Tues, May 29: Case Study- Russia

1. Case Book, Ch. 7

Thurs, May 31: Case Study- China
1. Case Book, Ch.8

Tues, June 5: Case Study-Nigeria
1. Case Book, Ch. 14

Thurs, June 7: Case Study- Iran
1. Case Book, Ch. 10

Tuesday, June 12: FINAL EXAM (10:15-12:05)