

POLI 130.003: Introduction to Comparative Politics

TTh 9:30-10:45 AM, Kenan Labs B121

Instructor: Cole Harvey

Spring 2016

Office Hours: Tuesday 11 am - noon, Thursday 12:30 – 2:30pm, or by appointment

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to comparative politics, a subfield of political science which attempts to answer questions like: Why do some countries become democratic, while others do not? Why do some countries develop economically, while others' economies stagnate? Why do political institutions matter, and can they be tailored to best fit particular societies? In the first portion of class, we will discuss foundational topics like ideology, nationalism, and modern statehood. From there, we will cover democracy, authoritarianism, and the design of political institutions. In the last segment of the course, we will cover specific topics of importance for countries around the world, including political violence and economic development.

Aims and Outcomes

By the end of this course, your understanding of politics and the world we live in will have increased in three ways. First, you will learn the vocabulary that political scientists use to describe, classify, and explain political outcomes (How does a parliamentary system differ from a presidential system? What exactly is socialism?). Second, you will gain a deeper substantive knowledge of several important countries other than the United States, and one country of your own choosing. Finally, you will be able to use your knowledge to create and evaluate causal arguments about politics (for example, "Mexico became a democracy in the late 20th century *because...*").

Required Textbook

Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases

Dickovick, J. Tyler and Jonathan Eastwood

Oxford University Press, 2015 (2013 edition also acceptable; pages numbers will be different)

Course Website (Sakai)

The course website is on Sakai (<http://sakai.unc.edu>). I will use the course website to post the syllabus, lecture slides, and other course information in an easily accessible location. Please let me know immediately if you have any issues logging into the website.

Course Grade Components

10%: Attendance quizzes

10%: Participation

 7%: In-class participation

 3%: Discussion question

20%: Essay 1

25%: Essay 2

10%: Group Presentation

10%: Mid-term exam

15%: Final Exam

Attendance

Since this is a Tuesday-Thursday class, and no one wants to listen to a lecture for an hour and fifteen minutes, our meetings will combine lecture and discussions. Attending class regularly will help you considerably on the exams, and allow you to participate in discussions. I will also take attendance at random throughout the semester, using a very short quiz at the beginning of class. Everyone who submits an answer (right or wrong) will receive full credit; the quiz itself is meant to help you check your understanding of the material. One missed quiz will be dropped without penalty; unexcused absences after the first will result in a reduction in your attendance score. I will send an announcement via Sakai after each quiz, so that anyone who missed class can keep count.

I will excuse absences due to illness with documentation from a doctor or Campus Health Services, due to University-sanctioned events with documentation (i.e., you are traveling to compete in a University athletic event), and for religious observations. In the case of other personal obligations that will prevent you from attending class, please discuss it with me in advance if you would like me to consider excusing the absence.

Participation and discussion questions

Each student will sign up to provide a discussion question once during the semester, which will be used to frame the discussion portion of our Thursday sessions. As a result, we will have 3-4 student-submitted questions each week.

The question must be submitted to the class by email, using the Sakai message tool, by midnight the day before class (that is, by 11:59 pm Wednesday), and also brought to class on Thursday. Discussion questions will be graded on a pass-fail basis.

Discussion questions should be designed to stimulate discussion and go beyond the text of the readings. That is, they should pose a deeper question and not restate definitions or concepts from the reading. Discussion questions are a good opportunity to consider current events, or aspects of American politics, in light of the material we are considering that week.

During discussions, we will often discuss “Case in Context” readings from the textbook. These are short readings from the back of the textbook in which a particular country is used to explore the topic at hand. Discussion questions copied from the “Case in Context” section (perhaps unsurprisingly) won’t be accepted.

Country-case Essays

You are required to submit two five-page papers. The detailed requirements and formatting guidelines will be posted on Sakai. You will select one country to analyze in both papers. You will analyze a country that has received a rating of “partly free” from the democracy-promotion NGO Freedom House, indicating that your country is somewhere between a functioning liberal democracy and a wholly authoritarian regime. Democratic institutions may be present, but they are not functioning properly.

- For Country Paper #1, you will describe how your country’s political regime does or does not meet the definition of democracy, and propose an explanation for incomplete democratic consolidation there.

- For Country Paper #2, you will examine ways that your country can become more democratic in the future, with a focus on political institutions. How would you suggest that the country move toward improving democracy given its own unique history?

Group Presentation

The group presentations are based on the country papers. Having completed two research papers on your country, you are likely to be the class's expert on that case. You will be put into groups with other 'experts,' defined by world region (e.g. Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa). Each group will be asked to come to a consensus about democracy in their region, and will present their findings to the class, along with relevant comparisons and contrasts across their cases. Everyone is expected to participate in the Q&A after each presentation. A full description of the assignment will be posted on Sakai.

Mid-Term Exam

The mid-term will be held on Thursday February 23. It will be a multiple-choice exam (Scantron sheet) meant to test students' comprehension of the readings and lecture material for the first half of the course.

Final Exam

The final will be on Tuesday, **May 3 at 8:00 am**, in our regular classroom. The University sets the final exam schedule. The exam will cover material after the mid-term. The format will include multiple choice questions (Scantron sheet) and a small number of short-answer questions (blue book).

Course Policies

Discussion

I hope to make the class a welcoming place for everyone to join in discussion, and I understand that some students are more comfortable with public speaking than others. Participation in discussion is [valuable for several reasons](#), however. Everyone's perspective can help enrich our discussion, so I encourage you to feel free to offer questions or comments. A few guidelines to follow during discussions:

- While differences of opinion are welcome in the classroom, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. Anyone behaving in a disrespectful way may be asked to leave the classroom.
- Our discussions will be most successful when all voices can be heard.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions! Everyone has different areas of expertise, but it is also likely that others have similar questions.

Electronic Devices

Cell phones should not be used during class (emergencies, of course, excepted). If you use your phone during class, I may deduct from your participation grade. Laptops are welcome, but should generally not be used during discussion sessions. Please be aware that using the laptop for non-class purposes can be distracting for those around you, and is not very difficult for instructors to detect! Using laptops in a distracting way may also result in a reduced participation grade.

Late Penalty

Late work may be penalized up to one letter grade for each 24-hour period that it is late. Please reach out to me in advance if it will be difficult for you to complete an assignment by the deadline.

Communication

I try to respond to emails promptly, but don't be alarmed if it takes a full business day for me to reply. Please include the course number in the subject line of any emails (this makes it harder for your email to get lost).

If you wish to discuss your grade with me, please see me in person. I ask that you allow a 24-hour waiting period after the grade is posted.

Important Dates

1/26: Submit country preferences for essays

2/23: Mid-term exam

3/8: Essay 1 due

4/7: Essay 2 due

4/19: Group presentations begin

5/3: Final exam

Grading Scale

94 – 100: A

90 – 93: A-

87 – 89: B+

84 – 86: B

80 – 83: B-

77 – 79: C+

74 – 76: C

70 – 73: C-

60 – 69: D

0 – 59: F

Useful Resources

The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/> -- Has resources and services that can help improve your academic writing, including one-on-one tutoring, handouts, and support for students for whom English is a second language.

Accessibility Resources and Service: <https://accessibility.unc.edu/> -- Works with colleagues throughout the University to ensure that the programs and facilities of the University are accessible to all students. Additionally, ARS determines reasonable accommodations to provide students with disabilities with equal access to the opportunities available to them at Carolina as independently as possible.

Counseling and Psychological Services: <https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/counseling-and-psychological-services> -- Can provide resources, individual therapy, academic interventions and more to students who are experiencing challenges related to their mental health.

Other resources: <http://studentsuccess.unc.edu/resources-carolina/> -- A fuller list of resources available to students at UNC.

Tips on how to study: <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/24/5824192/study-smarter-learn-better-8-tips-from-memory-researchers>

Course Schedule

Section I: Foundational concepts

- **Week 1: Introduction to political science / comparative politics**
 - 1/12: Introductions, and what is comparative politics?
 - 1/14: Theories, methods, evidence, arguments, examples
 - Readings: Dickovick chapters 1 (skim) and 2
 - Additional reading: “A plea for caution from Russia,” (Putin, V. V.)
<http://nyti.ms/17V0yPh>
- **Week 2: The state**
 - 1/19: The modern state and its origins
 - 1/21: Theories of modern state formation
 - Reading: Dickovick chapter 3 (The State)
 - Case reading: Nigeria overview (skim), pp. 510-517, and case study on weak states: pp.517-518
- **Week 3: Big ideas I: Nationalism**
 - 1/26: Origins of nationalism
 - 1/28: Nationalist conflict, Yugoslav wars
 - Readings: Dickovick chapter 13 (Nationalism and National Identity)
 - Case readings: “The Nigerian Civil War” pp. 522
- **Week 4: Big ideas II: Ideology and Religion**
 - 2/2: Ideology
 - 2/4: Ideologies in practice: Russia and Eastern Europe
 - Reading: Dickovick chapter 15 (Ideology and Religion in Modern Politics)
 - Case readings “Religious differences and conflict in Nigeria”, p. 523;

Section II: Democracy and authoritarianism

- **Week 5: Democracy and democratization**
 - 2/9: Defining democracy
 - 2/11: Theories of democratization
 - Readings: Dickovick chapter 6 (Democracy and Democratization)
 - Case readings: India overview (skim), pp. 455-462, “Democracy’s Success in India,” p. 464; “Is American Democracy in Trouble?” pp. 562-63
- **Week 6: Varieties of authoritarianism**
 - 2/16: Authoritarian regimes
 - 2/18: Authoritarian elections + review for mid-term
 - Readings: Dickovick chapter 7 (Authoritarian Regimes and Democratic Breakdown),
 - Case readings: Russia case overview (skim), pp. 525-533, “Oligarchy, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in Russia,” pp. 511-12
- **Week 7: Mid-term week**
 - 2/23: Mid-term
 - 2/25: No class. But note that there are two chapter readings next week.

Section III: Institutions

- **Week 8: Federalism, Legislatures and Elections**
 - 3/1: Federalism and devolution
 - 3/3: Electoral systems
 - Readings: Dickovick chapters 8 and 9 (Constitutions and Constitutional Design, Legislatures and Legislative Elections)
 - Case reading: “The Mother of Parliaments: The UK and the Westminster Model,” p. 549
 - Optional: “Federalism and Differences in Development in India,” pp. 464-465
- **Week 9: Presidential and parliamentary systems, electoral manipulation**
 - 3/8: Electoral manipulation
 - **Paper 1 due 3/8**
 - 3/10: Parliamentary systems
 - Dickovick chapter 10 (Executive)
 - Case readings: “Executives in Russia: Formal and Informal Powers,” pp. 534-535
- **Week 10: No class—Spring Break**
 - 3/15: Spring Break
 - 3/17: Spring Break
- **Week 11: Parties and interest groups**
 - 3/22: Political parties and party systems
 - 3/24: Interest groups
 - Dickovick chapter 11 (Parties, Party Systems, Interest Groups)
 - Case readings: “Personalism and the Party System in Russia,” pp.535-36
 - Optional: “Consensus-based Politics in Germany,” p.452

Section IV: Outcomes

- **Week 12: Political violence**
 - 3/29: Contentious politics
 - 3/31: Revolutions, successful and failed
 - Reading: Dickovick chapter 12 (Contention and Revolutions)
 - Discussion readings:
 - “What ISIS Really Wants,”
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/> (long read; skim in order to get the gist of the argument)
 - “What I Discovered from Interviewing ISIS Fighters,”
<http://www.thenation.com/article/what-i-discovered-from-interviewing-isis-prisoners/>
- **Week 13: Political economy and the welfare state**
 - 4/5: Political economy
 - 4/7: Welfare state
 - **Paper 2 due 4/7**
 - Readings: Dickovick chapter 4 (Political Economy)
 - Case readings: “Did Free Markets Help the US Get Rich?” p. 561
 - Optional: Japan overview (skim), pp. 482-489, “State-led Development in Japan,” p. 490

- **Week 14: Comparative Politics and International Relations**
 - 4/12: The EU, and the democratic peace
 - 4/14: Review session for final exam + work on group projects
 - Readings: Dickovick chapter 16 (Comparative Politics and IR)
 - Optional case reading: “Resource Management in Japan,” pp. 494; “Globalization and Culture in France” p. 439
- **Week 15: Begin group work**
 - 4/19: Group presentations
 - 4/21: Group presentations
- **Week 16: Group presentations**
 - 4/26: Group presentations
- **Final exam: May 3 at 8:00am**