

POLI 130.002: Introduction to Comparative Politics

TTh 2:00-3:15 PM, Murphey 0105

Instructor: Cole Harvey

Fall 2017

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00 - 11:00 am, Thursday 3:30 – 4:30pm, 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, 2nd ed (1st edition also acceptable; though page numbers and some content will be different)

Course Website (Sakai)

The course website is on Sakai (<https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli130.002>). 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
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, discussions, and exercises. 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, discussion, and current events

Participation is an important element of this class, especially during discussion periods and exercises. During discussions, we will often consider “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. We will also often draw on the discussion questions included at the end of chapter readings. When indicated on the syllabus, please familiarize yourself with the cases and/or discussion questions prior to class, in order to facilitate a better discussion. It is a good idea to jot down a few thoughts relating to the discussion question after reading the chapter.

Participation is multi-faceted, and includes engaging in lecture, discussion, exercises, and office hours. One additional way to gain participation points is by using current events to illustrate and discuss course concepts. In order to do this, you must summarize a current news article (no older than two weeks) for the class, and pose a discussion question. Time will be set aside for current

event discussion on Thursdays. **Please let me know by 10 am on Thursday** if you wish to present a news article that day. Each student can present a current-event story once during the semester, for 1-3 participation points. News stories should be taken from credible, mainstream outlets. Examples include major newspapers (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post [free digital access with .edu email], etc), non-partisan news outlets (e.g. NPR), and major international news bureaus (e.g. BBC). If you are unsure about the credibility of a news source, please check with me.

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.

1. 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.
2. 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 Tuesday October 3. 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 Saturday, **December 9 at 12:00 pm**, 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, and everyone's perspective can help enrich our discussion. I encourage you to feel free to offer questions or comments. A few guidelines to follow during discussions:

1. 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.
2. Our discussions will be most successful when all voices can be heard.
3. 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 permitted, 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.

Also, it is well-established that taking notes by hand better promotes understanding and retention than taking notes by computer. The choice is yours, but I strongly recommend taking notes with pen and paper. See here: <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>

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

8/31: Submit country preferences for essays
10/3: Mid-term exam
10/17: Essay 1 due
11/14: Essay 2 due
11/28: Group presentations begin
12/9: 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

1. Week 1: Introduction to political science / comparative politics

8/22: Introductions + theories, methods, and arguments

Readings: Dickovick chapters 1 (skim) and 2

Discussion questions: Ch. 2, question 5

8/24: The modern state

Readings: Dickovick chapter 3

2. Week 2: No class this week, region preferences due

8/29: NO CLASS

8/31: NO CLASS

Submit region preferences by 8/31 via Sakai assignments tab

3. Week 3: Big ideas I: Nationalism

9/5: Origins of nationalism

9/7: Nationalist conflict, Yugoslav wars

Readings: Dickovick chapter 13 (Nationalism and National Identity); discussion question 4

Case readings: Nigeria overview (skim), pp. 510-517, and "The Nigerian Civil War" pp. 522

4. Week 4: Big ideas II: Ideology and Religion; Race/Ethnicity and Gender

9/12: Ideology

Reading: Dickovick chapter 15 (Ideology and Religion in Modern Politics); Discussion question 5

9/14: Race, ethnicity, gender

Reading: Dickovick chapter 14 (Race, Ethnicity, and Gender); Discussion questions 2 and 3

Section II: Democracy and authoritarianism

1. Week 5: Democracy and democratization

9/19: Defining democracy

9/21: Theories of democratization

Readings: Dickovick chapter 6 (Democracy and Democratization) including 'Thinking Comparatively;' discussion questions 1 and 4

Case readings: India overview (skim), pp. 455-462, "Democracy's Success in India," p. 464; "Is American Democracy in Trouble?" pp. 562-63

2. **Week 6: Varieties of authoritarianism**

9/26: Authoritarian regimes

9/28: Authoritarian elections + review for mid-term

Readings: Dickovick chapter 7 (Authoritarian Regimes and Democratic Breakdown) including 'Thinking Comparatively,' discussion questions 1, 4, 5

Case readings: Russia case overview (skim), pp. 525-533, "Oligarchy, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in Russia," pp. 511-12

3. **Week 7: Mid-term week**

10/3: Mid-term

10/5: No class.

(But note that there are two chapter readings next week.)

Section III: Institutions

1. **Week 8: Federalism, Legislatures and Elections**

10/10: Federalism and devolution

Reading: Dickovick chapter 8 (Constitutions and Constitutional Design), discussion question 4

10/12: Electoral systems

Reading: Dickovick chapter 9 (Legislatures and Legislative Elections), discussion questions 3, 4

(a) *Case reading:* "Federalism and Differences in Development in India," pp. 464-465

2. **Week 9: Electoral manipulation**

10/17: Electoral manipulation

Paper 1 due 10/17

10/19: NO CLASS (Fall break)

3. **Week 10: Executives**

10/24: Parliamentary systems

10/26: Presidential systems

Reading: Dickovick chapter 10 (Executive), discussion questions 1, 2

Case readings: "Executives in Russia: Formal and Informal Powers," pp. 534-535

4. **Week 11: Parties and interest groups**

10/31: Political parties and party systems

11/2: Interest groups

Reading: Dickovick chapter 11 (Parties, Party Systems, Interest Groups), discussion questions 4, 5

Case readings: "Personalism and the Party System in Russia," pp.535-36

Section IV: Outcomes

1. **Week 12: Political violence**

11/7: Contentious politics

11/9: Revolutions, successful and failed

Reading: Dickovick chapter 12 (Contention and Revolutions) including 'Thinking Comparatively,' discussion questions 2, 4

Discussion readings:

"What I Discovered from Interviewing ISIS Fighters," <http://www.thenation.com/article/what-i-discovered-from-interviewing-isis-prisoners/>

2. **Week 13: Political economy and group project**

11/14: Political economy and the welfare state

Reading: Dickovick chapter 4 (Political Economy), discussion questions 2, 3

Paper 2 due 11/14

11/16: Review session for final exam + work on group projects

3. **Week 14: Economic and social development**

11/21: Development

Reading: Dickovick chapter 5 (Development)

Case reading: China case overview, pp. 412-420 (skim), and "How did China become an economic power?" pp.420-421

11/23: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

4. **Week 15: Begin group presentations**

11/28: Group presentations

11/30: Group presentations

Week 16: Group presentations

12/5: Group presentations

Final exam: December 9 (Saturday) at 12:00 pm