Introduction to Comparative Politics
Political Science 240 - Section 1
Spring 2009
M, W, F: 9:20-10:10, Weinstein 305

Professor: Dr. Jenny Pribble
Office Hours: Mondays and Fridays 12:30-2pm or by appointment
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Overview and Course Objectives:
Why do some countries have democratic forms of government while others are ruled by authoritarian leaders? Why do several European countries have welfare states while the United States does not? Why does ethnic violence occur? Why is Latin America characterized by such high levels of income inequality? These are but a few of the interesting and important questions that we will analyze and discuss during the course of this semester.

This is an introductory course in comparative politics. The class is designed to be accessible to students with no prior knowledge of particular regions of the world or with the study of comparative politics. There are, therefore, no prerequisites. Students will explore major themes in comparative politics and analyze several country case studies. By the end of the semester, you will be able to explain concepts such as democracy, authoritarianism, the welfare state, dependent development, and the comparative method. Moreover, students will be able to identify the challenges facing countries in Africa, Europe, and Latin America and offer competing explanations for why these countries exhibit such divergent political and economic trajectories.

Course Organization:
The course is divided into two sections. During the first half of the semester we will study general themes in Comparative Politics, including democracy, authoritarianism, and political economy. In the latter part of the semester we will analyze country cases from distinct regions of the world, including Africa, Europe, and Latin America. The class will meet three times a week for 50 minutes. Our in-class time will involve interactive lectures and a discussion of the readings. We will also carry out some group projects and view documentaries and films.

Required Texts:
1.) O’Neil, Patrick. 2007. Essentials of Comparative Politics (Second Edition). New York: Norton. (In the remainder of this syllabus I refer to this as “Essentials.”)
2.) O’Neil, Patrick and Ronald Rogowski. 2006. *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*. New York: Norton. (In the remainder of this syllabus I refer to this as “ER.”)

3.) Online Reserves & Blackboard: Several of the readings required for the class are taken from scholarly journals or books. These readings are available through the library’s e-reserves and/or through blackboard (as noted in the syllabus). I will post the class lectures and other handouts on blackboard (you can access this by logging on at: blackboard.richmond.edu).

You should complete the assigned readings before each class session. I will provide reading questions on blackboard to help guide your preparation. Coming to class prepared is important so that you can participate actively in discussions and engage in the interactive lecture period. I reserve the right to give unannounced reading quizzes if I sense that students are not completing the assignments. Grades on such a quiz would count toward your participation.

**Recommended Texts:**
This class will deal with the politics of countries as diverse as Sweden and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Keeping up-to-date with current events around the globe will, therefore, serve you well. I highly recommend that you read online newspapers or take advantage of the free New York Times newspaper service available to all UR students. You can pick up a free copy of the paper at several campus locations, including most residence halls, the Heilman Dining Center, and the Business School.

**Evaluation and Course Requirements:**

1.) **Class attendance and participation (10%)**

It is essential that you come to class prepared. This means that you are expected to complete and reflect upon the required reading before each class session so that you can actively engage in discussion and ask questions.

We will be dealing with interesting and controversial issues in class, and I hope that we will have lively and fun debates. This is the essence of a political science class. It is important that you respect one another and the instructor. Remember that differences of opinion can provide an opportunity for intellectual growth.

Be on time and attend all classes. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class and if you are more than 10 minutes late it will count as an absence. After 3 absences, any additional absence will result in a one-letter-grade reduction to your participation grade.

2.) **Country presentations (10%)**
In order to deepen your knowledge of specific countries, you will work in groups of two people to prepare and deliver a short (10-12 minute) presentation about a country that is particularly relevant to the themes discussed during that day’s class. The presentation should provide a brief historical background, discuss the political regime and the country’s political-institutional set-up, and provide an overview of the primary domestic and international challenges that the state faces. You should use power point for the presentation and send me a copy of the file after your presentation. In addition to other resources, I encourage you to use the library’s research guide to help prepare the presentation:
http://library.richmond.edu/information/csguides/PLSC240Pribble.htm Please feel free to come and meet with me about the presentation as well.

3.) Three Essays (30% [1st = 5%, 2nd = 10%, and 3rd = 15%])
You will write three short research essays about central themes explored in this course. The paper assignments will be posted on blackboard and we will go over them in class. Papers cannot be submitted via email and must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due-date. A late paper will result in a letter-grade reduction in grade per day late.

4.) Mid-term Exam (25%)
A closed-book mid-term exam will be given on March 6. The exam will mix short answer and long essay questions. You are responsible for mastering all course materials, including aspects of the reading that may not have been discussed during class.

5.) Final Exam (25%)
A closed-book final exam will be given on May 2. The exam will mix short answer and long essay questions and will cover the entire semester. You are responsible for mastering all course materials, including aspects of the reading that may not have been discussed during class.

Late Work: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Late assignments will result in a letter grade reduction per day late.

Make-up Work: There will be no make-ups for either exam unless there are documented extraordinary circumstances that prevented you from taking the exam. Additionally, there will be no extra credit assignments.

Honor Code: All work must adhere to the University’s Student Honor Code and pledge. For details of the code, see: http://www.richmond.edu/about/honorcode.html. Please write and sign the pledge on all assignments and tests.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism, very briefly, refers to stealing other peoples’ written work (from books, articles, newspapers, web sources, etc.) or verbal ideas. You must cite all material that is not your own. If you have doubts of what
constitutes plagiarism, consult the student honor code, and/or talk to me. Finally, all in-class exams are to be taken without the assistance of books, notes, or other people.

**Classroom Etiquette:** I want to create a nice learning environment for you and your peers. To do this, I ask that you respect a few basic ground rules:

- I will start class on time and expect you to arrive to class on time. I make important announcements at the beginning of class as well as take attendance. In addition, people coming in late could disrupt the professor and their fellow students.

- Many students prefer to take notes with their laptops. This is fine; however, I expect you to refrain from activities unrelated to the class (e.g. emailing, instant messaging, surfing the internet). I reserve the right to ask you not to use your computer if I suspect you are engaging in these activities.

- Please remember to turn off your cell phone.

**Getting Help:** If you are having difficulties with the class and reading materials, please come and see me during my office hours. I also encourage you to use the resources of the Writing Center (http://writing.richmond.edu/), Speech Center (http://speech.richmond.edu/), and the Academic Skills Center (http://oncampus.richmond.edu/student/affairs/office/asc/).

**Class Schedule and Assignments:**

**Week 1: What is Comparative Politics?**

January 12: Introduction & Syllabus

January 14: An overview of comparative politics

- **Essentials:** “Chapter 1: Introduction,” (pgs. 1-19).

January 16: The Comparative Method:


**Week 2: Using the Comparative Method to Explain Political Outcomes**

January 19: Approaches to Studying Comparative Politics

- **Online Reserves:** Peters, B. Guy. “Approaches in Comparative Politics,” in Daniele Carmani (ed.) *Comparative Politics*. (pgs. 44-61).
January 21: Comparative Research: In-class exercise & **Receive Writing Assignment #1**
- **ER:** “Observation, Speculation, and Modeling,” (pgs. 7-31).

January 23: Applying the Comparative Method

**Week 3: Understanding Key Concepts in Comparative Politics**

January 26: The State
- **Essentials:** “Chapter 2: States,” (pgs. 20-43).
- **ER:** “War and the State in Africa,” (pgs. 46-61).

**FIRST PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

January 28: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Comparative Politics: In-class Film (Ghosts of Rwanda)
- **Essentials:** “Chapter 3: Nations and Society,” (pgs. 44-55). **Please note that I have not assigned the full chapter, but only a portion**
- **Blackboard:** Reading TBA

January 30: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Comparative Politics.
- **ER:** “The Global Menace of Local Strife,” (pgs. 79-83)
  “Clash of Civilization,” (pgs. 105-118)
  “Civilizational Imprisonments,” (pgs. 118-126)

- **Online Reserves:** Varshney, Ashutosh. “Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Carlos Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.).

**Week 4: Political Economy**

February 2: What is Political Economy: Understanding the Building Blocks
- **Essentials:** “Chapter 4: Political Economy,” (pgs. 77-89).
- **Online Reserves:** Sodaro, Michael J. “Chapter 14: Political Economy,” in *Comparative Politics a Global Introduction*. (ppgs. 342-356).
February 4: In-class film: *Life & Debt*

February 6: In-class film: *Life & Debt* + Discussion

**Week 5: Political Regime Type: what is democracy? How do democratic regimes come to exist? How do democracies differ from one another? Political Regime Type: Authoritarian Regimes**

February 9: What is Political Economy: the Big Picture

- **Essentials**: “Chapter 4: Political Economy,” (pgs. 89-109).

In-class activity about: China, Sweden, Brazil, and Japan.

**Group Presentation 1: South Korea**

February 11: Defining Democracy & Sources of Democracy

- **Essentials**: “Chapter 6: Democracy,” (pgs. 134-142 [stop at ‘Electoral Systems’]).
- **ER**: “What Democracy is… and is not,” (pgs 247-256).


February 13: Democratic Transitions & the Third Wave of Democracy


**Group Presentation 2: Argentina**

**Week 6: Political Regimes and Democracy Continued– Political Institutions and State Design**

February 16: Democratic Transitions & Democratic Consolidation

**Receive Writing Assignment #2**

- **Blackboard**: Print and read the handout on writing tips; pleas also bring it to class.
February 18: How do democracies differ?: Political Institutions and State Design
- **Essentials**: “Chapter 6: Democracy,” (pg. 142-160).

**Group Presentation 3: the United Kingdom**

February 20: How do democracies differ? -- Political Institutions and State Design

**Week 7: Political Regime Type: what is authoritarianism? Why do authoritarian regimes emerge? How do authoritarian regimes stay in power? What are the consequences of authoritarianism?**

February 23: Defining Authoritarianism
- **Essentials**: “Chapter 5: Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism,” (pg 110-133).
- **ER**: “Modern Nondemocratic Regimes,” (168-180)

February 25: A Study in Totalitarianism: In-class Film on North Korea: *A State of Mind*

**SECOND PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

February 27: Finish in-class film and discuss: *A State of Mind*

**Week 8: Review and Exam**

March 2: Authoritarianism Continued
- **ER**: “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” (pg. 181-192).

**Group Presentation 4: Russia**

March 4: Catch-Up, Review, & Wrap-up

March 6: **Mid-Term Exam**
Week 9: Advanced Industrialized Democracies

March 16: An Overview of Advanced Industrialized Democracies & the EU

March 18: How does the EU Work?
  • Online Reserves: Reading TBA

March 20: The EU: Obstacles in the Integration Process


  • Blackboard: Milner, Henry. “Yes to the Europe I want; No to this one,” Some Reflections on Frances’ Rejection of the EU Constitution,” PS Online (Pgs. 257-260).


Group Presentation 5: France

Week 10: Advanced Industrialized Democracies and the Welfare State

March 23: The Welfare State

March 25: The Welfare State & Activity

March 27: Why the U.S. Doesn’t Have a Welfare State:
Week 11: Eastern Europe

March 30: The Communist System

- **Essentials**: “Chapter 8: Communism & Postcommunism,” (pg. 189-201).

April 1: The Dual Transition

- **Essentials**: “Chapter 8: Communism & Post-Communism,” (pg. 201-218).
- **ER**: “Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Post-Communist Experience,” (pg. 371-381).

Group Presentation 6: Poland

April 3: Post-Communist Trajectories and the Challenges of Development


Group Presentation 7: China

Week 12: Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries

April 6: The Challenges of Development and Democratization

- **Essentials**: “Chapter 9: Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries,” (pg. 219-230).

Group Presentation 8: South Africa

April 8: In-Class Movie: *Democracy in the Rough*

Receive Paper Assignment #3

April 10: Africa and the Challenges of Democracy & Development
Week 13: Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries

April 13: Latin America overview

April 15: A Case Study: Chile
   - Online Reserves:

April 17: In-class movie TBA
   **Paper #3 Due Today**

Week 14: Bringing It Together: Big Questions in Comparative Politics

April 20: Finish In-class movie & Discussion

April 22: Poverty and Inequality and its Effects on Democratic Stability

No Class Thanksgiving Break

Group Presentation 9: Mexico

April 24: Bringing it together, What have we learned about Comparative Politics?

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, May 2, 7-10pm.
   ** Since this is the last exam period, you also have the option of taking the final on Thursday April 30 from 9am-12pm. Please contact me if you are interested in this option.