INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Spring 2010
POLI 2053, Section 3
3:10-4:30, T/Th
117 Tureaud Hall

INSTRUCTOR:
Kristin Wylie
Political Science Department
Stubbs 217
Office hours: Tuesday 4:30-6 & Thursday 1:00-2:30
Email: knwylie@mail.utexas.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

In recent decades, the Cold War has ended, dozens of countries have democratized, and people have mobilized in social movements fighting for the rights of women, ethnic minorities, the landless, and beyond. Furthermore, the flow of capital, labor, and goods across borders and the emergence of transnational issues such as climate change and terrorism have demonstrated the increasingly globalized nature of our world.

This course is designed to provide students with the tools and concepts to understand such events and issues. We will spend the first part of the course learning about the method of and issues explored by comparative politics. For the remaining weeks, we will use this method of comparison to study domestic/internal politics in six countries (Mexico, Brazil, Britain, China, India, and the US).

Having successfully completed this general education course, students should have developed broad knowledge and critical understanding of political phenomena. The assignments and participation-based nature of the course are intended to enhance critical thinking and written and spoken communication skills. By learning about politics in diverse settings, students will also gain an understanding of other cultures throughout the world.

REQUIRED TEXT


This book is available for purchase at the university bookstore. Any additional readings will be posted on Moodle.
REQUIREMENTS/ GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Students are responsible for all material in the lectures and for completing all weekly readings by the Tuesday session.

Students will be evaluated according to the following (A: 90-100; B: 80-90; C: 70-80; D: 60-70; F: 0-59):

1. Five unannounced brief short-answer quizzes (5% each, 25% total). There will be seven quizzes administered, thereby allowing students to drop the two lowest grades. These quizzes will be based on the assigned readings and lectures, and are intended to incentivize students to keep up with the readings and attend class regularly. Since students may drop two quiz grades, make-ups will not be allowed.

2. Midterm exam (25%). This will be an in-class, closed book exam consisting of multiple choice questions, identifications, and short essays. Bring a scantron and a blue book. Date: March 11.

3. Current events (5%). Each student will present to the class a brief analysis (one typed page, double-spaced, and a 5-minute presentation) of a news article of his/her choosing concerning a political event in a country other than the US that he/she finds interesting. Acceptable sources include but are not limited to The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Economist. Students should consult the instructor with questions regarding additional sources. A presentation sign-up sheet will be passed around during the first week of class. A schedule of presentations will be posted on Moodle.

4. Two country paper (15%). Students will write a 5-7 page paper analyzing the consequences of a political event (election, protest, strike, new law, economic/political reforms, etc.) in two countries not covered in class. Due: April 22, beginning of class. Late papers will be deducted one letter grade each day.

5. Final exam (30%). This will be an in-class, closed book cumulative exam consisting of multiple choice questions and essays, designed to evaluate students’ understanding of the major issues treated in the course. Bring a scantron and a blue book. Date: May 12, 3:00-5:00.

Make-up policy: Students are expected to take all exams on the scheduled dates. There will be no exceptions made for the quizzes. Exceptions for the midterm and final exams will be made only in the event of: 1) extreme emergencies, defined as a serious medical illness (accompanied by a physician’s note) or death of a close family member or 2) participation in University-sponsored events (official notification must be presented at least three weeks prior to the scheduled exam).
ACCOMMODATIONS:

Students with documented disabilities requiring accommodations should present their letter from the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to the instructor at the start of the semester to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided.

POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:

Students are expected to conform to University rules regarding scholastic dishonesty. Penalties for violation of these rules will be strictly enforced.

RESPECT IN THE CLASSROOM:

1. In class discussions, students are required to be civil and respect a diverse range of perspectives.
2. The use of cell phones or other electronic devices are strictly prohibited. Students may use laptop computers to type notes during lectures, but internet surfing during class time will not be tolerated.
3. Students are to arrive and leave class on time.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS*

I. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

January 19: Introductory issues
January 21: Issues in Comparative Politics (Chapter 1)
January 26 & 28: Comparing Political Systems (Chapter 2)
February 2: Political Culture and Political Socialization (Chapter 3)
February 4: Interest Articulation (Chapter 4)
February 9 & 11: Interest Aggregation and Political Parties (Chapter 5)
February 16: Mardi Gras (no class)
February 18 & 23: Government and Policymaking (Chapter 6)
February 25: TBD
March 2 & 4: Public Policy (Chapter 7)
March 9: Exam review
**March 11: MIDTERM EXAM

II. COUNTRY STUDIES

March 16 & 18: Mexico (Chapter 14)
March 23 & 25: Brazil (Chapter 15)
March 30 & April 1: Britain (Chapter 8)
April 6 & 8: Spring Break (no class)
April 13 & 15: China (Chapter 13)
April 20 & 22: India (Chapter 17)
**April 22: TWO COUNTRY PAPER DUE
April 27 & 29: United States (Chapter 19)
May 4: Course wrap-up
May 6: Exam review
May 12: FINAL EXAM (3:00-5:00)

*Schedule of readings is subject to change.