Political Science 2053: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2009
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:40-1:30 a.m.
228 Tureaud Hall

Instructor
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Office Hours: MW 10:30-12:15 p.m. and by appointment

Course Overview:
What explains the fall of the Soviet Union? What separates democratic regimes from authoritarian ones? Why did empires disappear in the 20th century? What initiates revolutions? What were the reasons for the fall of Weimar Germany? What is political culture? What is the role of the European Union? How do presidential roles differ in France, Russia, and Brazil? How did Soviet communism differ from Chinese communism?

Political Science 2053 is an introduction to the study of comparative politics, one of the four major subfields of political science (along with international relations, American politics, and political theory). As a subfield of political science, comparative politics examines the domestic/internal politics of countries throughout the world, with interest in making generalizations about politics in different domestic settings. However, there is more to this field than just descriptions of political and economic characteristics of countries; rather, comparative analysis tries to understand the existence and significance of these characteristics on both the individual and systemic levels. This course places emphasis not just on the contemporary politics of a country but also the historical circumstances that shape the occurrence of these events as well as a cultural perspective that includes gender, ethnicity, and religion. This course aims at stimulating your interest in the study of comparative politics through the introduction of the most important concepts, themes, and approaches in the field, but most importantly inspire you to broaden your view of the world and your place in it.

Organization of the Course:
The course is divided into three main sections: introducing the field and concepts; advanced, industrial countries; and transitioning/authoritarian countries. There is an introduction into comparative politics and the field's major concepts. The focus here will be on the why, how, and what comparativists study, the differences between comparative politics and international relations, and the major themes of comparative politics. The next two sections cover different regimes divided into advanced industrial countries and transitional/authoritarian countries respectively. The student will be presented with a broad view of historical and contemporary developments in a selection of countries. The developed countries include industrialized countries, within the Western European and United States' sphere of influence, such as Britain, France, and Germany. The transitional countries include those countries which have had difficulty building stable democracies, such as Russia and Brazil. The authoritarian regimes include those countries with more repressive societies, such as Iran and China.

Required Readings:
• **Supplementary Readings:** Additional readings come from book chapters and journal articles, and each is available online. Book chapters will be on Moodle, and journal articles will be on JSTOR or Academic Search Premier.

**Access to JSTOR/Academic Search Premier:** Journal articles are available through JSTOR. Go to the LSU Libraries. Once there, click on Indexes and Databases. Stroll all the way to the bottom of the page and under Social Sciences, click on Political Science. Stroll down until you see JSTOR.

*** In addition to the assigned text, it is highly recommended that every student keeps up with international news. You should get in the habit of reading a news source with extensive foreign coverage, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, or The Economist. Discussion of selected stories will occur on a regular basis throughout the semester. Students will be expected to participate knowledgeable in these discussions.

**Course Objectives:**
By the end of this course you will have an understanding of:
- Various terms used in comparative political science
- The major aspects of democratic and non-democratic governments
- The political history; key institutions; political cultures; political parties; interest groups; political issues, cleavages, and the major political conflicts of the countries discussed below
- The interconnectedness of countries through major world events (such as World Wars), organizations (such as European Union), and political challenges (such as immigration, minority and women rights)
- Knowledge of countries not typically discussed in a comparative politics course
- Contemporary current events covered in the international news media

**Course Requirements:**
- This course will have three exams, one after each completed section. They include multiple choice and identifications. A review sheet will be placed on Moodle before each exam. **Bring scantron and bluebook to exams.**
  **First Exam:** 15%- covers Introducing the Field and Concepts
  **Second Exam:** 15%- covers Advanced Industrial Countries
  **Third Exam:** 15%- covers Transitioning Countries and Discussing the Field

***Makeup exams will be given during the final exam period.***

- Eight unannounced quizzes will be distributed throughout the semester. The best five grades achieved on these quizzes will count toward your grade in the course. These quizzes will be based on the most recent readings, lectures, and in-class films. The questions will be multiple choice or written responses. **Quizzes: 2% each (10% total)**

***I will not allow make-up quizzes because only five of the quizzes will count towards your final grade. ***

- In order to understand the political development of different regions, you must know the geography. I will give you a map and ask you to fill in certain countries and their capitals.
  **Map Quiz:** 5%

**Countries**: England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, China, Taiwan, Japan, India, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, Nigeria, South Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan
• A 15-page public policy proposal will be required. You will be assigned to your group by a random process. You and your group are expected to use the country that you were assigned for the country reports and devise a political strategy for a policy that you think that country should implement. In other words, you will provide a blueprint to some politician or activist explaining what political obstacles he or she will have to overcome to get a particular policy implemented. On the day you and your group turn in your proposal, e-mail me a brief (one to two sentences) description of your contribution to the presentation and of the contributions of each of your co-authors.

**Group Paper Proposal: 25%**

**Before you start writing, consider the following questions.**
1. What problem will you address?
2. Why is it a problem?
3. Whom does it affect?
4. How does it affect them?
5. Why hasn’t it been solved yet?
6. What is your solution?
7. What are some other possible solutions?
8. Why should your solution be enacted?
9. How should your solution be enacted?
10. What are the consequences of doing nothing?

**Proposal Contents**
The questions offered in each section should be answered but it is not necessary to do them in the order they are posed in that section. This proposal should be backed up by sources that justify your statements.

1. **Abstract (1/2 page)**
   • Should be able to stand alone.
   • Answer the following clearly: what will be done, for what purpose, for how long, at what cost, what are the outcomes, and who will benefit?

2. **Statement of Need (7-8 pages)**
   • What is the issue you are addressing (what is the historical circumstances behind the issue)?
   • Why does this matter? Why not another issue?
   • What are you proposing?
   • Why is what you propose necessary?
   • Who benefits (what segment of the population)? What is the public good?
   • Why hasn’t this issue been addressed sufficiently in the past?

3. **Proposal Alternatives (5-6 pages)**
   • Why did you choose to address the issue in the manner that you have?
   • Are there other approaches? If yes, why aren’t they appropriate to the situation you are seeking to improve?

4. **Evaluation (2-3 pages)**
   • What are some outcomes you expect to achieve?
   • How do you plan to measure your project goals and objectives?
   • What are the likely pitfalls of your policy?

**Paper Format:**
• An equivalent font to Times New Roman 12 pt.
• 1-inch margins
• Cover page, abstract, and bibliography
• You can use any formatting style you like as long as you inform me of the style (on the cover page)
• Typed and double-spaced with page numbers
• Must cite all sources (Wikipedia and encyclopedias are not proper sources!)  
• Hard copy that must be stapled or paper-clipped

***Papers that do not follow the format requirements will receive no higher than a C.***

***Papers are to be turned in at the beginning of class on December 2 (a written copy). Late papers will not be accepted.***

***I have no problem reading drafts as long as I receive them by November 16.***

*** You may only do the paper alone if you have unusual circumstances and get my permission. In this particular case, you will have to write the 15-page alone. ***

• Each student will work in a group to prepare country reports (5-page) and presentations (20-mins) on the countries below. This report and presentation should include an analysis of your country's history, current political circumstances, and socio-cultural environment. I will meet with each group to discuss the presentations. Prior to class on the day of your presentation, you will e-mail me a brief (one to two sentence) description of your contribution to the report and presentation and of the contributions of each of your co-authors.

  **Country Report:** 5%  
  **Presentation:** 5%  
  **Total: Group Country Reports:** 10%

• Class participation is a necessity for a good class. Discussion allows us to learn from each other. This class is *not* just a lecture class. I will be asking questions throughout the lectures, so there is an expectation of participation. Your participation also entails asking questions about the readings, lectures, and how the different sections of the class relate to each other. In addition, at the end of each country study, 20 minutes will be reserved for current events discussion. I will post articles on Moodle a week prior to the discussion. Each individual person in the class is expected to come up with three written, quality questions from the topics and/or articles before class. These questions should be emailed to me by 10:00 a.m., the day of the discussion.

  **Class Participation:** 5%

**Grading Policy/Grading Scale:**

• A: 90-100 pts  
• B: 80-89 pts  
• C: 70-79 pts  
• D: 60-69 pts  
• F: 0-59 pts

**Course Expectations:**  
• You are expected to attend all in-class lectures. Those who do not attend lectures will not do well in this course.

• You are expected to keep up with the assigned readings according to the schedule below. This means dedicating substantial time to careful reading and thoughtful reflection before coming to class. Those who do not keep up with assigned readings will not do well in this course.

• You must respect others' opinions. No view is forbidden, but equally important, no view is protected from critical challenges. However, this does not mean personal attacks, humiliations or dismissal.

• You are expected to keep your cell phones on vibrate or silent.
• You are expected **not to read other texts or newspapers, surf the internet, do crossword puzzles, sleep, or anything else that could be considered disruptive** while in class. All attention should be focused **completely** on this class.

• You are expected to **be on time for class.** It is distracting when people come in and get settled while class is being conducted. If there is a reason why you would be perpetually late, please come see me **as soon as possible.**

• Class ends at exactly 1:30. Therefore, you are expected to **not begin packing up before class is over.** It is extremely disruptive and disrespectful to me and fellow classmates.

**Instructor’s Pledge:**
• I will be more than happy to **help you throughout the semester with any questions.** However, do not wait until right before the exams to ask them.

• I will consistently **maintain office hours and check my email** on a regular basis. If at anytime I have to cancel office hours or class, I will post an announcement on Moodle.

**Access to Moodle:** The course uses **Moodle:** go to **Paws Account** to login. Once in paws, go to **Student Services** and click on **Moodle.** Once you are in the course site, you will have access to the syllabus, announcements, and additional readings.

**Students with disabilities:** Anyone in this class who has a disability that may require some modification of testing or other class requirements please come see me after class or during office hours.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the copying of another’s work without proper citation. This act can result in failure of a class and expulsion from the university. Most plagiarism is the result of carelessness and laziness. Please do not copy directly from the internet; provide references for all your sources of information; and never reprint published material without adequate citation. For more information on plagiarism, or on proper citation form, see the LSU library webpage on plagiarism: [http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html).
Course Outline and Readings

Readings are subject to change. I will inform you in class of any changes in the syllabus. Readings are meant to be read prior to the class.

Section I. Introducing the Field and Concepts

Class 1 (August 24): Introduction

Class 2 (August 26): What is Comparative Politics?
Kesselman et al., Chapter 1

Class 3 (August 28): States and Nations
Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.”

Class 4 (August 31): Democracy and Its Associations
***Final Day of Dropping Courses without Receiving a Grade of W***

Class 5 (September 2): Democracy (continued)

Class 6 (September 4): Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism

Class 7 (September 7): Labor Day Holiday

Class 11 (September 9): Political Institutions- Electoral Systems

Class 8 (September 11): Political Institutions- Political Systems
***Map Quiz***

Class 9 (September 14): Social Movements and Revolutions

Class 10 (September 16): Political Culture

Class 12 (September 18): Exam One

Case Studies

Section II. Advanced Industrial Countries

Class 13 (September 21): Britain
Kesselman et al., Chapter 2 (1)
Class 14 (September 23): Britain
Kesselman et al., Chapter 2 (2 and 3)

Class 15 (September 25): Britain
Kesselman et al., Chapter 2 (4 and 5)

Class 16 (September 28): Current Events
Country Report I: Ireland, Greece, or Belgium

Class 17 (September 30): France
Kesselman et al., Chapter 3 (1)

Class 18 (October 2): Fall Holiday

Class 19 (October 5): France
Kesselman et al., Chapter 3 (2 and 3)

Class 20 (October 7): France
Kesselman et al., Chapter 3 (4 and 5)

Class 21 (October 9): Current Events
Country Report II: Switzerland or Scandinavian country

Class 22 (October 12): Germany
Kesselman et al., Chapter 4 (1)

Class 23 (October 14): Germany
Kesselman et al., Chapter 4 (2 and 3)

Class 24 (October 16): Germany
Kesselman et al., Chapter (4 and 5)

Class 25 (October 19): Current Events
Country Report III: Italy or Spain

Class 26 (October 21): European Union
Select readings posted on Moodle

Class 27 (October 23): Exam Two

Section III. Transitioning Countries

Class 28 (October 26): Brazil
Kesselman et al., Chapter 9 (1)

Class 29 (October 28): Brazil
Kesselman et al., Chapter 9 (2 and 3)

Class 30 (October 30): Brazil
Kesselman et al., Chapter 9 (4 and 5)
Class 31 (November 2): Current Events
Country Report IV: Cuba or Central American country

Class 32 (November 4): Russia
Kesselman et al., Chapter 11 (1)

Class 33 (November 6): Russia
***Final Day for Resigning from the University and/or Dropping Courses***
Kesselman et al., Chapter 11 (2 and 3)

Class 34 (November 9): Russia
Kesselman et al., Chapter 11 (4 and 5)

Class 35 (November 11): Current Events
Country Report V: Any former Soviet or post-communist country

Authoritarian Countries

Class 36 (November 13): China
Kesselman et al., Chapter 13 (1)

Class 37 (November 16): China
Kesselman et al., Chapter 13 (2 and 3)

Class 38 (November 18): China
Kesselman et al., Chapter 13 (4 and 5)

Class 39 (November 20): Current Events
Country Report VI: North Korea or Myanmar

Class 40 (November 23): Iran
Kesselman et al., Chapter 12 (1)

Class 41 (November 25): Thanksgiving Holiday

Class 42 (November 27): Thanksgiving Holiday

Class 43 (November 30): Iran
Kesselman et al., Chapter 12 (2 and 3)

Class 44 (December 2): Iran
Kesselman et al., Chapter 12 (4 and 5)
Country Report VII: Middle Eastern country (not Iraq)

Class 45 (December 4): Review and Wrapping Up
Country Report VIII: An African country (not Nigeria)

Class 46 (December 7): Exam Three (7:30-9:30 a.m.)