Introduction to Comparative Politics
POLI 2053, Fall 2009

Instructor: Ping Xu
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Office Hours: M 10:00-12:00, W 12:30-2:30, or by appointment
Class meetings: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2:40-3:30pm @ 228 Tureaud Hall

Course Overview
This course introduces important concepts, theories, issues and methods of comparative politics. It is divided into five modules. In each module we will discuss a topic in comparative politics. The five modules include State and Regime Types; Democratization; Comparative Institutions; Comparative Policy Making; and Methods of Comparative Politics. In module one, we will introduce the concepts of state and different regime types (i.e. democracy and dictatorship). In module two, we will examine the concept of democratization, discuss circumstances under which authoritarian and totalitarian regimes democratize and democracies consolidate. In module three, we will look at the institutions in different countries, which include the electoral systems, party systems, legislatures, executives and cabinets, and judicial systems. In module four, we will investigate social and economic policies in a comparative context and discuss why some countries generate good policies while others do not. Module five deals with the methods of comparative politics and will equip students with basic research tools in comparative politics.

Course Objectives
POLI 2053 is a general education course designed to improve broad knowledge and critical understanding of the political phenomena. It is designed to teach an understanding of the levels of association ranging from friends and family to civilizations of global significance and an understanding of the diversity of cultures across time and space, as well as universal social characteristics and global networks.

As an introductory course, this course has three goals: first, to understand the important concepts and theories in comparative politics; second, to provide a broad perspective for students to understand the important political issues of the world we live in; third, to acquire basic methods and tools to analyze important questions in comparative politics.

Course Requirements
1. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before class, attend all classes, and become actively involved in seminar discussions.
2. Students are expected to take twelve pop quizzes in class. Each pop quiz includes one or two simple questions based on the readings of that class, or the notes from previous lectures. Two lowest-scored quizzes will be dropped.
3. Students are expected to keep a journal with entries every week and turn a hard copy in on Friday. In the journals students are expected to summarize a newspaper story in New
York Times (or other national newspapers), and analytically comment on it based on the theory learned in class. Each journal should be double spaced, one page long. Four lowest-scored journals will not be counted when calculating the final grades.

4. Students are expected to take two midterm exams and one final exam. All the exams will reflect the lecture notes and readings.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pop quizzes</td>
<td>100 points (10 points per quiz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>200 points (20 points per journal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exams</td>
<td>400 points (200 points each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>300 points</td>
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**Grades:** Final grades will be assigned according to the following formula on the basis of the points accumulated by each student during the semester:

- 900-1,000 points = **A**
- 800-899 points = **B**
- 700-799 points = **C**
- 600-699 points = **D**
- 0-599 points = **F**

**Make-up Exams:** A make-up exam for the Final exam can be arranged only when an adequate documentation of a “valid reason” for absence, as defined by University Document PS-22, is provided. ([http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/$Content/Student+Handbook](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/$Content/Student+Handbook)) There is no make-up exam for Midterm exams. The weight of a missed Midterm exam will be added to the Final exam automatically.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is not allowed and under no circumstances can be excused. Cite your sources of information properly whenever you quote or paraphrase other authors. ([http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html))

**Important Dates**

1. **First Midterm exam:** 2:40pm-3:30pm September 14 (Monday)
2. **Second Midterm exam:** 2:40pm-3:30pm October 12 (Monday)
3. **Final Exam:** 2:40pm-4:00pm December 9 (Wednesday)

**Course Readings**

Each class has approximately 30 pages reading, which includes both textbook chapters and academic articles. The classes involve lectures on and discussions of the assigned readings.


2. **Journal articles and other book chapters.** These readings will be posted on Moodle or distributed in class by the instructor.
Module I. State and regime types (August 24-September 4)

1. August 24: Roadmap of the course

2. August 26: What is a state?
   [Shively] Chapter 3, pp. 47-74

3. August 28: What does State do?

4. August 31: What makes a state?
   Skocpol, Theda. 1985, Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research, in Peter B. Evans et al. eds. Bringing the State Back In. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-43

5. September 2: State and regime types
   How do states maintain their authority and legitimacy?
   [Shively] Chapter 7, pp. 149-180

6. September 4: What is democracy? What countries are democratic?

7. September 9: What are authoritarian regimes? Why do people rebel?
   [Shively] Chapter 13, pp. 303—318
   Review: [Shively] Chapter 7, pp. 161-172;

Module 2. Democratization (September 9-28)

1. September 11: What are three waves of democratization?

2. September 14: Midterm

3. September 16: How do states democratize?

4. September 18: Is transition to democracy once for all process?

5. September 21: Possible explanations of democratization: Social conditions

6. September 23: Possible explanations of democratization: Economic conditions

7. September 25: How do democracies consolidate?

7. September 28: Summarize on democratization

**Module 3. Comparative Institutional Designs (October 5 –November 2)**

1. October 5: Constitutions and Design of Government
   [Shively] Chapter 9, pp. 209-230

2. October 7: Different Designs of Government

3. October 9: Government Forms and their Performance

4. October 12: Midterm Exam

5. October 14: How are elections organized in different countries?
   [Shively] Chapter 10, pp. 230—255

6. October 16: Majoritarian Electoral System

7. October 19: Proportional Representation System

8. October 21: Party System
   [Shively] Chapter 11, pp. 255-278

9. October 23: How do different party systems work?

10. October 26: Parliamentary Government
    [Shively] Chapter 14, pp. 318-336

11. October 28: Presidential System
    [Shively] Chapter 15, pp. 341-363


12. October 30: Comparison of Parliamentary system and Presidential system
    Thomas Baylis, “Presidents versus Prime Minister,” *World Politics* 48 (1996): 297-323

13. November 2: Summarize on Comparative Institutional Designs

**Module 4 Comparative Policy-making (November 4-16)**

1. November 4: What are important public policies made by the state?
   [Shively] Chapter 4, pp. 75-96

2. November 6: Why do states make different social policies?
   [Shively] Chapter 2, pp. 20-47

3. November 9: Economic policies: Why do some governments generate “good” economic outcomes while others produce “bad” ones?
   [Shively] Chapter 5, pp. 96-122


6. November 16: Policy implementation: Bureaucracy and Public Sector?
   [Shively] Chapter 16, pp. 363-379

**Module 5. Methods in Comparative Politics (November 18-December 2)**

1. November 18: What is political analysis?

2. November 20: Basic methods of comparative politics

3. November 23: What, why, and how to compare?

4. November 30: Qualitative methods

5. December 2: Quantitative methods
   Jackman, Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics, in *AJPS* (February 1985: 161-82)

6. December 4: Summarize on Methods of Comparative Politics
   Mahoney and Goertz, A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research, in *Political Analysis* (2006: 227-49)

7. December 7: Review

8. December 9: Final Exam