

POLI 130-002: Introduction to Comparative Politics

*M/T/W/Th 3-5pm, Hanes Art Center, Room 118
Summer Session II 2017*

Instructor: Katharine Aha

Office hours: Tuesday 1 - 2:30pm & Thursday 1 - 2:30pm

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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.

Required Textbook

Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases (2nd edition)

J. Tyler Dickovick and Jonathan Eastwood
Oxford University Press, 2015

Course Website (Sakai)

The course website is on Sakai (<http://sakai.unc.edu>). I will use the course website to post the syllabus, lecture slides, and other course information in an easily accessible location, and you will be expected to post assignments on Sakai throughout the semester. Please let me know immediately if you have any issues logging into the website.

Course Grade Components

10%: Participation grade
25%: Blog posts and comments
15%: Final blog post
20%: Midterm exam
20%: Final exam
10%: Group presentation

attendance & participation

Our meetings will combine lecture and discussions. Attending class regularly will help you considerably on the exams, and allow you to participate in discussions. I will also take attendance before each class. You are allowed two unexcused absences before missing class starts to affect your grade. Every unexcused absence after that will automatically cause your participation grade to drop by $\frac{1}{2}$ a letter grade (5 points).

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.

I expect you to come to class prepared by having read and thought about the readings and any homework, and ready to actively participate. Lectures are designed with the expectation that you have read the assigned material before class begins. You will not do well in this course unless you do the readings.

Do not expect an A in participation just for showing up – regular attendance denotes average performance, which equates to a grade of 75%. Raising this grade depends on demonstrating that you have both read and thought about the reading. The only way for you to do this is to actively participate. An easy way to do this is to come to class prepared with comments and/or questions relating to the week's readings, lectures, or how current event reflect what we are studying in class. I will give you ample opportunities to participate in class – please take advantage of this time!

If I feel that students are not reading the course material, pop quizzes will be given.

One of the goals of this class is to give you a safe environment in which to speak so that you can practice analyzing political events and applying the theories we learn in class to real-world events. To this end, we will frequently engage in discussion. Guidelines we will follow to help foster meaningful discussion:

- Be respectful. Different opinions are healthy and welcome in the classroom. However, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. You do not have to agree with someone's view, but you do have to be respectful. Disrespectful students may be asked to leave the classroom. Please take a look at UNC's harassment policy if you have questions (<http://www.unc.edu/campus/policies/harassanddiscrim.pdf>)
- Speaking in front of groups can be intimidating to some students; it is my goal to ensure that this class is a comfortable space where everyone can participate. Our discussions will be most successful when all voices are heard. If speaking in front of the class makes you nervous, come talk to me so that we can figure out some strategies to help you earn points towards your participation grade.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions! Everyone has different areas of expertise, and some concepts may be more confusing to you than others. I will be of limited help to you if you don't speak up when you need clarification, and the discussion portions of the class will not work unless you participate.

Blog posts

Throughout the course, you will write a series of six blog posts (typically on Tuesday/Friday schedule). Your blog will focus on a country considered “partly free” by Freedom House (2017), and for each post (~250-350 words) you will analyze a component of the political rights and civil liberties in your selected country used by Freedom House to calculate their ratings. More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted prior to their due dates. You will also periodically be asked to comment on fellow classmates’ blog posts. If you have any concerns about sharing your work with classmates, please let me know and we can discuss an alternate arrangement. A blog post schedule can be found below. Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the due date – late submissions will not be accepted.

Final blog post

For your final blog post (~1000-1250 words), you will use what you have learned both about your selected country and about comparative politics during the course of the semester to examine ways that your country can become more democratic in the future. How would you suggest that the country move toward improving democracy given its own unique history?

blog post schedule

6/30: country introduction
7/4: freedom of expression and belief
7/7: functioning of government
7/14: electoral process
7/18: rule of law
7/21: political pluralism and participation
7/28: final blog post

Exams

The midterm will be held on July 12th, and is meant to test comprehension of the readings and lecture material for the first half of the course. The final will be on Tuesday, August 1st at 3pm in our regular classroom. The University sets the final exam schedule. The exam will primarily cover material from after the mid-term.

Group presentation

The group presentations are based on the country blogs. Having researched this country during the course of the semester, you are likely to be the class’s expert on that case. You will be put into groups with other ‘experts.’ Each group will be asked to come to a consensus about democracy across their cases, and will present their findings to the class. This includes relevant comparisons and contrasts across their cases. There will be a Q&A after each presentation in which everyone is expected to participate. The group presentations will be held on the last day of class.

Course policies

Honor Code

It is expected that all work you do in this course will be original work not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course, unless this is done with the prior permission of all instructors involved. All work for this course falls under the University’s Honor Code; the

student's signature on her/ his work confirms that the Code rules were respected. All work must be your own – plagiarism, cheating, and related violations will not be tolerated. For more information on the honor code, please visit <http://instrument.unc.edu/>.

Familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism in order to make sure that you avoid it. Plagiarism is defined as deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise. Take the library's tutorial at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/> and ask me if you have any questions.

Questions

If you have questions about the course, please come see me after class or during office hours. Please email me if you absolutely cannot come to office hours. Some questions may not be easily resolved by email, but we can set up another time to meet if necessary. Please do communicate with me early if you have any challenges that impact your performance in this course; I will not be able to help you if you do not ask for help.

Rescheduling Exams

If you have to miss class on the day of an exam or wish to reschedule an exam, then you must write and explain beforehand in all but the most unusual circumstances. If you are going to miss an exam for an event you know about well in advance, please come speak to me early in the semester (ie in first week or two of class) so that we can make appropriate arrangements. Please note that I cannot allow you to take the final on a different day or at a different time without the Dean's approval; therefore, contact the Dean if you have a conflict with the time of the final and need to change it.

Conduct in Class + Additional Info

I would like you to bring your laptops to class in order to access electronic resources - however, I expect you to use them for activity related to this course. Playing on the Internet during class is highly disrespectful to people who are trying to pay attention. I may not call you out for being on another site during class, but I will notice, and it will affect your final grade. You may not have your laptops open during any sort of student presentation. If, during the course of the semester, I see that the laptops are acting as more of a distraction than a help, I reserve the right to restrict their usage.

Do not use your cell phone during class. I can tell when you're using it, and it will definitely impact your participation grade. Don't do it.

If you are going to spend class time playing on your computer or your phone, then please respect your classmates, use one of your unexcused absences, and do not come to class.

As a general rule, I will not email you your grades, nor will I discuss your grades with you within 24 hours of handing graded assignments back. That being said, if you have questions about my comments on your assignments, I am happy to talk to you. If you want me to regrade something, you will need to write a few (at least 3) paragraphs responding specifically to my written comments and explaining why you feel you deserve a higher grade.

Course Schedule

Section 1: Foundational concepts

- June 26 & 27: Introduction to Political Science/Comparative Politics
 - o Readings:
 - 6/26: Dickovick chapter 1 (The Comparative Approach: An Introduction) - skim
 - 6/27: Dickovick chapter 2 (Theories, Hypotheses, and Evidence)
- June 28: The State
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 3 (The State)
- June 29: Nationalism
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 13 (Nationalism & National Identity)
- July 3: Ideology and Religion
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 15 (Ideology and Religion in Modern Politics)

Section 2: Democracy and Authoritarianism

- July 5 & 6: Democracy and Democratization
 - o Readings:
 - 7/5: Dickovick chapter 6 (Democracy and Democratization)
 - 7/6: "Is North Carolina the Future of American Politics?", Jason Zengerle, (sakai)
- July 10 & 11: Democracy, Democratization, and Varieties of Authoritarianism
 - o Readings:
 - 7/10: Dickovick chapter 7 (Authoritarian Regimes and Democratic Breakdown)
 - 7/11: "Europe's New Dictator," Colin Woodward (sakai); "Illiberal Democracy Comes to Poland," Anne Applebaum (sakai)

Midterm: July 12

Section 3: Institutions

- July 13 & July 17: Federalism, Legislatures and Elections
 - o Readings: Dickovick chapters 8 & 9 (Constitutions and Constitutional Design, Legislatures and Legislative Elections)
- July 18: Presidential and Parliamentary Systems
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 10 (Executive)
- July 19 & 20: Parties and Interest Groups
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 11 (Parties, Party Systems, and Interest Groups)

Section 4: Outcomes

- July 25: Political violence
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 12 (Contention and Revolutions)
- July 26: Political Economy and the Welfare State
 - o Reading: Dickovick chapter 4 (Political Economy)
- July 27: Comparative Politics and International Relations

- Reading: Dickovick chapter 16 (Comparative Politics and IR)
- July 28: Group Projects

Final: August 1st, 3pm