

POLITICAL SCIENCE 260 - INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Term I / TR 9:55 – 11:10

Briggs 125

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Purpose of the Course: Political Science 260 is an introduction to the study of comparative politics, one of several distinct subfields in the discipline of political science. Its purpose is to familiarize students with the basic concepts necessary for comparing, contrasting, and beginning to comprehend the wide variety of political systems extant in the contemporary world. Our approach will be two-fold: first, we will engage in in-depth analyses of the major theoretical approaches to the study of comparative politics and the key contemporary questions in the discipline; second, we will analyze these via the application and analysis of data to a number of representative modern political systems. Students can thus expect to become more literate about both comparative politics and politics in general.

In addition, Political Science 260 subscribes to and is designed to emphasize and promote several broad educational goals germane to a liberal arts curriculum: (1) the ability to **read** actively and critically; (2) the ability to **think** logically, analytically, and independently; (3) the ability to **analyze** and **interpret** information; (4) the ability to **communicate** clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing; and (4) the ability to **learn** on one's own. The class format and assignments are structured to enhance the achievement of these goals.

Political Science 260 - Comparative Politics - is one of two courses (the other is POL 451 - International Relations) that can be taken to satisfy one of the six required courses for the undergraduate major in Political Science. In addition, it satisfies Objective 5D. (History and Culture: Study of Diverse Cultures or Foreign Language) of the University's Core Curriculum.

Course Format: The format of this class may be different from what you are used to, in two respects: first, the text is nontraditional in that it is accompanied by a workbook and software, tools that allow you to explore the real world of comparative politics using the same data and analytical tools used by professional researchers. **It is absolutely essential that you have constant and immediate access to a computer** with the following minimum system requirements: Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, a CD-ROM drive, and, if you choose to install the software on your PC (which I recommend), 15 MB of available hard drive space. You must have access to a computer with these system requirements as well as time to spend at a computer site, either one of the several campus computer labs and/or at home. In short, you will spend much of your out-of-class time for this course at a computer site. The course software, which comes bundled with the textbook, is exceptionally easy to learn and use. The course will commence with a training session, to be held during the second class period (Thursday 9/4) in the computer lab on the 3rd floor of Briggs, on using the course software essential to the course.

The second respect in which this class may be different from what you are used to is it is not primarily a traditional lecture course. Rather, the course is based on the premise that you will learn more if you actively contribute to the learning process by participating, as opposed to sitting passively, merely absorbing what you are “taught.” Although I may, very occasionally, offer a lecture, that teaching/learning method will be the distinct exception. Instead, my more usual role will be to organize the course material for our class discussions, and to focus and direct, and refocus and redirect, our discussions to ensure that we cover important course material. Therefore, **discussion**, and your preparation for discussion, is central, expected, and required.

What, exactly, will we discuss? In addition to being **discussion-centered**, this class is **text-based**. Our discussions will center on the assigned readings and exercises (rather than on whatever opinions we may happen to come to class with on a particular day), so it is imperative that you come to each and every class period prepared to discuss the text. This means you must complete the readings and exercises prior to the day they will be discussed. More importantly, you must complete the work in such a way that you are prepared to discuss the material intelligently. Your input is essential to the class, and is required: not participating is not an option! In sum, you are required to attend each and every class prepared to thoughtfully discuss reading assignments and exercises and, in general, to make a positive contribution to the class and the learning environment therein.

Course Requirements & Grade Determination: Your grade will be determined by cumulative points earned on six course requirements. You have the opportunity to earn a maximum of 500 points through these requirements, as follows:

1. 15 of 16 (drop the lowest) chapter worksheets, X 10 points @	=	150 points
2. mid-term examination #1, Tuesday, 30 September	=	50 points
3. mid-term examination #2, Tuesday, 28 October	=	50 points
4. final examination, Thursday, 11 December, 8-9:50 A.M.	=	50 points
5. term project (see p.8)	=	150 points
6. class participation/contribution	=	<u>50 points</u>
 Total	 =	 500 points

The following chart converts your earned points into a letter grade:

>470	(>94%)	=	A
450-470	(90-94%)	=	A-
435-450	(87-90%)	=	B+
415-435	(83-87%)	=	B
400-415	(80-83%)	=	B-
385-400	(77-80%)	=	C+
365-385	(73-77%)	=	C
350-365	(70-73%)	=	C-
335-350	(67-70%)	=	D+

315-335	(63-67%)	=	D
300-315	(60-63%)	=	D-
<300	(<60%)	=	F

I understand how important grades are to you. They are important to me as well, and I work very hard at two grade-related issues: first, to provide as much assistance as possible to ensure you get the highest grade you are capable of and willing to work for, and, second, to make sure that you get nothing more or less than the grade you deserve. In this context, please feel free to discuss any and all aspects of your grade with me at any time.

Policy Concerning Attendance: My policy on attendance is simple: to do your best, whatever that may be, you need to attend each and every class. Since the majority of administrative information (i.e., changes in the schedule, readings, exam dates) is announced at the beginning of each class period, it is important to come to each and every class, and on time. Coming to class late is disruptive and disrespectful to those already at work in the class, myself included. On a related topic: disable the audio alert (i.e., ringing, beeping) on all pagers and cell phones during class time.

Policy Concerning Late Work: My policy concerning late work is simple: I accept it, without regard to how late it is (so long as it is turned in by the last day of class), and penalize it by one full grade. Regarding scheduled exams, you should plan to take the exams at the times they are scheduled. If you are faced with an impossible set of circumstances over which you have no control that makes this impossible, you must, for me to consider a make-up, let me know in advance of the exam.

Policy Concerning the Incomplete Grade: My policy on the Incomplete grade is equally straightforward: I will not consider an “I” grade unless (a) a student who has taken the course seriously is, at the end of the semester, suddenly faced with an impossible set of circumstances over which s/he has no control, and (b) the student requests that I consider a grade of “I” and makes arrangements to complete the unfinished work. Under no circumstances will the “I” grade be used in lieu of an earned grade in the course.

Readings: The reading load for this class is designed to encourage not only completion of all reading assignments and worksheets prior to their due date, but also to allow a certain amount of time beyond mere reading to comprehend the material in a way that will prepare you to contribute to class discussion. The following book has been ordered at the bookstore. I have instructed the bookstore to order only new copies, as used ones will not come bundled with the software essential to the course.

Michael K. Le Roy. *Comparative Politics Using MicroCase ExplorIt*. 2nd edition, 2003.

In addition, I strongly encourage you to purchase a term-long subscription to The New York Times. It will be an invaluable resource for your term project. I will provide you with information for subscriptions at the lowest possible student rates. I may, from time to time, direct you to or make available to you additional optional readings.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus.

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION & FOUNDATIONS: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- T 9/2 Introduction to the course
- R 9/4 Computer Workshop on MicroCase ExplorIt
- Read:** Le Roy, Preface, pp. ix-x,
Getting Started, pp. xi-xvii, &
Appendix: Variable Name and Sources, pp. A1-A12.
- T 9/9 The Nation-State 1/2
- Read:** Le Roy, Ch. 1, pp. 7-10.
- R 9/11 The Nation-State 2/2
- Read:** Le Roy, Ch. 1, pp. 11-19.
- Due:** Ch. 1 Worksheet, pp. 21-27.
- T 9/16 People, Populations, and State Capacity
- Read:** Le Roy, Ch. 2, pp. 29-37.
- Due:** Ch. 2 worksheet, pp. 39-44.
- R 9/18 Organizing and Classifying Political Systems
- Read:** Le Roy, Ch. 3, pp. 45-52.
- Due:** Ch. 3 Worksheet. pp. 53-59.

II. POLITICS IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

- T 9/23 Political Culture in Liberal Democracies 1/2
- Read:** Le Roy, Ch. 4, pp. 63-69.

R 9/25 Political Culture in Liberal Democracies 2/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 4, pp. 70-75.

Due: Ch. 4 Worksheet, pp. 77-85.

MID-TERM EXAM #1: Tuesday, 30 September

R 10/2 Political Participation in Liberal Democracies

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 5, pp. 87-91.

Due: Ch. 5 Worksheet, pp. 93-99.

T 10/7 Electoral Systems in Liberal Democracies

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 6, pp. 101-105.

Due: Ch. 6 Worksheet, pp. 107-112.

R 10/9 Political Parties in the United Kingdom and Germany 1/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 7, pp. 115-121.

T 10/14 Political Parties in the United Kingdom and Germany 2/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 7, pp. 121-126.

Due: Ch. 7 Worksheet, pp. 127-135.

Also Due: Term Project Proposal

III. COMMUNIST & POSTCOMMUNIST POLITICAL SYSTEMS

R 10/16 After Communism

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 8, pp. 139-147.

Due: Ch. 8 Worksheet, pp. 149-153.

T 10/21 Democratic Transition in Russia and Poland

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 9, pp. 155-160.

Due: Ch. 9 Worksheet, pp. 161-167.

IV. POLITICS IN NEWLY INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES (NICs)

R 10/23 Wealth and Poverty in Developing Nations

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 10, pp. 171-178.

Due: Ch. 10 Worksheet, pp. 179-183.

T 10/28 Asian NICs 1/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 11, pp. 187-190.

R 10/30 Asian NICs 2/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 11, pp. 190-195.

Due: Ch. 11 Worksheet, pp. 197-201.

MID-TERM EXAM #2: Tuesday, 4 November

R 11/6 Asian Political Culture

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 12, pp. 203-208.

Due: Ch. 12 Worksheet, pp. 209-214.

T 11/11 Latin American Political Culture 1/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 15, pp. 253-259.

R 11/13 Latin American Political Culture 2/2

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 15, pp. 259-265.

Due: Ch. 15 Worksheet, pp. 267-276.

V. POLITICS IN THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs)

T 11/18 Sub-Saharan Africa

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 13, pp. 219-226.

Due: Ch. 13 Worksheet, pp. 227-232.

R 11/20 Political Culture in Nigeria and South Africa

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 14, pp. 233-241.

Due: Ch. 14 Worksheet, pp. 243-250.

T 11/25 no class – Thanksgiving Break

VI. POLITICS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD (ISLs)

T 12/2 Islam and Politics in Pakistan and Turkey

Read: Le Roy, Ch. 16, pp. 279-286.

Due: Ch. 16 Worksheet, pp. 287-293.

R 12/4 no class

Due: Term Project

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, 11 December, 8-9:50 A.M.

The Political Science 260 Term Project

Your grade on the term project component of this course constitutes 150 points of a maximum 500, or slightly less than one-third of the total. That is, this requirement holds significant weight.

This assignment is very open-ended, in that I encourage you to do research on a topic that interests you. The Le Roy text offers many examples of research projects that would be appropriate for this assignment. For example, his very first example, on pp. 7-9 of the text, explores the variation in capital punishment across the world, and in minutes you can display a graphic showing the state of the death penalty (abolished, used conditionally, not abolished but no longer used, or retained) in 174 nations. This data, interesting in and of itself, can be used to ask a series of fascinating research questions: is there any particular pattern to the states that have abolished, or retain, the death penalty? Is that pattern best understood in terms of a country's culture? Or is it better understood in terms of the type of political system extant in a country? Does the persistence of capital punishment correlate to religion, or level of economic development, or date of independence, or level of political freedom? The software program allows you to easily manipulate the data so as to examine the relationship between two variables (i.e., the death penalty and religion). I suggest that you, with the text's and my help, explore the massive amount of data on the CD-ROM that accompanies the text. A good place to start is with the Appendix, pp. A1-A12, of the text; it lists the variables accessible in each data file and, beginning on p. A8, a list of helpful sources. Finally, simply reading a good daily newspaper, one, such as **The New York Times**, known for its coverage of non-U.S. politics, will also prompt some ideas about countries, or parts of the world, or larger questions germane to comparative politics.

After doing some initial digging in these sources, and thinking about what interests you, you should talk to me about your ideas. You must turn in a formal term project proposal no later than **Tuesday, 14 October**. The quality of the proposal is used in the calculation of your grade on the project. The proposal must include: (1) the research question, topic, or theory you intend to examine; (2) a hypothesis or hypotheses, including the identification of the variables you will use (identified by number) and the assumed relationship between them; and (3) the sources you intend to use, including specific ExplorIt data files and tasks. You can use any legitimate source you want, and more is generally better; one source you must use is the data provided with the text. As this is a term project, you should work on it over the course of the term. Part of that process is to touch base with me periodically on your progress. The final draft of your project is due no later than the last scheduled class meeting, **Thursday, 4 December**.