**Political Science 104**

***Comparative Politics***

**Spring, 2018**

*Updated 1-10-2018*

Class time: MWF 10:30-11:20

Location: CBA 104

Instructor: Jonathan Andrew Jackson

Office: 517 Oldfather Hall

Office hours: MTWR 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM or by appointment

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**Overview**

**Description:**

Why are some countries rich and others poor? Why do some countries become democratic and others rename authoritarian dictatorships? Why are some governments (both democratic and authoritarian) stable while others seem to always be on the verge of collapse?

There are several common fields in political science. Most fields are named after the topic of their focus (e.g. American government & politics, international relations, political theory, human biology & politics). Comparative politics is different in that it is named after a research method: comparisons. As we will see as we progress through the course, we will discovered that the name is actually a bit of a misnomer since a common research method is the single-country case study (although such studies are usually used to compare that country to a larger body of evidence or to explain why the politics of one country is different than what we would expect). The first third of this class will be a (gentle) focus on methods in comparative politics.

While method is central to comparative politics, ours is also a “problem focused” approach. In the mid and later 20th century, that often meant “area studies”: focusing on specific regions of the world. Much of that focus can still be seen in multi-disciplinary studies focusing on particular regions. For example, you can get minors in Latin American, Asian, African, and European studies at UNL. However, within political science the focus has shifted to particular problems rather than particular regions. For example, a friend and colleague of mine is working on refugee rights in North American, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. The bulk of the class will be on various problems (or topics) in comparative politics.

In summary, this class incorporates both methods and topics into a broad study of comparative politics.

**Required Text:**

*Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics, 4th Edition* by Landman Todd, 2017, Routledge

Paperback: 9780415538305

**Learning Objectives**

The general goal for this course is for all students to be able to understand the basic methodology of comparative politics and some of the common topics or problems that comparative politics studies.

Through this course, you should be able to understand the science of comparative politics:

* Why comparing counties is useful and broadly used in political science
* Strategies and methods for comparing many countries broadly
* Strategies and methods for comparing few countries in detail
* Using single-country studies for depth of understanding and to add to a broader comparative knowledge
* The trade-offs of using each method
* (Note: This is not a methods course and you will not be expected to produce research using the methods we will review in this class. However, you are expected to be able to understand which methods may be the most appropriate to answer certain questions and to begin to become a better consumer of social science research.)

Through this course, you should also be able to understand some of the issues studied in comparative politics:

* The relationship between economic development and democracy
* How and why some states transition to democracy and others do not, and why some democracies revert to autocratic rule
* Why some democracies effectively delivery public goods to their people and others do not
* The causes and outcomes of violent and non-violent dissent (revolutions and social movements)
* Why there is variation in the protection of human rights between countries and why some countries adhere to their public proclamations of support for human rights while others do not
* The relationship between domestic politics and international relations

**Course Requirements**

All students are expected to do the assigned readings and work, attend class, and participate in class discussions. The themes of those assignments will be a major part of our quizzes and the final exam. We will be moving fairly quickly and active participation in class discussions is expected, so keeping up with readings, attendance, and class participation are vital.

There will be a total of 1000 points for the course. Grades will be made up of class participation, 10 quizzes, 3 exams, and a research review. They will be weighed as follows:

* Participation: 100 points
* Quizzes: 225 points (25 points each x 9)
* Exam 1: 175 points
* Exam 2: 175 points
* Exam 3: 175 points
* Final report 150 points

The points for each assignment will be added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6.

**Participation**

The bulk of the participation grade will be for attendance. Every student starts the course with 100 participation points, but loses 5 points for each unexcused absence. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each class. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to sign in at the end of class. In addition, 5 points will be deducted from your participation grade if you do not take the practice quiz during the first week of class.

Lively discussions and engagement in the readings will greatly improve your ability to understand course content. It is assumed that students will do all assigned readings before class and come prepared to fully participate in class discussions. Substantial participation in class discussions will be periodically noted and points added to your participation grade. Since participation will be noted periodically, the only way to assure that your participation will be credited will be to participate consistently. Any participation points over 100 will be counted (up to 110 points). That is the only extra credit that will be given in the course. I know that some students are less comfortable speaking in class than others, so the class is designed in a way that speaking is means of improving your grade rather than avoiding a poor grade.

**Weekly Quizzes**

Most full weeks will have a 25-point quiz. The quizzes will be online, open-book, open note. However, since they will only be open for 30 minutes, you should not attempt to look up each answer. Instead, be sure to review your notes ahead of time so you can quickly answer most questions and then look up those for which you are less sure about your answer. All the questions will be objective and some will be application. They will be on that week’s readings and classes only.The quizzes will open at 6:00 PM on Wednesday. The deadline for complete each quiz will be 10:00 AM on Friday. I will grade the quizzes on Friday afternoon, so please do not ask me about the quizzes during Friday classes. The quizzes are worth 25 points each.

**Exams**

There will be three exams during the course. Exam 1 will cover the first five weeks of the course. Exam 2 will cover weeks 6 through 10. Exam 3 will cover weeks 11 through 14.

Do not some to the class room during the two-day exam period. You will take the exams at the Digital Learning Center Exam Commons, located in the southeast corner of the Adele Coryell Hall Learning Commons (Love Library North). There will be no class during the exam periods. The exam commons are open 9 AM to 10 PM Monday through Thursday and from 9 AM to 5 on Fridays. I have reserved times for your exams but do NOT wait until the end of the exam period to go to the testing commons as all available spaces can be sometimes be taken by other testers (especially on Friday afternoons). They will be closed-noted and closed-book.

The exams are worth 175 points each. They will consist of roughly 15 objective questions worth 5 points each and 5 short answer (3-7 sentence) questions worth 10 points each.

The goals of the exams are to gauge the level of understanding the student has of the material covered. They are designed to encourage proper study skills, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning.

**Final Report**

In lieu of a final exam, we will have a final report that incorporates lessons from throughout the semester. The presentation will take the form of an 8-10 research proposal.

You are to identify an issue or problem in comparative politics (perhaps developed from our studies in weeks 6 through 12), explain how you could use a combination of large-N, small-N, and single-N research methods (covered in weeks 1 through 5) to address that question. The opening 2 or 3 pages should include 6-10 citations relevant to your topic. I prefer parenthetic citations. For the purpose of this paper, assume that you are relatively unconstrained by time or funds. For example, you may include six months of field work in central Asia as part of the small-N or single-N part of your proposed research.

The paper shall be 8-10 full pages, Times New Roman, 12-point font, normal (one inch) margins, and double spaced. There should also be a 1-page reference section for all your citations.

The papers will be graded holistically based on how effectively you present your research question and proposes methods. As soon, there is not a formal rubric for the assignment. However, covering everything on this checklist will likely help you improve your grade:

* Does it clearly state a comparative politics problem or question?
* Does it have a section for proposed large-N research?
* Does it have a section for proposed small-N research?
* Does it have a section for proposed single-N research?
* Does it have a proper introduction?
* Does it have a proper conclusion?
* Does it follow the formatting outlined above?
* Does it have a reference section?

All students are required to attend the April 27 writing workshop. Students are not required to attend the latter two workshops that week if they have already submitted their paper.

You may submit your final report as early as noon on Monday, April 23. The deadline to submit papers is 11:59 PM on Friday, April 27. I will have all final reports graded by Friday, May 4 (probably much sooner). At that point you will know your final grade for the class. I will submit your grade to MyRed by noon on Monday, May 7.

We will discuss the project further at the March 2 workshop.

**Grade Scale**

The grade scale for this course will be:

A+ = 97-100 A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86 B- = 80-82 C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76

C- = 70-72 D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62

F = 0-59

As noted previously, the points for each assignment will added together and the decimal point shifted one to the left to get the final grade. For example, a total of 756 points for all assignments represents a final grade of 75.6, rounded to 76: a C.

**Class Policies**

**Respect**

Please show respect for the opinions of your fellow students. Students should feel free to express their views without fear of condemnation or harassment inside or outside the classroom. Likewise, students should not seek to use the free and open exchange of ideas as a license to provoke or denigrate others. Clearly, there is a balancing act involved, but it can be achieved if students engage each other and the instructor in a spirit of goodwill.

**Make-up** **assignments**

Should you miss a scheduled quiz or exam, you will be assigned zero points for that quiz unless you provide a valid excuse to the instructor. That would include a doctor’s note/bill or a cast on a newly broken arm. Non-valid reasons include, but are not limited to, being busy or forgetting to take the quiz. You are also expected to submit your paper on time.

**Incompletes and Withdrawals**

Students will only be given an “I” (incomplete) for valid reasons, such as verified military deployment or illness, and only if the student has made substantial satisfactory progress in the course. To withdraw from a course, follow UNL procedures; your instructor will not do it for you.

**Laptops and other electronic devices**:

Please put away all electronic devices at the beginning of class except those being used for the class. Turn your phone off or put it on silent (not vibrate) mode, and put it away. The inappropriate use of electronic devices is distracting to you and rude to the instructor and other students.

We will start with allowing the use of laptops, but the instructor reserves the right to later ban their use except for those students with a documented disability. Even when laptops are used exclusively to take class notes, they virtually eliminate eye contact and limit students’ mental engagement with the material. You are a student, not a stenographer.

Any student found to be inappropriately using a laptop or other electronic device, or who refuses to show or turn off their electronic device when requested, will be dropped a full letter grade for the class for each incident.

**Disability Policy**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodations to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration. Their phone number is 472-3787.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is expected throughout the course. Plagiarism and cheating, as defined by the UNL Student Code of Conduct, are not allowed. Plagiarism includes self-plagiarism (taking parts of a paper that you had previously written and using it in a current assignment without noting that it had come from the earlier work). The result of such acts may include a zero for the assignment or failure of the entire course. Major violations will also be reported to the student’s department chairperson and to the Judicial Office.

**Schedule (subject to change)**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Topic & Readings** | **Dates & Notes** |
| 1 | Introduction to comparative politics | * 1-8 Introduction & syllabus review
* 1-10 Chapter 1 lecture
* 1-12 Chapter 1 discussion **[Practice quiz]**
 |
| 2 | Methods of comparison | * 1-15 *Martin Luther King Jr. Day - no class*
* 1-17 Chapter 2 lecture
* 1-19 Chapter 2 discussion
 |
| 3 | Large-N studies | * 1-22 Chapter 3 lecture
* 1-24 Chapter 3 discussion
* 1-26 Workshop **[Quiz 1]**
 |
| 4 | Small-N studies | * 1-29 Chapter 4 lecture
* 1-31 Chapter 4 discussion
* 2-2 Workshop **[Quiz 2]**
 |
| 5 | Single-N studies | * 2-5 Chapter 5 lecture
* 2-7 Chapter 5 discussion
* 2-9 Workshop **[Quiz 3]**
 |
| 6 | Development and democracy | * 2-12/13 **Exam 1**
* 2-14 Chapter 6 lecture
* 2-16 Chapter 6 discussion
 |
| **7** | Political violence | * 2-19 Chapter 7 lecture
* 2-21 Chapter 7 discussion
* *2-23 No class* **[Quiz 4]**
 |
| 8 | Nonviolent political challenges | * 2-26 Chapter 8 lecture
* 2-28 Chapter 8 discussion
* 3-2 Workshop **[Quiz 5]**
 |
| 9 | Becoming a democracy (or not) | * 3-5 Chapter 9 lecture
* 3-7 Chapter 9 discussion
* 3-9 Workshop **[Quiz 6]**
 |
| 10 | Making democracy work (or not) | * 3-12 Chapter 10 lecture
* 3-14 Chapter 10 discussion
* 3-15/16 **Exam 2**
 |
| *March 19-23: spring break* |
| 11 | Human rights | * 3-26 Chapter 11 lecture
* 3-28 Chapter 11 discussion
* 3-30 Final report workshop **[Quiz 7]**
 |
| 12 | Comparative politics and international relations | * 4-2 Chapter 12 lecture
* 4-4 Chapter 12 discussion
* 4-6 Chapter 12 workshop **[Quiz 8]**
 |
| 13 | Methodological limits and building theory | * 4-9 Chapter 13 lecture
* 4-11 Chapter 13 discussion
* 4-13 Workshop **[Quiz 9]**
 |
| 14 | The state of comparative politics | * 4-16 Chapter 14 lecture
* 4-18 Chapter 14 discussion
* 4-19/20 **Exam 3**
 |
| 15 | Final reports | * 4-23 Final report workshop (bring your laptop to class)
* 4-25 Final report workshop (as needed)
* 4-27 Final report workshop (as needed)
* **Deadline for final report: 4-27 at 11:59 PM**
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| Note: This class will have a final report due on April 27 in lieu of a final exam. |

Lectures classes will primarily consist of me introducing that week’s topic and answering student questions. Discussion classes will primarily be “soft Socratic” in which I, after a brief introductory lecture, ask students questions on the week’s topics and open the floor for a general discussion of that topic. Workshops will consist of a wide variety of activities, some of which may include methods practice, hearing from guest speakers, watching relevant videos, open discussion of current world issues, and working on your final report. Workshops are not “testable” for quizzes but are testable for the three exams.

I hope that you will learn a lot from this class, and that at least some of what you learn will be useful for you in the future.