

Intro to Comparative Politics PS 2053

Tuesdays and Thursdays
10:30-11:50
Coates 103

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Tue. 1:00-2:30 and by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to fundamental concepts, theories and questions of the study of comparative politics. This course begins with introducing tools of the scientific methods to study comparative politics. We will learn how to engage questions that explore cause and effect, using falsifiable hypotheses and empirical data to test our theoretical expectations. The rest of the course focuses on a number of topics central to understanding the political systems around the world: democratization, voting and elections, political parties, and representation and accountability. We will also examine contemporary political issues around the world, such as immigration, gender, and ethnic conflicts. This course will give students a basic understanding of how politics operates in the political systems around the world, and how historical, cultural, economic, and institutional differences across countries affect politics and policy-making.

Course Structure

1. You *are required* to read the assigned reading carefully each week. I will frequently ask for your inputs of ideas and questions during the lecture.
2. There will be in-class group activities related to the materials from the reading or lecture. Your participation in in-class discussions and activities will be essential.
3. There are three exams (two midterms and final) scheduled for the semester.
4. I will hold weekly office hours on Tuesdays 1:00-2:30 PM. Please drop by during my office hours, if you have any questions and issues with the course material. Also, I encourage you to seek out assistance at the first sign of difficulty with the course material. I will be happy to discuss the material with you.

Course Materials

There is one required book in the course, available for purchase at the bookstore.

- David Samuels, 2018. Comparative Politics, 2nd Edition, Pearson (ISBN: 9780134562674)

For some weeks, there will be additional readings beyond the textbook. I will post these reading materials on Moodle.

Course Policies

LSU Learning Competency Statement for the Social Sciences

LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct [Link]. I strongly encourage you to review these policies. All violations of the university's academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

Special Accommodations

For students who have special needs or who require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so arrangements can be made. To request academic accommodations, students must contact Disability Services (<https://www.lsu.edu/disability/>), located in 124 Johnston Hall.

Late Submissions

Because you know the deadline so far in advance, late submissions will result in 0 points. Extensions will only be granted if you approach me at least one day before the deadline and only in case of personal illness or death in the immediate family. In each case, I require proof (e.g., a written note from a doctor).

Classroom Etiquette

- Arriving late or leaving during class is disruptive. Please make every effort to be on time. If you know in advance that you have to leave early, please let me know before class begins.
- Please be sure to silence your cell phone during class. Please put your phone away before class starts and don't bring it out.
- Please be respectful to your instructor and your peers by using your laptops only for class-related purposes.

Grade Dispute Policy

- If you are going to dispute a grade, you will need to submit a written explanation for doing so *within one week* of the quiz or exam being handed back to the class. I will not consider grade disputes after this one-week period.

- You will receive a response within one week of submitting it. Please be warned, however, that a reassessment does not automatically result in a higher grade; your grade could stay the same, go up or be lowered.

Requirements and Evaluation

Grading in this class will be based on the components described below. Makeup exams will not be given unless the instructor is notified in advance and agrees that the absence is a university excused absence. Students who miss exams will receive a score of 0.

Grading scale

| Score | Grade | Score | Grade | Score | Grade | Score | Grade | Score | Grade |
|---------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ≥ 97 | A+ | 87 - 89 | B+ | 77-79 | C+ | 67-69 | D+ | <60 | F |
| 93 - 96 | A | 83-86 | B | 73-76 | C | 63-66 | D | | |
| 90 - 92 | A- | 80-82 | B- | 70-72 | C- | 60-62 | D- | | |

Grading breakdown

- Pop Quizzes (10 %)

There will be 5 pop quizzes during the semester. Each quiz will consist of approximately 7 multiple choice questions. At the end of the semester I will drop each student's lowest quiz score. Quizzes will contain questions both from the assigned readings and recent lectures. Questions appearing on quizzes may also appear on exams.
- Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend every class and to actively participate in class activities. For in-class simulations and other activities, I will take attendance to record your participation.
- A media report (10%)
- Exams
 - Midterm I (20%)
 - Midterm II (20%)
 - Final (30%)

Forms of questions on the exams could include true/false, multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc. The purpose of the exams is to assess your comprehension of concepts we are discussing and your ability to employ them in the explanation of major components of political systems. They will draw on all aspects of the course: readings, lectures, class discussions and activities. Midterm I and II are *not cumulative* and will be based on all material covered in class and in the readings by the date of the exam since the previous exam. The final exam is *cumulative* and is based on all materials covered throughout the semester.

Media Report

Over the course of the semester, each student is required to monitor news story on *politics* in TWO countries of your choice other than the U.S. Your job is to identify and read at least one recent news story for each of these countries and then write up a short summary and commentary on it. The article(s) should be recent, preferably within the last month. You should briefly describe what the story is about and then offer some analysis or commentary on its significance. For example, you might talk about how the story relates to something we have covered in class, the degree to which it reflects change or continuity, or its implications for democracy, world politics, etc. The minimum is one news article per country, but I look favorably on reports that cover two or more recent stories on the same country.

You must pick stories from one of the following newspapers or magazines. The websites of these news papers make it very easy for you to find recent stories on specific countries: from the home page click on "World" and then a specific region. I will provide a guideline on how to access these websites through LSU libraries. If you want to use a story from a source that is not listed here, please consult with me first.

Acceptable Sources:

- The New York Times (www.nytimes.com)
- The Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>)
- The Guardian (London) (www.guardian.co.uk)
- The Independent (London) (<http://www.independent.co.uk>)
- The Economist (available in the periodicals section of the library)

Students will have an opportunity to present their own media reports. Students who present their reports will receive **extra credit**.

Here are some important dates:

- **September 18:** Deadline for submitting your choice of country.
- **November 20:** Student presentations of media reports.
- **November 29:** Deadline for submitting the final media report.

Course Schedule

| Week | Topic | Reading/ Note |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Week 1 8/21 8/23 | Course Overview What is Comparative Politics? | Samuels Ch.1 |
| Week 2 8/28 8/30 | State State Formation | Samuels Ch. 2 Class Discussion: Colonial legacy and weak state (Read Samuels pp. 47-48 before the class). |
| Week 3 9/4 9/6 | What is democracy, and what is not? Determinants of Democracy | Samuels Ch. 3 (pp. 55-62) Freedom House Report, 2018. "Freedom in the World" (Will be available on Moodle) |
| Week 4 9/11 | Presidentialism and Parliamentarism | Samuels Ch. 3 (pp. 63-74) Strøm, Kaare W., and Benjamin Nyblade. "Coalition theory and government formation." In The Oxford handbook of comparative politics. 2007. (Will be available on Moodle) |
| 9/13 | Making and Breaking Governments | In-Class Activity: Government Formation Simulation |
| Week 5 9/18 9/20 | Midterm Review Midterm I | SUBMIT YOUR CHOICE OF COUNTRIES FOR MEDIA REPORT (in class). |
| Week 6 9/25 9/27 | Electoral Systems around the World Electoral Rules Simulation | Samuels Ch. 3 (pp. 74-82) We will meet in Stubbs 102 (computer lab). |
| Week 7 10/2 | Non-Democratic Regimes | Samuels Ch. 4 Class Discussion: Corruption in Non-Democracies (Read Samuels pp.107-109 carefully before the class.) |
| 10/4 | No Class; Fall Holiday | |
| Week 8 10/9 | Democratic Transitions | Samuels Ch. 5 |

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| 10/11 | Social Movements | Samuels Ch. 9 (pp. 219- 232) Fouad Ajami, "The Arab Spring at One: A Year of Living Dangerously," <i>Foreign Affairs</i> 56 (2012) (Will be available on Moodle) |
| Week 9 10/16 10/18 | Political Parties | Samuels Ch. 9 (pp. 236-245) |
| Week 10 10/23 10/25 | Midterm Review Midterm II | |
| Week 11 10/30 11/1 | Political Violence | Samuels Ch. 10 |
| Week 12 11/6 11/8 | Political Economy of Development | Samuels Ch. 11 Class Discussion (TBD) |
| Week 13 11/13 | Gender in Comparative Politics | Samuels Ch. 8 Magda Hinojosa and Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Women won big in Mexico's elections" <i>The Washington Post</i> , July 12, 2018. (Will be available on Moodle) |
| 11/15 | Contemporary Issues in Comparative Politics (2) Globalization | Samuels Ch. 13 Ward, Dalston, Jeong Hyun Kim, Matthew Graham, and Margit Tavits. 2015. "How economic integration affects party issue emphases." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 48(10): 1227-1259. (Will be available on Moodle) |
| Week 14 11/20 11/22 | Student Presentations of Media Reports No Class; Thanksgiving Holiday | |
| Week 15 11/27 | Politics of Immigration | Ottaviano, G., and Peri, G. (2008), Immigration in Western Europe", <i>VoxEU</i> , 4/17/2008. [link] |
| 11/29 | Final Review | MEDIA REPORT DUE, in class |
| 12/7 (Fri) 3:00-5:00 PM | Final Exam | The exam will take place in the usual classroom. |