INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Course website: through https://blackboard.uoregon.edu/

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Office Hours: Tues & Thur 3:30 - 5pm

Class Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:00 p.m. - 1:20 p.m.
Class Location: 221 McKenzie

GTFs: TBA

Course Materials: The required textbook is available at the Duck Store and through online retailers:
(Referred to as O’Neil in Schedule)

All other required readings are on the course Blackboard website, under “Course Documents/Course Readings.” Please contact Prof. Kauffman immediately if you have any trouble downloading them. You will also find other useful information on Blackboard, such as a copy of the syllabus, information about assignments and exams, and your grades.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class is an introduction to the study of comparative politics. The basic ideas of “comparative politics” are 1) that politics in different countries works similarly in some ways and differently in others, and 2) that whether we are interested in understanding just one country or in understanding trends across many of them, we can learn a great deal by comparing things across a variety of national cases. By looking at how democracy developed in Britain, Japan, and Brazil, for example, we might hope to say something about what is common about democratization in these different countries—or about how the notion and process of democratization can vary.

In addition to this method of learning by comparison, you will explore some of the field’s main questions: Why are the most powerful, richest countries in the world capitalist democracies, and to what extent are other countries converging on that “Western” model? In other words, is there only one path of “modernity” to democracy and capitalism? Is something driving all countries along that path? Or do other paths exist, with other impulses to other outcomes, such that the world will continue to exhibit very different national political systems? This class will ask these questions across a wide range of countries to introduce students to how politics works and changes around the world. The course will cover a wide range of issues, including the formation of the nation-state, the democratization process, the persistence of authoritarianism in some places, the role of religion in politics, the effects of political institutions, and strategies of economic development. We also will discuss some debates in comparative politics that have been important in the policy-making community in recent years, such as the problems posed by failed states, how to promote development, and the challenges of nation-building and democracy promotion.
EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In this class, you will learn to:

- Describe why states have become the main form of political organization in the world;
- Use the comparative method to compare countries so as to better understand why they differ in their political and economic trajectories. In so doing, you will be able to explain the differences among states and their forms of government, through the ability to answer questions such as: Why are some states weak while others are strong? Why are some states wealthy and others poor? Why do some states develop a strong sense of nationalism while others are plagued by ethnic divisions? Why do some states become democracies while others remain authoritarian? How do authoritarian states become democracies? How does a country’s political development affect modern day politics? How do a country’s political institutions shape the way politics works? What is the best combination of political institutions, including the form of government and electoral system?
- Apply these concepts in a wide array of countries;
- Demonstrate your knowledge through several short assignment and two exams.

ESTIMATED STUDENT WORKLOAD:

This class requires 4 hours of class time per week—3 hours of lecture and 1 of discussion section. In addition, students are expected to read 70-80 pages of materials per week and prepare to discuss this reading in class. Part of this preparation includes completing a small collection of multiple choice questions based on the readings. For the typical student, this will involve roughly 8 hours per week of reading and other preparation outside of class. In addition, there is a short discussion paper and two exams (one during the term and one final exam), which will require additional time outside the classroom to complete.

This course is reading intensive. You are expected to complete the assigned readings before class, and to read carefully with a critical eye. Mark passages, ideas, and concepts that you find confusing and bring them up in lecture or discussion section. Ask questions! – this is the best way to learn. Please bring the readings to class, either hard copies or on your laptop or tablet, so that we can refer to them during class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

20% Online Reading Quizzes (10 at 2 points each). You are expected to complete the assigned readings before each class. As part of this process, you are required to complete a short quiz based on the readings before each class. These quizzes are open book. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to come to class prepared so that we can have an informed and productive discussion of the readings. Students can complete the reading quizzes on Blackboard any time before that day’s class begins. I recognize there will be days when students are unable to complete all the readings. Therefore, I will only count students’ top 10 quiz scores. Quizzes are worth 2 points each, for a total of 20 points.

5% Online Video Exercise. After week 2 you are required to complete a short online video exercise on Nationalism, conducted on Blackboard (click on the Assignments link). This involves watching a short video (around 5 minutes) and answering several multiple choice and short answer questions based on the video.
25% **Midterm Exam.** There will be one in-class midterm exam. It will assess three things: (1) your knowledge about the concepts, specific issues and cases we have covered; (2) your ability to think critically about the concepts and themes explored in the class; and (3) your ability to apply these concepts to specific cases. The midterm will cover both the readings and information presented during lectures. **There will be no make-up exams.**

15% **Discussion Paper on Democratic Transitions.** This assignment involves watching four videos on democratic transitions in the Soviet Union, Tunisia and Egypt (roughly 85 minutes total; available on Blackboard) and then writing an essay of no more than 2000 words (roughly 5-6 double spaced pages with 1” margins) that analyze the democratic transitions in these countries.

25% **Final Exam.** The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm and will concentrate on material covered after the midterm.

10% **Discussion section attendance and participation.** You are permitted one unexcused discussion section absence. If you miss more than one section, your discussion section grade will drop one half letter grade (e.g., from an A to an A-) per absence. In addition to attendance, part of your grade will reflect your preparation, in terms of having done the reading and participating in discussion.

**Extra Credit Opportunity (maximum 5 points):**
You may earn extra credit by bringing to discussion section a newspaper or magazine article that relates to one of that week’s topics and describing its relevance in section. You will earn 1 extra credit point each time you do this. You may do this up to five times for a total of 5 extra credit points. Students may not use articles/stories that I previously used in lecture or ones that other students previously used in discussion section. If multiple students identify the same story the same week, all will get credit so long as each discusses a unique aspect of how the article relates to that week’s readings.

**No Make-up Exams:**
Out of fairness to the other students, there will be no opportunities to re-take missed quizzes or exams. Exceptions will only be made in the event of serious illness or family death, and evidence of the event will be required. In addition to a formal doctor’s letter, you must provide 24 hours advance notice AND obtain approval by instructor.

**Turn in your assignments on time:**
Late assignments will be accepted for up to one week (7 days) after the deadline. Late assignments lose a half letter grade (e.g., from A to A-) each day. Assignments are due at the beginning of class, and a late penalty of one day (half grade) applies for assignments handed in later on the due date. NOTE: passing the class requires that you turn in ALL assignments. I rarely fail anyone who turns in all assignments. The rare times that I do fail people, however, is when they fail to turn in all assignments (since each is such a large portion of the final grade). So, please, turn in even late assignments. Help me help you pass the course.

**Academic Honesty:**
Don’t cheat. Don’t waste my time and yours. Today’s software makes it very easy to catch cheaters. Everything in your assignments must be your own work. Neither ignorance of these policies nor the lack of an intention to cheat or plagiarize will be considered a legitimate defense. Raise questions you have with me before problems arise. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will receive a zero on your assignment, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and you may fail the class. For more information on the Student Conduct Code and on plagiarism, see these websites:
Grading:
If you have questions or concerns about the grading of the assignment, first discuss the assignment with the GTF who graded it. If you still have concerns, feel free to come to the professor with the assignment in question. All requests for a re-grade must be made in writing and provide a compelling reason. If the professor re-grades the assignment, whatever grade the instructor assigns stands, which can be lower or higher than your initial grade. Requests for re-grades must be made within two weeks of the return of the assignment to the class.

Class Communications:
Please check your email and the announcements section on the course Blackboard site every day. I may send you information on scheduling, corrections to lectures or readings, and other messages that you need to see. It is your responsibility to check your email and the course blackboard site. Once I have sent you a message, I assume that you have that information.

Technology Policy:
Silence your cell phones before coming to class. Students who answer phone calls or engage in excessive text messaging will be asked to leave. Please feel free to bring your laptops to class to take notes and refer to the readings. Avoid using your laptop to play games or distract your fellow students during class. During exams, students may not use any electronic devices, including cell phones, PDAs, i-pods, dictionaries or any other electronic equipment. Students who are found to be using any electronic device will automatically fail the exam.

STUDENTS REQUIRING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION

Both I, as a professor, and the University of Oregon are committed to creating inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if any aspects of my instruction methods or course design result in barriers to your participation. If you have a disability or require special accommodation, I encourage you to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu. If you have already been in contact with the Accessible Education Center and have a notification letter, please provide me with a statement from the Accessible Education Center during the first week of class so that we can make appropriate arrangements. University policy requires that “students MUST present a notification letter from the Accessible Education Center to receive testing accommodations” (see http://aec.uoregon.edu/)

STATE FORMATION

1. March 31 – Introduction to Comparative Politics: The Big Questions and Comparison

2. April 2 – Why is the world made up of States and how did they form? (26 pp.)
3. **April 7 – Why are there so many weak States and what should we do? (32 pp.)**
   - “Two Arab Countries Fall Apart,” *The Economist*, July 14, 2014 (available on Blackboard).

4. **April 9 – Nationalism: Creator or Destroyer of States? (33 pp.)**

* ONLINE VIDEO EXERCISE ON “NATIONALISM” DUE BY APRIL 14 AT 12:00 p.m.

5. **April 14 – Civil Society and Political Culture (27 pp.)**

   **THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT**

6. **April 16 – Political Economy and Development (34 pp.)**
   - O’Neil, Essentials of Comparative Politics, Chapter 4, “Political Economy,” pp. 95-96; 102-110 only.

7. **April 21 – Communism in Russia and China (37 pp.)**
   - O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on China, pp 368-388 (on Blackboard).

8. **April 23 – Late Developers (38 pp.)**
9. April 28 – MIDTERM EXAM

10. April 30 – Modernization & Authoritarianism (31 pp)
   - O’Neil, Essentials of Comparative Politics, Chapter 6, “Non-Democratic Regimes,” pp. 163-174 only.
   - O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on Brazil, pp. 581-591 (on Blackboard).

DEMOCRATIC REGIMES

11. May 5 – What is democracy, and is it the best form of government? (26 pp.)
   - Joseph Shumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, 1976 (excerpt) (on Blackboard).

12. May 7 – Democratization: how do democracies emerge? (32 pp.)

** DISCUSSION PAPER INSTRUCTIONS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS **

13. May 12 – Online Video Exercise: Democratic Transitions Discussion Paper
   - There will be NO LECTURE held. Instead, you are responsible for completing the Discussion paper assignment on Democratic Transitions posted on Blackboard (see above description under “Course Requirements”).

14. May 14 – Democratic Institutions (32 pp.)

15. May 19 - United Kingdom: The First Modern Democracy (31 pp.)
   - O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on UK, pp. 41-71 (on Blackboard).
16. May 21 – Second and Third Wave Democracies: Japan and Brazil (39 pp.)

- O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on Brazil, pp. 592-597; 601-605 (on Blackboard).

**DISCUSSION PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**

17. May 26 – What’s the best form of government for deeply divided societies? (31 pp.)


18. May 28 – A Reverse Third Wave? Struggling Democracies in Russia and Nigeria (34 pp.)

- O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on Russia, pp. 325-336 (on Blackboard).
- O’Neil, Fields & Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, Chapter on Nigeria, pp. 694-704 (on Blackboard).

19. June 2 – Authoritarian Resilience (40 pp.)


20. June 4 – Review for Final Exam

* Final Exam date to be determined by the university