

DRAFT

PS 204 Introduction to Comparative Politics (On-Line Version)
Summer 2017 (8 week term)
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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 course 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 effects of political institutions, and strategies of economic development. The course also addresses 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 a variety of quizzes, video exercises, and writing assignments.

Required Text:

Essentials of Comparative Politics, Fifth Edition, by Patrick O’Neil (W.W. Norton & Company). Ebook versions are substantially cheaper than print and can be purchased at <https://digital.wwnorton.com/esscompol5> . Do **NOT** purchase older versions of the textbook because it will not adequately prepare you for the chapter tests. The course structure follows that of this required textbook.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Over 8 weeks, you must complete 10 chapter quizzes, 10 video exercises, and 4 reflection papers. **Some assignments are due every two weeks.** Within each two-week period you may proceed at your own pace. However, you must complete all assignments during the two-week period in which they are assigned (see **Course Schedule below**). **Late assignments will NOT be accepted.**

- 40% CHAPTER QUIZZES** – You will take one quiz each for chapters 2-11 in the textbook. These quizzes will be taken on-line via CANVAS and can be accessed through the “Modules” page under the module for each chapter. The quizzes can also be accessed through the folder called “Assignments.” Forty percent of your grade for the class will be based on these chapter quizzes. Each chapter quiz contains 25 multiple-choice questions. You will have 45 minutes to take each chapter quiz. After completing the test, please make sure you press the submit button about 30 seconds before the 30 minute time limit because it takes the system about that long to process your quiz.
- 20% VIDEO EXERCISES** – You will also complete a series of short video exercises for chapters 2-11. These involve watching short videos online (typically 5-10 minutes each) and answering several multiple choice questions relating to each video segment. The purpose of these is for you to think about how the issues discussed in the text relate to real-world cases. There is no time limit for completing the video exercises, which will be completed via CANVAS (see the Modules page). They are worth 20% of your final grade.
- 40% REFLECTION PAPERS** – Every two weeks you will write a short (2 to 3-page double-spaced) “reflection paper” responding to questions I post on CANVAS. The questions require you to reflect on and analyze information provided in the chapters assigned for that two-week period. A reflection paper is not a summary of the course readings or a stream of conscious mind dump on paper. Rather, it is a means for you to analyze and respond in a substantive way to the content, issues and controversies raised in the assigned readings. While you are free to do any outside research you want, it is not necessary. Your writing assignments will be securely uploaded to Canvas and automatically checked for plagiarism. Together, these reflection papers constitute 40% of your grade for the class (10% each).

Grading Scale:

A	= 94 - 100	C+	= 77 - 79
A---	= 90 - 93	C	= 74 - 76
B+	= 87 - 89	C--	= 70 - 73
B	= 84 - 86	D+	= 67 - 69
B--	= 80 - 83	D	= 60 - 66

No Make-up Assignments or Incompletes:

Out of fairness to the other students, there will be no opportunities to re-take missed assignments.

No incompletes can be given for this course due to its web-based nature. If you do not complete a quiz, video exercise or paper for any reason, you will receive a “0.” If you have trouble accessing any quiz, please contact me immediately.

Technological Requirements:

- You will need regular access to a competent computer with web access.
- **The course CANVAS** site is the web site used for this class. All class information will be run through this website.

Other Policies:

- PS 204 cannot be repeated for credit – the traditional lecture course PS 204 is treated as the same course by the Registrar’s office.
- Please email me with any questions from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, and I will respond within 24 hours.

PLEASE NOTE: It is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code to open the required textbook or other materials during a quiz, collaborate or consult with another person during a quiz, share questions or answers with others, print out the quiz, or use a quiz or quiz answers provided by another person, or to pay another person or organization to assist you in taking these quizzes. If you engage in any of these activities even once, your grade for all the quizzes will be a zero, which will make it essentially impossible to pass the class.

Faculty Reporting Requirements

All faculty and staff share in the responsibility to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the campus as a whole. As members of the campus community, all faculty and staff (other than those designated as confidential reporters) are designated as *responsible employees* and therefore have the duty to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If a student would prefer to share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, a list of those individuals can be found at <https://safe.uoregon.edu/services>. Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

Title IX Rights:

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. As a member of the university community, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at <http://safe.uoregon.edu/services>. Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

Course Schedule:

Weeks 1 & 2 (June 26 to July 9)	
Assignments Due: 10pm (PST), Sunday July 9	Read: O'Neil, Chapters 2-4
	Complete Quizzes for Chapters 2-4
	Complete Video Exercises for Chapters 2-4
	Complete Reflection Paper 1
Weeks 3 & 4 (July 10 to July 23)	
Assignments Due: 10pm (PST), Sunday July 23	Read: O'Neil, Chapters 5-7
	Complete Quizzes for Chapters 5-7
	Complete Video Exercises for Chapters 5-7
	Complete Reflection Paper 2
Weeks 5 & 6 (July 24 to August 6)	
Assignments Due: 10pm (PST), Sunday August 6	Read: O'Neil, Chapters 8-9
	Complete Quizzes for Chapters 8-9
	Complete Video Exercises for Chapters 8-9
	Complete Reflection Paper 3
Weeks 7 & 8 (August 7 to August 18)	
Assignments Due: 10pm (PST), Friday August 18	Read: O'Neil, Chapters 10-11
	Complete Quizzes for Chapters 10-11
	Complete Video Exercises for Chapters 10-11
	Complete Reflection Paper 4