2014

120 Comparative Government and Politics

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Department of Political Science
POLI 120: Comparative Government and Politics
Spring 2014

Credit Hours: 3
Class meets from 10:00-10:50am, MWF @ SMH G29
Instructor: Dr. Bin Yu
Office: 708 Schott
Office Hours: 11:00am-12:00pm, Monday; 2:00-4:00pm, Thursday; and by appointment.
Email: Yub@Xavier.edu

I. Course Description:
This course introduces key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical methods commonly used today in comparative politics. It examines the various ways in which governments operate and the ways people behave in political life. Meanwhile, we aim to obtain a broad global comparison by drawing upon political realities in countries all over the world. In particular, we focus on political realities in the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and Iran. In the process of our investigation, we will explore topics such as economic development, democratization, political culture, civil society and social capital, ethnic and religious conflict, and the challenges posed to domestic politics by globalization.

II. Course Objectives:
By the end of the semester, students should:
- be able to grasp key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical methods in comparative politics.
- be more familiar with world affairs and be able to follow current events more knowledgeably.
- be able to identify and engage themselves in solving global political and economic problems.
- be able to think more critically.

III. Textbooks:
* All supplementary readings are available on Blackboard.

IV. Important Dates:
January 31 (Friday): deadline to sign up for multi-media Project
February 14 (Friday): deadline to submit project proposal
February 17 (Monday): 1st quiz
March 10(Monday): midterm exam
April 7 (Monday): 2nd quiz
May 7 (Wednesday): final exam @10am

V. Tests and Writing Assignments:
Your grade is comprised of five parts—class participation, two announced quizzes, a midterm exam, a multi-media project, and a final exam.
- Class Participation (10%):
  Participation is an integral part of this course. Students are expected to attend class and to be prepared to discuss the readings, questions raised in lectures, and current events. Grading criteria include the ability to answer questions asked in class about assigned readings and the ability to ask and answer questions in ways that raise the level of discussion and help other students to learn. I encourage you to contact me after class with any questions, concerns, and ideas about this course. Throughout the semester, you are allowed to have one unexcused absence. Any additional absence, if unexcused by me, will downgrade your final course grade by half a letter grade, e.g., from A to A-.
- Quizzes (10%):
  There will be two announced quizzes throughout the semester. Students are expected to review course materials before taking quizzes, which will be based on course materials taught during previous weeks.
- Midterm exam (25%)
  There will be a midterm exam comprised of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions.
- Multi-Media Project (25%)
  In order to enhance your critical thinking and presentation skills, you are required to finish a multi-media project.
  - Topics will involve a significant question relevant to comparative politics.
  - Each and every student must work in a group of 2 people.
  - Each group must sign up for a country and a presentation date by January 31 (Friday).
  - A project proposal must be submitted on February 14 (Friday). Before you can proceed with the project, the proposal must be approved by me.
  - Each group expected to conduct a research, collect relevant information, make a PowerPoint, and present the findings.
  - Each group will take 10-15 minutes to present the project. The group is also expected to respond to questions and comments from the audiences.
  - Both group members must participate in every step of the of this research project: conducting the research, collecting the information, making the PowerPoint, presenting the findings, and responding to questions and comments.
  - A hard copy of the PowerPoint is due on the day of the presentation. An electronic copy should be sent to me at: Yub@Xavier.edu.
- Final Exam (30%)—The final exam will cover all course materials. It will be comprised of multiple choice, identification, short answer, and essay questions.
VI. Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1. Politics and Comparative Politics
Monday 1/13. Introduction of the Course
Wednesday 1/15 & Friday 1/17. What is Politics? What is Comparative Politics?
- Syllabus
- Chapter 1 (pp. 3-37) in CCP

Week 2. Comparing Political Systems
Monday 1/20. Labor Day
- No class
Wednesday 1/22. Why We Compare? How We Compare
- * Chapter 2 (pp. 29-43) in Comparative Politics Today
Friday 1/24. An introduction to Critical Thinking I
- * Part of chapter 3 (pp. 60-79) in Comparative Politics

Week 3. How to Think Critically?
Monday 1/27. An Introduction to Critical Thinking II
- * Part of Chapter 3 (pp. 80-97) in Comparative Politics
Wednesday 1/29. Lab I
Friday 1/31. Lab II
- No reading assignment

Week 4. The UK I
Monday 2/3 & Wednesday 2/5. Political History and Political System
- Part of chapter 2 (pp. 38-64) in CCP
Friday 2/7. Discussion: What factors contributed to the emergence of democracy in the UK?

Week 5. The UK II
Monday 2/10 & Wednesday 2/12. Parties, Leaders, and Policies
- Part of chapter 2 (pp. 64-93) in CCP
Friday 2/14. Discussion: Is economic development a precondition for democracy?
Week 6. Russia I
Monday 2/17 & Wednesday 2/19. Political History and Political System
- Part of chapter 7 (pp. 314-38) in CCP
Friday 2/21. Discussion: Why did the Soviet Union Collapse?
- *Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848. The Communist Manifesto

Week 7. Russia II
- Part of chapter 7 (pp. 338-363) in CCP
Friday 2/28. Discussion: Has Putin’s Russia become more or less democratic?

Week 8. Spring Break
3/3-3/7. No class

Week 9. Midterm and China I
Monday 3/10.
- Please bring a blue book and pen
Wednesday 3/12 & Friday 3/14. Political History and Political System
- Part of chapter 8 (pp. 364-391) in CCP

Week 10. China II
- Part of chapter 8 (pp. 391-421) in CCP
Friday 3/21. Discussion: What’s the future of China?
- Excerpts from The Gate of Heavenly Peace

Week 11. Iran I
Monday 3/24. The Developmental State
Wednesday 3/26 & Friday 3/28. Political History and System
- Part of Chapter 10 (pp.472-98) in CCP
Week 12. Iran II
- Part of Chapter 10 (pp.498-521) in CCP
Friday 4/4. Video Day
- Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think

Week 13.
Monday 4/7. Islam and Democracy
Wednesday 4/9. Religion as a Belief System
Friday 4/11. Clash of Civilizations?

Week 14.
Wednesday 4/16
- Presentations of Multi-media Project
Friday 4/18. Easter Holiday
- No class

Week 15. Presentations of Multi-media Project
Monday 4/21 Easter Holiday
- No class

Week 16. Presentations of Multi-media Project
Monday 4/28, Wednesday 4/30, and Friday 5/2

Week 17. Final Exam
- 1000-11:50am on May 7(Wednesday)
VII. Grading Policy

The following grade scale will be used in this course:  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, and F = Below 60.  There is no curving or dropping of grades in this class.  For a reference to the standards for these grades, see the Department of Political Science and Sociology Grading Guidelines provided below:

A- to A = Superior critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Detailed understanding of course readings. Generally clear, well-organized writing that develops important issues in a thoughtful way. Analysis of texts is without technical or factual errors.  An excellent essay will significantly surpass the expectations of a good essay by demonstrating critical mastery of the logic, assumptions, and evidence of research sources. Excellent use of quotations and proper citation of texts.

Class discussion is frequent and thoughtful; shows a very good grasp of the issues.

B- to B+ = Good to Very Good critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Solid understanding of course readings. Generally clear, well-organized writing that reports important issues in some detail. Analysis of texts is generally without technical or factual errors.  A good to very good essay will have a thesis, define and incorporate concepts appropriately, present a coherent argument, and make a persuasive case for its thesis using convincing evidence; it may also need to consider plausible and reasonable alternatives systematically. Good use of quotations and proper citation of texts.

Class discussion is regular and helpful; shows a solid grasp of the issues.

C- to C+ = Adequate critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Basic understanding of course readings. Generally competent writing that identifies important issues but leaves them insufficiently explained or examined. Analysis of texts may be technically or factually defective in minor ways. An adequate essay will have a thesis, define and incorporate concepts appropriately, and present a coherent argument. Correct use of quotations and citation of texts.

Class discussion is occasional and generally adequate; may reveal some misunderstanding of the issues.

D- to D+ = Inadequate critical reading, thinking and analytical skills. Poor or incompetent understanding of course readings. Below average writing that omits or misunderstands important issues. Analysis of texts may be technically or factually defective in substantial ways. An inadequate essay may not have a clear thesis, or may not define and incorporate concepts appropriately, or it may not present a coherent argument. There may be ineffective use of quotations and inadequate citation of texts.

Class discussion is infrequent; may reveal a lack of engagement with the issues or serious misunderstanding.

F = Unacceptable. No serious engagement of course readings. An unacceptable essay shows little or no serious attempt to understand important issues. Writing is unclear, or unorganized, or undeveloped to the degree that the essay is deemed a failure. Analysis of texts may contain egregious errors. There may be a failure to cite texts.

Class discussion is infrequent and ill informed; reveals no real understanding of even basic issues.