

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Drexel University
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Instructor: Professor Amelia Hoover Green

E-mail: ameliahoovergreen@gmail.com

Class meetings: Monday/Wednesday, 8:00 am–9:50 am, Peck Problem Solving Center 107

Office hours: Monday, 10:20 am-noon (or by appointment) 3025 Macalister

Required Texts

There are 2 required texts in this course: *Comparative Politics*, by David Samuels (“CP” in the rest of this syllabus) and an additional readings packet (“Reader”). CP is available in any number of locations—including but not limited to the Drexel Bookstore and Amazon’s Kindle shop—and the reader is available from the Drexel Copy Center.

Course Overview

This course introduces basic concepts, methods and questions in comparative politics, one of four traditional sub-disciplines of political science. Comparative politics looks for answers to questions like: What are the chances for lasting democracy in the Arab Spring countries? Why does the US have a two-party system, while other countries have a wider array of parties? What caused, and what are the prospects for resolving, conflicts in (for example) the Democratic Republic of Congo or Afghanistan? (Or, more generally: Why are some countries democracies, while others are ruled by authoritarian regimes? What factors determine how a country’s party system works? What causes civil war?) Comparative politics covers a broad range of topics and questions. What ties the sub-discipline together is commitment to *comparison* as a tool for answering those questions. **The main objective of this course is a clear, demonstrable understanding of key methods and approaches in comparative politics, as applied to common substantive topics and questions.**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Describe common questions in comparative politics research.
- Compare and contrast differing methodological approaches to comparative politics.
- In writing and conversation, identify key findings and debates in the following substantive areas of comparative politics:
 - Regime types
 - Democratization and democratic institutions
 - Elections and electoral systems
 - Welfare state politics
 - Protection of human rights in war and peace
- In writing and conversation, demonstrate knowledge of the political dynamics of a specific region of the world.
- In writing and conversation, apply comparative politics findings and debates to current issues and events.

Classroom Climate and Participation: Policies

Please read this section carefully, paying close attention to the four initial paragraphs (beginning “You must”).

You must come to class, and you must come on time. This is a discussion-based class, not a gigantic lecture—your classmates and I will notice your absence. Attendance and promptness are both components of your participation grade.

You must do the reading, and you must bring your readings to class. **I expect each class session to require about two hours of preparation,** although that will vary a bit over the course of the quarter. Not understanding the readings (i.e., having a million questions) is totally fine—great, in fact. Not doing the readings is not. I can tell the difference.

You must participate in class. Participation accounts for a significant portion of your grade, and is an important element of both your learning and the learning of your colleagues. However, if participation is hard for you—as it is for many people—email me or meet with me. I will help you strategize about participating in a way that feels challenging but not terrifying.

You must treat me, and your classmates, with respect. Treating others with respect is a key part of your participation grade (and an important life skill!). Some indicators of respect that I demand are:

- No phones: no texting, no talking, no surfing the web. Turn them to silent and put them away.
- Computers are for notes, or (extremely occasionally) looking up class-relevant stuff on the web.
- No side conversations (unless I specifically ask for them, which I will occasionally do).
- Warm, non-judgmental attention to whomever is speaking. This means: active, attentive listening; nonverbal demonstrations of engagement using eye contact and/or body language and/or facial expression; expressions of support rather than dismissiveness.
- If you’re bored, I expect you to pretend otherwise. If you can’t stay awake, don’t come to class.

Participation Grading: I assign a rough 0-10 score for participation after each class period. At the end of the term, I remove the two lowest participation scores, and average the remaining scores. In general, “A+” participation for a class period (10/10) requires all of the following: (1) you attend, (2) you are extremely well-prepared, including reading the news and/or political science blogs/Twitter, (3) you make insightful comments in class, (4) your comments are relevant to the reading and the broader purposes of the class, and (5) your comments are respectful of your classmates and me. Failing to meet any of these requirements will lower your grade. In general, I assign participation grades of no lower than 5/10 when you are in class. However, two circumstances will cause zero participation grades: missing class (unless excused under my Emergencies policy below, or as an element of a disability accommodation) and behaving disrespectfully (non-note-taking computer use, sleeping, repeated interruptions, or disparaging remarks, for example).

Specific behaviors that will improve your participation grade:

- Don’t interrupt.
- Listen actively, making eye contact, signaling your agreement by nodding, and so on.
- If you have trouble participating in class, email me or make an appointment, and we’ll strategize.
- If you are someone who likes to speak a lot in class discussions, that’s awesome. Still, be mindful of colleagues who have less practice speaking up by pausing for a few seconds before you jump in.
- Really listen when your colleagues are speaking. Don’t just rehearse what you’re going to say.
- Be thoughtful as you frame remarks about cultures and practices that are not your own.
- If you disagree, do so respectfully. Try jumping off from a point of agreement.
- Don’t make assumptions about what is “basic” knowledge. Judgment makes learning harder for everyone.

If you’re not sure about your participation grade, it’s your right and responsibility to check in with me. If your participation problems are particularly severe, I may reach out to discuss them with you—but it’s not wise to assume that your participation grade is perfect just because you haven’t heard otherwise.

Other Course Policies

Please read this section, which is organized alphabetically by topic, carefully. I treat a syllabus as a contract of sorts. If you take my class you are bound by the terms here.

Academic Integrity: ALL YOUR WORK MUST BE YOUR OWN. I cannot emphasize this enough. If you feel that you're in over your head, or you don't know whether what you're doing constitutes plagiarism or another academic integrity violation, PLEASE talk to me. Making the wrong decision could get you expelled from Drexel. I take academic integrity very seriously (academic research is, after all, my job). Under most circumstances, I will pursue disciplinary action to the fullest extent for any dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism or other academic integrity violation. The full text of Drexel's academic misconduct policies can be found at http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp.

Attendance: I do not grade on attendance. However, you receive a zero participation grade for class meetings you do not attend. Perhaps more importantly, when you are absent you do not have the opportunity to learn materials that are discussed in class rather than in the readings, which decreases your likelihood of earning full credit on written assignments.

Changes to the Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time. I do my best to communicate clearly about any changes.

Disability Statement: My goal is full inclusion. (See below under "Diversity and Inclusion" for more on that.) I work hard to help everyone take full advantage of my classes, but in some cases I'm not sure what my students' specific learning needs are. If you are disabled, think you might be disabled, or become disabled, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan. There is no need to have a specific accommodation figured out in advance; we can talk about your needs and the class requirements, and figure out what is necessary. You will probably also want to get an accommodation verification letter, as described in Drexel's official policy: "[T]he University is committed to the non-discrimination of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations and services at Drexel need to present a current accommodation verification letter (AVL) before accommodation can be made. AVL's are issued by the Office of Disability Services." (The Office of Disability Services is located at 3201 Arch St. in Suite 210, and can also be reached at disability@drexel.edu.)

Diversity and Inclusion: I try to teach in a way that promotes the full, equal participation of people from lots of different backgrounds, including people who haven't had the same sorts of educational opportunities, people with a variety of mother tongues, and people of different racial, socioeconomic, sexual and gender identities. If you're not familiar with the concept of privilege, please read some of the following pieces:

- <http://paintingonscars.wordpress.com/2012/10/07/whats-privilege/>
- <http://weeklysift.com/2012/09/10/the-distress-of-the-privileged/>
- <http://paintingthegreyarea.wordpress.com/2012/11/26/literacy-privilege/>

In keeping with my focus on inclusion, there are a few things I don't tolerate under any circumstances, including slurs of any kind, body-shaming, and mocking or deriding anyone's appearance or other private choices. This stuff earns you a zero participation grade for the day.

Drops and Withdrawals: I adhere to the University's policies on drops and withdrawals, which are available at http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp and http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/pdf/course_withdrawal.pdf, respectively.

Emergencies: If you believe you will miss class, or be unable to turn in an assignment on time, due to legitimate, verifiable illness, disability, or emergency, please contact me directly and we will consider how to proceed.

Grading Notes: I give grades of A+ only in exceptional circumstances. A rule of thumb: if your insight is new to me, and extremely clearly presented, then you *may* receive an A+. Rubrics for individual assignments will be handed out separately, but these general guidelines apply to all written assignments and are the only way to receive an A.

- For assignments that ask you to “evaluate” or “analyze,” please do so. You may summarize *if and only if* the finer points of the material summarized are relevant to the evaluative argument.
- Use evidence: quotations from the reading, examples from the news, and readings from other courses are all appropriate sources. All sources must be accurately and completely sources.
- Evaluate your evidence and arguments fairly. Social science writing is not about winning a debate or laying out one side of an argument; it’s about critically but open-mindedly assessing theory and evidence.
- Be clear. It doesn’t have to be beautiful prose (although that helps), but it does have to get the point across with a minimum of fuss and confusion.
- I do not grade on spelling or grammar, but I do grade on clarity. Always proofread to make sure that your writing says what you want it to say. If you’re not sure about how clear your writing is, have someone else look over it.

Grading Scale:	A+	97-100%
	A	93-96%
	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%
	F	62% and below

How to Turn in Your Work: All assignments are due at the BEGINNING of the class period, in hard copy. You may turn in up to two assignments per quarter via email, but then you must also turn in a hard copy to my mailbox in Macalister 3025 within 48 hours of the due date in order to receive full credit.

Late Work: I accept late assignments for partial credit, no questions asked, until **three weeks after the original deadline**. After that time you will receive a zero for the assignment. I deduct one letter grade (10%) from work handed in up to one week after the original deadline. After one week has passed, but before three weeks have passed, I deduct four letter grades (40%). I will not accept work that is more than three weeks late. ALL ASSIGNMENTS, except the final draft of the final paper, must be turned in by 5:00 pm on Monday, March 16.

However, under certain circumstances, I will accept late work with no penalty. If you need an extension due to legitimate, documented illness or emergency, please speak with me before the scheduled due date if at all possible. We will create a plan specifying a new due date.

When to Expect Grades: I make every effort to return all written work promptly. In general, you should expect to receive your grade and any comments by one week after the due date. However, this is not possible in all situations. I will advise you if grading will take longer than expected.

What Your Grade is Based On

Your grade is based on the components outlined in the table below.

Component	Description	Due when	% of grade
Optional Reading Responses	Up to four times during the quarter, you may turn in a short essay (500-800 words) that responds thoughtfully to two or more course readings. Each of these essays is worth up to 2% extra credit on your quarter grade. You may only turn in extra credit reading responses in weeks 3, 5, and 8.	Start of class, Monday of week 3, 5, and 8.	Up to 6% EC
Optional Political Event Response	At any time during the quarter, you may attend a political event (a speech, workshop, protest, campaign meeting, rally, or activist group meeting) and write a short essay (500-800 words) that (1) describes the purpose of the event and (2) describes your reaction to the event. This essay is worth up to 2% extra credit on your quarter grade.	Start of class, any Monday <i>before</i> week 9.	Up to 2% EC
Participation	See description above. Attendance is included in participation grades.	NA	25%
Assignment 1	On the first day of class we considered two questions: What is politics? What is comparative politics? Compare the answers we came up with in class to the answers in CP. How would you answer these questions now? 500–700 words.	Start of class, Monday of week 2.	5%
Assignment 2	Discuss some definitions and measurements of democracy that we have considered in our reading and in class. Is one of these definitions best? 500–700 words.	Start of class, Monday of week 4.	10%
Midterm Exam	This in-class midterm will cover topics from the first 4 1/2 weeks of class and will consist primarily of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.	In class, Wednesday of week 5.	10%
Assignment 3	You will be assigned a country. Describe that country’s electoral system, according to the International IDEA rubric, and consider how the electoral system is affecting politics in the country. You may wish to refer back to the conceptions of democracy considered in Assignment 2.	Start of class, Monday of week 6.	10%
Final paper, Part I	Your final paper will be a research proposal. The first part of the paper includes a topic, motivation, and proposed bibliography. By “motivation” I mean: why is this topic important? You can refer to current events, or to unsolved questions in the academic literature. The topic and motivation should be about 300-400 words together and will form the basis of the introduction to your paper. For the proposed bibliography, please list approximately 6-8 scholarly sources (books or refereed journal articles) that you intend to read as part of your research.	Start of class, Monday of week 7.	5%
Final Paper, Part II	First draft of final paper. A research proposal has the following sections: Introduction (including a research question), Literature Review, Theory, Research Plan, Conclusion. Your draft must be at least 1500 words long. This draft need not include formal references or be fully complete, but it is in your best interests to complete as much as possible so that I and your classmates can give productive feedback.	Start of class, Monday of week 9.	10%
Assignment 4	Carefully read two of your classmates’ final paper drafts. For each, write a review of 300-400 words, identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement. 600-800 words total.	Start of class, Monday of week 10.	10%
Final Paper, Part III	Final draft. 2500–3500 words, exclusive of references. References must be complete.	5:00 pm, Friday, 20 March	15%

Detailed Course Schedule

The schedule below gives a fairly complete overview of each week's readings and any assignments due. Please note the TIME as well as the day that assignments are due.

Week # / Dates	Topic(s)	Read for Monday	Read for Wednesday	Due
1: January 5,7	Introduction; key skills and issue areas.	No reading.	CP, chapter 1; Reader: "How to Read Political Science."	Nothing due.
2: January 12,14	Methods: asking questions and getting answers in comparative politics	Reader: Mill, Sartori	Reader: Mahoney	Assignment 1 due Monday at start of class.
3: January 21 (No class January 19)	Origins of the (modern) state	Class cancelled: MLK Day.	CP, chapter 2	Optional reading response.
4: January 26, 28	Defining and measuring democracy and non-democracy	CP, chapters 3 AND 4	Reader: Coppedge, Gerring, et al.	Assignment 2 due Monday at start of class.
5: February 2, 4	Causes of/ transitions to democracy	CP, chapter 5; Reader: Carothers (Carothers reading is optional)	No reading. Prepare for in-class midterm on Wednesday.	Optional reading response.
6: February 9, 11	Elections & Electoral systems	Reader: International IDEA Electoral System Design Handbook, excerpts.	Reader: Reilly	Assignment 3 due Monday at start of class.
7: February 16 (No class February 18)	Institutions and economic development	CP, chapter 11	Class cancelled: AHG travel.	Final paper part 1 due Monday at start of class.
8: February 23, 25	Economic development, continued; welfare states	CP, chapter 12	Reader: Rudra	Optional reading response.
9: March 2, 4	Collective action and social movements	CP, chapter 9	Reader: Olson, Wood	Final paper part 2 due Monday at start of class.
10: March 9, 11	Political violence and civil war	CP, chapter 10	Reader: Fearon & Laitin	Assignment 4 due Monday at start of class.
11: March 16	To be determined	To be determined	No class. (Monday is the final day of class.)	Final paper part 3 due FRIDAY, 5:00 pm.