

Political Science 1024

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2012

Course Info

Instructor: Steven Wilson

Place: McBryde 240

Time: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 11:15AM - 12:05PM

Office Hours: 8:30-10:30 Wednesdays and Fridays in 506 Major Williams Hall

Contact Info: Email: slw42@vt.edu Phone: 540-231-1854

Objectives: This course will introduce students to the variety of political systems in the world, in addition to fundamental ideas of the field of Comparative Politics. We will also explore a number of in depth case studies in order to see how the political, economic, social, and institutional characteristics of different states have led to a myriad of political structures.

Textbooks

The course has three required text books, which will be supplemented by a selection of additional readings which will be available electronically throughout the semester. The three required texts are:

O'Neil, Patrick. Essentials of Comparative Politics, 3rd edition (2010, W.W.Norton and Co.) (Textbook)

O'Neil, Patrick, Karl Fields, and Don Share, Cases in Comparative Politics, 3rd edition (2010, W.W.Norton and Co.) (Case Book)

O'Neil, Patrick and Ronald Rogowski, eds. Essential Readings in Comparative Politics 3rd edition (2010, W.W.Norton and Co.) (Reader)

Assignments & Grading

Reading will be assigned for each class. Students should come to class having read the assigned material and being ready to discuss it. Lectures will be designed to supplement the material covered in the readings, and both will be reflected on the exams. Please come to office hours (or schedule a meeting with me if you have a conflict) if you have any trouble understanding the material, or if you have any questions about the course at all as the semester progresses.

The course will have three exams, a country report, and occasional smaller assignments or quizzes (and material covered on exams and assignments will always be cumulative). The proportion each of these is worth to the final grade is listed below:

First Exam (15%) (Friday, Sep 28th)
Second Exam (15%) (Friday, Nov 2nd)
Final Exam (25%) (Dec 17th, 3:25-5:25)
Country Report (25%) (Due at the start of the final class, Dec 12th)
Presentation (10%)
Other Assignments (10%)

The exams will be composed of multiple choice questions, and some short essays.

At the beginning of the semester, everyone will choose (or be assigned) a single unique country on which to write a Country Report. While the report will be turned in at the end of the semester, bits and pieces of it will be assigned and turned in throughout the semester. The Country Report will require students to research the politics and economics of their chosen country, using the subject matter of the course as a guide for writing.

In addition, everyone will be required to give a single five minute presentation on a specific assigned subject related to Comparative Politics. A list of subjects will be circulated at the beginning of the semester and students may sign up for a specific day. The presentations will occur in the week before each exam (weeks 5, 10, and 16). Since students tend to prefer to give presentations later in the semester, those volunteering for week 5 will receive an extra 10% on their presentation grade, while students volunteering for week 10 will receive an extra 5% on their presentation grade.

Course Schedule

The schedule for the semester is listed below, and specific readings will be assigned as the semester progresses.

Week 1: Introduction
Week 2: The State
Week 3: Institutions
Week 4: Political Economy
Week 5: Presentations, (First Exam on Friday)
Week 6: Democracy
Week 7: Dictatorship
Week 8: Hybrid Regimes
Week 9: Nationalism
Week 10: Presentations, (Second Exam on Friday)
Week 11: Identity and Culture
Week 12: Civil Society
Week 13: No class, Thanksgiving Break
Week 14: Collective Action
Week 15: Violence
Week 16: Wrapping Up, Presentations