

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Saint Michael's College

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STE 349

Comparative Politics, generally, is the study of countries and politics outside the US. Comparative Politics differs from International Relations in that we focus on politics within, not between, states. However, Comparative Politics also is very concerned with international processes, such as globalization today and colonialism in the past, that require governments and nations to respond to specific outside pressures, that reinforce existing cleavages, or that create new inequalities and challenges.

Studies of comparative politics can be country-specific and yield information and explanation about the politics of one country. They can be regional, in looking across countries at the politics of Latin America, for example, to understand or explain shared experiences. They can also address large questions (“the big picture”) across regions and across time. Big Questions include: “What is the state?” “What is the relationship between state and nation?” “What is the relationship between political and economic systems?” “What are the causes of violence? Of Revolution?”

Comparative Politics also structures our understanding of political systems. We “compare” by first categorizing phenomena. Is the state or “regime” democratic, authoritarian, totalitarian? What defines each category? What institutions, social relationships, and values characterize each? What is a “Welfare State” or a “Free Market”? What is a developed country as opposed to a developing country?

As Americans, we can draw **two related and compelling lessons** from the study of Comparative Politics. First, understanding the different perspectives, institutions, cultures, and politics around the world makes us more sensitive to diversity, more thoughtful of our own values and practices, and more responsible in our own choices and decisions. Second, studies in Comparative Politics can overtly or through implication provide recommendations or cautions for the foreign policy of the world's only superpower, the US, and provide a better understanding of how we as a nation interact in the world. What are American goals – what options do we have as a nation acting in the world? How can these goals be achieved? What are the opportunities? What are the impediments? What are the limits? These questions become even more important as we have faced the Post 9/11 world.

This course will provide fundamental knowledge necessary to take more advanced courses in political science, including courses on globalization and international affairs, as well as regional politics and specific political issues. It will also provide students with more depth to approach American politics courses, with greater knowledge about the world and America's role in it.

Country-specific case studies are used to illustrate specific concepts in comparative politics. This course is NOT about comparing the political systems of a set of countries. It is about grasping the key concepts, applying those concepts to certain countries to better understand the concept itself, and in this way preparing the student to approach the study of comparative politics in more depth and detail.

Texts

To Purchase:

1. *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (ECP on the syllabus)
2. Johnson, *Wild Grass*
3. Fanon, *Dying Colonialism*
4. Shiva, *India Divided*

Additional Sources:

1. Online resources about specific countries:

1. www.wikipedia.org Includes general articles on every country, accessed from the main portal, and links from each country specific article to discussions of politics, economics, and demographics. Elections coverage is particularly strong; however, Wikipedia is a complicated resource and there is no guarantee of its accuracy – handle with a critical perspective. www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html The CIA includes comprehensive statistics, from HIV seroprevalence to economic resources, for every country.
www.imf.org The International Monetary Fund provides a variety of economic statistics.

2. Readings Linked through E-College are required as indicated

3. *The New York Times* online edition - www.nytimes.com – you will need to register to access this site, and enable cookies, but it is free. You are responsible ONLY for coverage in the SUNDAY and WEDNESDAY papers of events outside the US (usually listed as “international,” but check business, arts and entertainment if you are interested in movies or music, and food or travel of course).

READINGS ARE TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE WEEKS THEY ARE ASSIGNED BELOW

Course Requirements and Evaluations

Newspapers and Attendance (13 Total). You are required to read international coverage (politics, culture, business) in the New York Times every SUNDAY before a Tuesday class and WEDNESDAY before a Thursday class.

Attendance will be established by handing in an article from the New York Times on world politics, culture, or business – from the Sunday paper for Tuesday class and from the Wednesday paper for Thursday class. You will receive a 1/2 point per class session, and you are allowed 2 sick days (when you do not have to turn in a newspaper article) during the semester, in addition to the first day and the day of the midterm, when no articles are due. **You will not receive credit for articles from other papers or other days of the week.**

Weekly Quiz (30 Total). Each Thursday after the first week, we will have an in-class, open NOTES (NOT open text) quiz on the assigned readings. Again, the first quiz will be in Week 2. Typically, the quiz will cover all readings for the week. Each quiz will consist of 3-6 brief response questions, multiple choice or identifications. Quizzes are worth 3 points each, but you will not earn more than 30 total points for the term. This means that either we’ll skip the quiz a

few times in the semester or that your lowest score will be dropped, as determined by the instructor.

A bonus question will be included on many quizzes. These will cover any current event outside the US or the US role in the world covered in NYTimes, or other recommended assignments announced in class or via email. Finally, bonus questions might be geographic in nature.

Discussion Points (12 Points Total). Your considered and thoughtful participation in classroom discussion will earn you one point per class toward your total participation score for the semester, beginning Week 2. Points will be rewarded to students who raise questions or issues from the readings, from current events that relate to the topic for the week, and for insightful comments that advance the discussion in class. Participation means informed comments or questions, but you do not have to be “right” in your comments, only thoughtful and related to the readings, assignments, and discussion. In fact, you are encouraged to ask questions and point out anything you find confusing or difficult to understand. That is also participation. Bring several questions or key points that you might want to raise. The instructor decides what contributions are rewarded with points, and can award additional participation points for attendance and attentiveness, provided that your total participation points cannot exceed 20.

Attendance will be determined based on the submission of a New York Times articles on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You could be called on to present your story in class.

Midterm (20 Points).

Final (25 Points).

Engaged Participant Observation. Up to 5 bonus points for completion of a community service project totaling 9 hours of work and an analytical reflection paper. Organizations on campus include: Student Global AIDS Campaign, Amnesty International, organizing to commemorate the Fifth Anniversary of the Iraq War, and Peace and Justice. Also check with MOVE. Off Campus examples include Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (802) 655-1963, and the Vermont Peace and Justice Center (<http://www.pjcv.org/center.htm>). Projects can address human rights, the environment, HIV/AIDS, immigration, poverty, globalization, and a variety of other issues.

See outline of Engaged Participant Observation at the end of the syllabus. You must submit a proposal per the instructions during the Third Week of class (indicated below).

Attendance. Expected! You must be in class and prepared to discuss the readings. Excessive unexcused absences will cost you points. Attendance, again, will be monitored through submitting New York Times articles.

100 Points Maximum for the course! Bonus points will help you overcome points lost in other areas.

General Policies. No late assignments will be accepted, except in cases of emergency as determined by college policy. Quizzes cannot be taken late, though in some circumstances other arrangements can be made. Papers with evidence of plagiarism or significant grammatical errors will not be accepted, and no resubmissions are allowed in such cases. Please see the college policy on plagiarism, and if you have any questions about grammar, contact the college writing

center. Word Processing programs include spell and grammar checkers – pay attention to the red and green lines!!! Email submissions are allowed only with prior approval.

All multi-page assignments must be stapled!

Note on sources for written work: Online encyclopedias and dictionaries are helpful for retrieving facts (statistics, institutions, leaders), but are not legitimate sources for research projects. You typically do not need to cite these sources for facts that are generally known (the president of a country, for example); only cite them for more obscure information (the percentage of citizens of foreign birth, for example). Legitimate research sources are academic books and articles, editorials and opinion articles, economic or statistical data from websites such as the CIA and IMF, and political speeches or proclamations that express an argument or perspective. Ask a librarian about online searches through JSTOR and other databases.

Using or quoting other works or another's ideas without citation is plagiarism and subjects the perpetrator to college disciplinary proceedings.

Introduction to Comparative Politics: How, What, and Why do We Compare?

Week 1

Course Outline, Requirements, and Evaluations

ECP Chapter 1, Introduction (21 pages)

Week 2

Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations” (28 pages)

Aslan, No God But God, Chapter 9, “An Awakening in the East” (28 pages)

The Basics – State, Nation, Economy

Week 3

The State

ECP Chapter 2, States (23 pages)

Sanford, “Colombian Peace Communities and the Reconstruction of Citizenship in the War Zone” (16 Pages)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING SERVICE LEARNING PROPOSALS

Week 4

States, Nations, and Peoples

ECP, Chapter 3, Nations and Society (35 pages)

Sudjic, “Inventing a Nation,” Chapter 6 of The Edifice Complex (34 pages)

Week 5

Markets, Society, and Politics

ECP, Chapter 4, Political Economy (34 pages)

Terry Karl, “The Perils of the Petro State: Reflections on the Paradox of Plenty”
(18 pages)

Defining Political Regimes – What are the distinctive features of Authoritarian, Communist, and Democratic systems?

Week 6 Dictators

Tuesday Holiday

ECP, Chapter 5, Authoritarianism (27 pages)

Week 7 Democracy and Authoritarianism

ECP, Chapter 6, Democracy (29 pages)

Hahn, “Managed Democracy? Building Stealth Authoritarianism in St. Petersburg” (38 pages)

Week 8 Democratic Options

ECP, Chapter 7, Advanced Democracies (31 pages)

Bosia, “Assassin! AIDS and Neoliberal Reform in France” (18 pages)

Week 9

Midterm on Tuesday

The Global South

ECP, Chapter 9, “Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries,” (34 pages)

Spring Break

Week 10 Colonialism and its Legacies

Fanon, Dying Colonialism, Preface – Chapter 1 (46 pages)

Fanon, Dying Colonialism, Chapter 2 – 3 (50 pages)

Week 11

Fanon, Dying Colonialism, Chapters 4-5 (58 pages)

Marx, Communism, and Modern China

ECP, Chapter 8, Communism and Postcommunism (37 pages)

Week 12 Party, Bureaucracy, and Dissent

Johnson, Wild Grass, “The Peasant Champion” (76 pages)

Johnson, Wild Grass, “Turning the Wheel” (100 Pages)

Globalization, Discontent, and Violence

Week 13

ECP, Chapter 10, Globalization (19 Pages)

ECP, Chapter 11, Political Violence (21 Pages)

Week 14

Shiva, Introduction-Chapter 2 (72 pages)

Shiva, Chapter 3 (40 pages)

Week 15

Shiva, Chapters 4-6 (40 pages)

Review