PS186, Fall 2013

Introduction to Comparative Politics (Honors)

Monday and Wednesday 9:30-10:45
Grainger 1070

Professor Nils Ringe
201B North Hall, ringe@wisc.edu
Office Hours: Mon 1:30-3:30 and by appt.

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to comparative politics, one of the four sub-fields of Political Science, which involves the comparative analysis of political institutions, processes, and outcomes at the national level.

During this term, we will make comparisons across different political settings explicit and systematic in order to determine how governments work, how power is organized and contested at the national level, and how regular people can participate and pursue their interests.

One of the primary goals of the class will be to introduce you to the study of comparative politics, including its key concepts, theories, methods, issues, and language. You will:

• Learn about some basic theoretical and methodological problems in the study of politics (concepts, theories, issues).
• Learn about the "real world" and how to explain it.
• Learn to identify interesting questions about politics in different countries.
• Learn to identify differences and similarities, and what both tell us about what we are studying.
• Learn to understand and compare different forms of democratic and non-democratic rule.
• Become familiar with the language of political science.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to apply the concepts of political science to analyze (and evaluate) political events in a variety of settings.

Finally, you will learn to write a research paper, and how to write it well. The juniors and seniors among you may find this redundant, but learning to write a good research paper takes time and practice. A research paper is a substantial assignment that you will not be able to complete during the last two days before the deadline. For this reason, we will have a number of deadlines throughout the term to make sure you all stay on track (see the appendix below for further details).
Requirements:

1. Regular attendance, careful attention, and active participation in class.
2. Reading and thinking about the assigned materials so you are able to participate in class discussions. I expect you to consider the readings carefully and thoughtfully before we meet.
3. A midterm exam, on November 6, 2013.

Grading:

Class attendance and participation: 30%
Midterm Quiz #1: 30%
Final paper: 40%

A few important notes:

- You should make a habit (if you do not already have) of reading at least one newspaper or periodical with substantial international coverage, such as The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Washington Post, or The Economist.
- Anything covered in class or readings is fair game for the exam. Note that even parts of the readings that have not been explicitly addressed in class may be covered in the exam.
- The best way to contact me is via email.
- I am happy to talk through your paper ideas, thoughts, concerns, drafts, etc., during office hours or by appointment. In fact, I encourage you to seek my advice. I expect you to write a good paper, and I will do my part in helping you.
- If you know that you will be absent from class for religious or other reasons that can be known in advance, please let me know before class. Also let me know if you have to miss class due to sickness or family emergencies. I will be keeping track of your attendance, so it is in your interest to inform me if you have a valid reason for missing class.
- I will not provide lecture or other class notes. Actively taking notes during class time is an important skill and learning tool.
- My policy on re-evaluating grades is the following:
  - You have to wait for 48 hours after the assignment has been returned before issuing any complaints.
  - You have to draft a 1-2 page double-spaced memo outlining why you deserve a better grade. Please note that this memo has to be based entirely on the merit of your own work, i.e., it cannot be based on comparisons with the grades of other students.
  - Your grade will be fully re-evaluated. This means that I may revise the grade downward as well as upward. So please be certain that you have a very specific and justifiable reason before asking us to make any changes – this is not a risk-free process!
- The exam day (November 6) is set. There will be no make-up examinations unless
you can provide proper documentation that your absence is due to a) a genuine family emergency, b) illness or injury, or c) travel away from Madison for university-related (!) obligations. Be sure to inform me of your absence before the exam commences; you will not be eligible for the makeup assignment otherwise. The makeup assignment will be a 12-page paper (not a sit-down make-up exam).

• Students needing special accommodations to ensure full participation in this course should contact me as early as possible. All information will remain confidential. You also may contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center regarding questions about campus policies and services.

• Cheating is a very serious offense that will get you in great trouble. You will receive a failing grade for the class, and the reason for the grade will be noted in your transcript. This will make it extremely difficult for you to gain entrance to graduate or professional schools and will jeopardize your opportunities with a large number of employers in the future.

Required readings:


Note: These books may be sold online at a lower price than at the UW Bookstore.
September 4—Introduction
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 1

September 9—The Scientific Method I
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 2, pp. 19-30

September 11—The Scientific Method II
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 2, pp. 30-end

September 16—The State
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 4

September 18—Democracy and Dictatorship
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 5

September 23—The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 6

September 25—The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 7

September 30—Democratic Transitions
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 8
Final Paper: Proposals due!

October 2—Democracy or Dictatorship: Does It Make a Difference?
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 9

October 7—Problems with Group Decision Making
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 11

October 9—Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 12

October 14—Elections and Electoral Systems I
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 13, pp. 535-564

October 16—Elections and Electoral Systems II
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 13, pp. 564-end

October 21—Social Cleavages, Parties, and Party Systems I
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 14, pp. 603-641

October 23—Social Cleavages, Parties, and Party Systems II
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 14, pp. 641-end

October 28—Institutional Veto Players
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 15
Final Paper: Annotated bibliography due!
October 30—The Consequences of Democratic Institutions I
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 16, pp. 741-788

November 4—The Consequences of Democratic Institutions II
Readings: Principles of Comparative Politics, ch. 16, pp. 788-end

November 6—Midterm Exam

November 11—The Order of Genocide I
Readings: Straus, Preface, Introduction and ch. 1

November 13—The Order of Genocide II
Readings: Straus, chs. 2-3

November 18—The Order of Genocide III
Readings: Straus, chs. 4-5
Final Paper: Development paper due!

November 20—The Order of Genocide IV
Readings: Straus, chs. 6-7

November 25—The Order of Genocide V; guest: Scott Straus
Readings: Straus, ch. 8 and Conclusion

December 2—Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe I
Readings: Alesina and Glaeser, chs. 1-2

December 4—Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe II
Readings: Alesina and Glaeser, chs. 3-4

December 9—Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe III
Readings: Alesina and Glaeser, chs. 5-6

December 11—Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe IV
Readings: Alesina and Glaeser, chs. 7-8
Final paper due!

November 18, 12:25-2:25 (scheduled final exam time)—Final Paper Presentations (mandatory)
APPENDIX: PS186 Final Paper Guidelines

The final assignment in this class is a 25-page research paper on a topic of your choice. This is a substantial project and requires your attention throughout the semester.

In order to facilitate the research and writing process for you, I am asking you to complete a series of steps during the course of the term. These steps require firm deadlines, and although it makes your life a bit more strenuous at various times throughout the course, it will significantly improve your work and hopefully prevent (or at least ease) end-of-semester panic. It also ensures that you stay on track, and it helps me stay involved in your research.

The due dates for the various assignments are:

1. Paper proposals: September 30, 9:15am
2. Annotated bibliography: October 28, 9:15am
3. Development paper: November 18, 9:15am
4. Final Paper: December 11, 9:15am
5. Final paper presentations (mandatory): December 18, 12:25-2:25 (scheduled final exam time)

Paper proposals: you will submit proposals for two potential paper topics. Each proposal should be one double-spaced page, for a total of two pages. Each proposal should include a research question (that is, the question you want your research project to address), a preliminary thesis statement, and indicate how you would go about researching your topic. You should also discuss why your research question is important, and what we might end up learning from your findings.

Annotated bibliography: an annotated bibliography is a list of citations of books, articles, and documents where each citation is followed by the annotation, i.e., a brief descriptive and/or evaluative paragraph. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. This exercise will require you to find sources relevant to your project, to think about their content, and to figure out how they relate and contribute to your research. The document you turn in should include at least 10-15 sources. Note that it is very obvious to the reader if you quickly and sloppily put together a list of sources, rather than having carefully assembled a select list of sources that are most relevant to your paper.

Development paper: think of your development paper as a short initial draft of your final paper. This draft should be 10-12 pages long and include a coherent argument, a good introduction, some preliminary analysis, and a conclusion. It is acceptable to preview what you will seek to accomplish in the final draft of your paper, if there are things you intend to do but did not yet have a chance to include.

Final paper: your final paper is due on December 11, that is, the day of our last class meeting.
Some general notes:

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins (which you may need to set manually), and in 12 point “Times New Roman” font. I expect all assignments to be well-written, grammatically correct, free of spelling errors, and to include a properly-written bibliography. For your citations, please use the APSA style (see http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html). Papers that do not meet these standards will be penalized when graded. Please submit your papers as MS Word files.

Here are my three rules of thumb regarding the information that should be included in your papers:

First, ask yourself: is this information relevant to the argument I am making? This is the first and most important criterion. If the information you provide is not relevant to your argument, it should not be in the paper – even if the information is really interesting. Unnecessary digressions and superfluous information can go a long way toward spoiling a high-quality paper (they are also a pet peeve of mine...).

Second, ask yourself: does the reader need this information to understand and follow my argument? Even if the information is not immediately relevant to your argument it may need to be included if the reader requires it to understand what you are trying to say. So this is the one exception to the first criterion above.

Third, to determine what information the reader needs to follow your argument, assume that you are writing this paper for one of your classmates, or perhaps a smart friend or roommate. That is, you can assume that a) the reader is not stupid, b) she has a basic understanding of what is going on in the world of politics, but c) she is not an expert on your topic.

Additional resources:

There are resources available that can help you significantly with the process of writing your paper. One is the library system. If you do not know how to make use of the library for your research you can ask a librarian for help.

A second important resource you might want to take advantage of is the writing center (http://writing.wisc.edu/).

Note that the internet can be a very valuable resource, but the problem of sorting useful information from junk (and there is a lot, a lot, of junk) is often more time consuming and risky than it is helpful. Luckily, the resources available through the campus libraries (in-house or online) will make your use of the junk that is out there unnecessary. And please note that Wikipedia (and similar online resources) are not acceptable as sources for academic assignments.
Submitting your assignments:

All assignments must both be submitted by the deadline into a Learn@UW dropbox and emailed to prof.ringe.paper.submissions@gmail.com.

- Log in to our Learn@UW website.
- Click on "Dropbox" in the top menu.
- Click on the assignment in question and "Add a File."
- Upload your assignment.
- Click "Submit."
- Then email the file to prof.ringe.paper.submissions@gmail.com (must be emailed by the deadline).

Please name your documents as follows: yourlastname_186_nameofassignment.doc (e.g. "ringe_186_proposals.doc" or "ringe_186_bibliography.doc").

I consider an assignment to be late if it is not turned in at exactly the time it is due. I deduct half a letter grade for each 24-hour period an assignment is late (that is, whether you turn in your assignment one minute late or 23 hours and 59 minutes late, I deduct half a letter grade; if it is 24 hours and one minute late, I deduct a full letter grade, etc.)

A few words on plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of improperly using someone else’s words or ideas as if they were your own. As such, plagiarism is the theft of intellectual property, and this is no less serious than the theft of material property. In academia, it is actually worse. Plagiarism is the ultimate sin, and this applies as much to me as a professor as it does to you as a student. There are no “degrees” of plagiarism; one little offense, no matter how small it may appear, is as devastating as “borrowing” an entire book. Whatever form it takes (downloading and reformatting an article, “buying” an essay, taking a “free” paper off the internet, turning in another student’s work, “sharing” assignments with others, failing to cite a source, neglecting necessary quotation marks, etc.) there is no excuse for plagiarism, and it will get you in a lot of trouble. Note that the most common form of plagiarism is failure to cite properly. You must provide a citation, for example (Brown 1999, 57), after writing a sentence or a series of sentences that contain words or ideas taken from another person or publication. If you are citing directly, you must use quotation marks.

If you are caught cheating, you will receive a failing grade for the class, and the reason for the grade will be noted in your transcript. This will make it extremely difficult for you to gain entrance to graduate or professional schools and will jeopardize your opportunities with a large number of employers in the future. If you are repeat offender, you will most likely be expelled from the university. Don’t put yourself (and me) into what will be a very uncomfortable situation with very serious consequences.
Finally...

I encourage you to involve me in your project by letting me know how things are progressing, by discussing ideas or problems during my office hours, or by seeking my input in other ways. You are going to put a lot of work into writing these papers, and I am committed to helping you in the process in whatever way I can. So please do not hesitate to ask for my help or input and let me know if there is anything in particular I can do for you, or for the group as a whole, to facilitate the research and writing process.