Course description and objectives

This course is an introduction to some of the key concepts and theoretical approaches in the comparative politics subfield of political science, and to the government and politics in select countries. Comparative politics is the study of processes and institutions within countries (whereas international relations is the study of interactions between countries). Prompted by real-world events and puzzles, comparativists investigate broad theoretical questions such as: How and why do countries democratize (or not)? What are different ways that states organize politics, i.e., how do they differ in terms of party systems, electoral rules, presidential powers, etc.? What is the relationship between the economy and the political system?

We will spend about half of the semester focusing on key concepts, and the final half studying those concepts in a sample of countries. The five countries that we will study in depth are the United Kingdom, Mexico, South Africa, Russia, and China. These represent many regions of the world and range from authoritarian regimes to newly democratic states and long-established democracies. The overall objective of the course is to give students grounding in the basic tools of comparative political analysis so that you can better understand world events and politics countries around the world.

This is an honors course and it will be based on student-centered discussion rather than lectures. Reading is essential for full participation in discussions and students will be asked to explain concepts from the readings in class. In addition, students will work in groups on in-class presentations that connect readings to current events. There will also be a final research paper and presentation in class.

Essential learning outcomes:

This course will address several "essential learning outcomes" of the LEAP initiative (http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm). First, students' knowledge of human cultures will be enhanced by their exploration of politics, society, and the economy in other countries. Second, the course assignments are aimed at developing intellectual and practical skills, including analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, and teamwork. Third, the connection between the political science material in the texts and current events, as well as the linkage of concepts and countries, is aimed at achieving an integrated learning experience.
Summary of course requirements and grading
(see p. 5-7 for detailed descriptions)

Reading, preparation, and participation in discussions (approx. 1.5% each week): 20%
Weekly quizzes (approx. 3% each week) 40%
Four in-class presentations (2.5% each) 10%
Final paper and in-class presentation 30%
Total: 100%

Grades will be posted on Learn@UW each week. Failure in any of the four course components will result in failure in the course overall.

Other course policies

Disability accommodations:
People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the McBurney Disability Office on campus. The McBurney Disability Resource Center can be reached at (608) 263-2741 or via email at mcburney@odos.wisc.edu.

Course readings and films

The following books are required and are referred to in the syllabus as either "Textbook" or "Casebook," as noted in brackets below.


- These two books can be purchased as a bundled pack at a substantial discount.
- In addition electronic downloadable versions are also available. See the Norton website for package offers and electronic version options:
  - Note that these eBooks may still be Flash-based and hence might not work on the iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, and some Android devices.
- The books are also available at the Reserve Section of the Helen C. White College library.
- For supplementary information on the books, see the Norton study space:

In addition to these books,
- There are some assigned articles available on the Learn@UW course website
- Films will be available online, on campus, through Learning Support Services
- Current events articles will be posted by students on the Learn@UW website
Class schedule and readings

Tues., Sept. 2: Introduction to the Course

Tues., Sept. 9: What is Comparative Politics? and The State
- Textbook: ch. 2 The State, 26-55.

Tues., Sept. 16: Nations and Society

Tues., Sept. 23: Political Economy
- Textbook: ch. 4, Political Economy, 90-125.

Tues., Sept. 30: Democracy
- Textbook: ch. 5, Democracy, 126-161.

Tues., Oct. 7: Non-Democratic Regimes
- Textbook: ch. 6, Non-Democratic Regimes, 162-191.

Tues., Oct. 14: Political Violence

Tues., Oct. 21: Advanced Democracies, and Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries
- Textbook: ch. 8, Advanced Democracies, 224-255.

Tues., Oct. 28: Communism and Post-Communism
- Textbook: ch. 9, Communism and Post-Communism, 256-289.

Fri., Oct. 31, 9:00 am: Paper Proposals due, posted on Learn@UW as a .pdf
**Tues., Nov. 4: United Kingdom:**
- Casebook, ch. 2, United Kingdom, 38-93.
  Film: *Margaret Thatcher: Prime Minister*

**Tues., Nov. 11: Mexico**
- Casebook, ch. 11, Mexico 522-575.
  Film: *Cause for Murder: Fighting Corruption in Mexico*

**Tues., Nov. 18: South Africa**
- Casebook, ch. 13, South Africa, 628-681.
  Film: *Long Night’s Journey into Day*

**Tues., Nov. 25: Russia**
- Casebook, ch. 7, Russia, 314-363
  Film: *My Perestroika*

**Tues., Dec. 2: China**
- Casebook, ch. 8, China, 364-421.
  Film: *China from the Inside*

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**Monday, Dec. 8, 9:00 am:** Final Papers due, posted on Learn@UW as a .pdf

**Tues., Dec. 9: Concluding Discussion and Student Presentations**
- Read student papers that have been posted on Learn@UW.
Description of Course Requirements

Reading, Preparation, and Participation:

• All students are expected to do all readings for each class and to bring the readings to class in order to aid in discussion. For some weeks there are films which students must watch prior to class. Students should also read the short current events articles posted for presentations.
• This is a discussion-based class and active participation is essential. Mere attendance is not full participation. Active participation means being prepared by doing the reading and thinking about the material so that you can ask and answer questions related to the course material in class.
• I will call on a few students during each class meeting; you should be prepared to answer questions about each of the assigned readings.
• Students are expected to attend for the full class period; arriving late or leaving the room during class will result in a lowered participation grade for the day.
• It is fine to use a tablet or laptop in class to take notes, but doing other work or online activity unrelated to the course during class will result in a lowered participation grade for the day.
• Absences will only be excused due to religious conflicts or medical issues; contact me as soon as possible should a medical issue or religious conflict arise.
• The grading scheme for discussion participation is:
  A = Attended and actively participated, seemed in command of readings and material; able to explain concepts to the class
  B = Attended and spoke, demonstrating adequate engagement with the readings, but without comprehensive understanding of the course material
  C = Attended but did not speak, did not show evidence of having done the readings, or was engaged in non-course-related activities online
  F = Did not attend
  Note that there is no "D" reflecting the large gap between attending and not attending.

Weekly Quizzes

• Each week we will start the class with a short written quiz.
• Anything from the readings or films may be on the quizzes.
• The format of the quizzes will usually be short-answer written questions, but may also be multiple-choice.
• The best way to prepare for the quizzes is to do the readings and watch the films.
• I will ask questions about key arguments of authors or definitions of major concepts from the readings.

The grading scheme for quizzes is:

A = Correctly answered questions, showing excellent command of readings and material
B = Partially correct answers, demonstrating engagement with the readings, but without full understanding of the course material.
C = Incorrect or missing answers.
F = Did not attend.
**In-class Presentations:**

Each week students will work in groups of 3 or 4 to prepare a 10-minute presentation, which will include 4-5 slides. The presentations should connect a central concept from the readings to a current events article. There will be two presentations for each class meeting.

**Articles:**
- Groups should meet during the week before their presentation to select an article.
- Students should come to my office hours to discuss the article or email me a link to the article with a short description of how it connects to the topic(s) covered in the readings.
- The current events article used in the presentation should be sent as a link or PDF to the class by Monday at noon. It should also be posted on Learn@UW under the "communications"/"discussion" tabs. There will be a discussion topic for each week set up, so just respond to that discussion topic with your attached article.
- All students should read the current events article before class.

**Slides:**
- There should be at least 4 slides (but groups may add one additional slide); the slides should follow this order, with one slide addressing each of these bullet points:
  1. Title and names of all students in the group;
  2. Discussion points from the course readings;
  3. Discussion points from the newspaper article;
  4. 2-3 discussion questions that link the course readings and current events article; these questions should be orally posed to the class at some point during the presentation.
- Slides are due at least one hour before class (by 1:30 pm), posted also on Learn@UW.
- Students are free to use PowerPoint, Pages, or other software for the presentation.
- I am available to discuss slide preparation and presentation tips.

**Grading scheme for group presentations (group grade):**
- A = The article was well integrated with the course reading to form a coherent discussion, and the audience was engaged in discussion of the presentation material.
- B = Presentation demonstrated good command of course material and article, and all students in the group participated.
- C = Presentation included at least two articles or a current events article and topic from course material and consisted of 4-5 slides.
- F = Did not attend or participate in a presentation (can be given to specific individuals and can differ from the group grade).

- Presentations will be marked down one grade if the article is not sent out by noon the day before class, or if the presentation slides are not posted by 1:30 on class day.
- Presentations with a significant number of grammatical or spelling errors will be marked down one grade. Make sure to proofread.
Final Paper

This paper will connect the theoretical material from the first half of the course with the case studies. Students should choose one of the five case-study countries (Russia, Mexico, China, South Africa and the United Kingdom) and one of the theoretical topics covered in course readings and write a paper focusing on the chosen theoretical topic in the chosen country.

- The paper should advance an argument, which could be a causal claim (e.g. why something happened, such as why South Africa democratized) or can analyze a concept in light of empirical evidence (e.g. is South Africa a democracy according to established definitions of democracy?).
- The paper must use 3 sources that were found in the UW-Madison library system, at least one of which must be a book or other printed, non-electronic, source. Other sources for the paper can come from course readings and recommended readings.
- You should meet with me early in the term to discuss your final paper.
- Be sure to cite all sources fully and properly.
- Students should also explore resources at the Writing Center (http://writing.wisc.edu).

- The paper assignment will be divided into two parts: Part 1 and the final paper. For all parts of the paper, include:
  - Your name on every document you turn in, in the text and in the electronic file title (e.g. "SmithPart1.pdf," not "part1.pdf")
  - Paper title
  - Use 12-point font, 1-inch margins
  - All parts of paper should be posted as PDF on Learn@UW

Due dates for parts of the research paper and requirements:
- **Friday, Oct. 31, 9:00 am**, Part 1 due.
  - Paragraph describing the theoretical concept (e.g. elections, the state, protest, political economy, democracy, ethnic conflict, communism, etc.) and the research question (e.g. what led to democratization in South Africa, what explains violence in Mexico, why were there protests in Russia, how do Chinese elites maintain political control).
  - Paragraph describing the empirical case (Russia, Mexico, China, South Africa and the United Kingdom) including the time period and region of the country if applicable.
  - List of key sources to be used from course material, and including at least 3 sources from the UW-Madison library system.
    - One sentence following each source to explain why it is useful for the paper.
    - At least one source must be a printed source not available electronically.
  - Approximately—but no longer than—one single-spaced page.
- **Monday, Dec. 8, at 9:00 am**, full research paper
  - Approximately 10 double-spaced pages, excluding citations
  - Include your name, date, a title, page numbers
- **Dec. 9**, Paper presentations and discussion of papers
  - Papers will be arranged into panels of 3-4 papers.
  - All students will give a 5-minute presentation based on their papers.
  - No slides necessary.
Additional Recommended Readings

The State

Nations and Society

Political Economy

Democracy

Non-Democratic Regimes

Political Violence

Advanced Democracies

Less Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries
**Communism and Post-Communism**


**United Kingdom:**

- Recommended Film: *Project Scotland*, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00pcmbr](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00pcmbr)

**Mexico**


**South Africa**

Russia

- Mankoff, Jeffrey. 2014. "Russia's Latest Land Grab: How Putin Won Crimea and Lost Ukraine,” *Foreign Affairs* 93:3, 60-68

China