Course Description:

Comparative politics is one of the major subfields of political science and consists of the systematic focus of comparing, contrasting and analyzing the different political systems and institutions of the world as well as the actions of individuals and groups. This course will provide you with an overview of the central themes and concepts in the subfield and introduce you to the core principles of conducting comparative research in the social sciences. The study and analysis of other political systems will provide each of you with a more comprehensive understanding of the U.S. political system and an increased understanding of the political developments in today's globalized world. Theories and questions that address political phenomena including democratization, economic reform, nationalism/ethnic violence, the transformation of the modern state and institutional development will be discussed over the course of the semester.

Learning Objectives:

The central goal of this course is to provide you with an introduction to the subfield of comparative politics. By the end of the semester, each of you will possess some familiarity with the subfield. In addition, we will help you develop specific skills that allow you to use comparisons to expand your factual and theoretical knowledge of countries, political processes, and political theories. I will also introduce different research methods and expect you to expand your abilities to research, critically assess and write persuasive arguments. At the end of the semester, each of you will possess a greater understanding of political phenomena outside of the United States and be able to analyze and explain how theories and concepts can be applied to examine political developments in different locations and time periods.

Requirements:

All assigned readings listed on the schedule below are required. In order to effectively understand and synthesize the material in the course it is imperative that you come prepared to participate in each class session. You should review the material before you come to class. Most of the lectures will not always directly address the literature but rather use the analysis and information from the literature as a frame for our discussion. As a result, it is expected that everyone should be prepared to contribute and discuss the readings/topics.
each class. Class grades will be determined by a series of exams and research projects and your participation and attendance in class.

Assignments:

Reading Responses- Each week (except the week of the mid-term and take home essay) I have provided a question that addresses the topics covered in the assigned readings/lectures for that week. You will be asked to provide a response to these questions (listed on syllabus and discussed in class on Monday) and they will be due every Friday in class or via e-mail. The responses will be approximately 3 pages long and should answer the question using evidence from the readings/class materials to support your answer (total of 4 responses).

Exams- There will be two mid-term exams (one in-class and one take-home essay) during the course of the semester. In addition there will be a final exam at the end of the semester. Each of the exams during the semester will consist of short answer and essay questions that will be drawn from the class readings and lectures. Each exam will be worth 15% of your final grade (the final will be worth 25%).

Directed Research Paper- This assignment (12-15 pages) asks you to develop an interesting “puzzle” or research question that pairs a key concept or theme from comparative politics with a country/case that does not seem to fit the expectations of the theory. The country cannot be one of the countries that we have studied in-depth in the course (UK, Germany, Iran, China, Brazil or Nigeria). I will provide suggested topics/theories that will help you identify a research question or “puzzle,” and you will be expected to expand your understanding of the political concept/principle and conduct research on the country of choice. An example of topics and ideas will be distributed in class. Final papers are due will count for 20% of your total grade.

Class Attendance and Participation- All assigned readings listed on the schedule below are required. In order to effectively understand and synthesize the material in the course it is imperative that you come prepared to participate in each class session. Failure to adequately prepare or willingly contribute to our weekly discussions will limit your ability to comprehend and synthesize the class materials effectively. Your attendance and willingness to participate in class discussions will count for 10% of your total grade.

Grade Breakdown:

Mid-Term Exams (2)- 30%
Reading Responses- 15%
Directed Research Paper- 20%
Final Exam- 25%
Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

Academic Integrity:

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet;
as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please
know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on
papers. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu.
Details about Academic Honesty are found at

http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/academic-honesty-details.

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in
sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or
speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but
such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly
identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard
referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another
person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is
known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can
result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is
written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the
seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within
these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any
participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is
intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in
programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy
against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as
well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to an administrative official and contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

**Special Assistance:**

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

**Required Texts:**

There are two required texts for this course (each of them are available at the BYU bookstore or available from online retailers).


All other texts listed will be available through databases located through the Library website (i.e. JSTOR, INFOTRAC, etc.) or via the class website on Blackboard.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

4/27- Class Introduction and Overview

Section I: Examining the Scientific Approach in Political Science

4/29- Putting the Science in Political Science

**Assigned Reading:**


5/2- Concepts, Methods and Research Design in Comparative Politics


Reading Response Question #1:

Political science has followed the field of economics in developing more systematic approaches to studying, understanding and explaining political phenomena. What do you see as the most difficult challenge facing political scientists who are trying to be more scientific in their research and which approaches/strategies are the most useful for accomplishing this?

Assigned Reading:


5/4- Different Approaches for Explaining Political Outcomes

Assigned Reading:


Section III- States and Society

5/6- Understanding Societies and Political Identities

Assigned Reading:

O’Neil, Essentials in Comparative Politics, Ch. 3, pg. 47-76; Robert Dahl, Polyarchy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), Ch. 7; Eric Hobsbawm, “Nationalism,” in O’Neil and Rogowski, Essential Readings in Comparative Politics, pg. 68-77;

5/9- The Modern State

Reading Response Question #2

The modern state remains the central form of political organization in the international system and is one of the most important areas of study within comparative politics. What do you think best explains why the state remains such a relevant area of study today?

Assigned Reading:
5/11- State Success/Failure

Assigned Reading:


Section IV- Regime Types

5/13- Democratic Regimes

Assigned Reading:


5/16- Patterns of Democratization/United Kingdom

Assigned Reading:


5/18- Advanced Democracies/Welfare State

Assigned Reading:


5/20- Mid-term Exam #1 (in class)

5/23- Non-Democratic Regimes

Reading Response Question #3:

Each “wave” of democratization has historically been followed by a retrenchment or expansion of non-democracy. What do you think best explains these “reverse waves” of democracy?
Assigned Reading:


5/25- Explaining the Persistence of Non-Democracies/Iran

Assigned Reading:


Section V- Politics and the Economy

5/27- Political Economy

Assigned Reading:


5/30- No class (Memorial Day)

**Take Home Essay Distributed Via E-mail

6/1- Varieties of Capitalism/Germany

Assigned Reading:


6/3- Combining the Political/Economic: Communism

Assigned Reading:

China represents an interesting example of a country that has made a dramatic transformation from the developing world into a newly industrialized country. What best explains how China has successfully developed and what lessons (if any) could be applicable for other countries in the developing world?

Assigned Reading:


**6/8- Newly Industrialized Countries/Brazil**

Assigned Reading:

Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Ch. 1 and 3 (pg. 1-20, 43-73);

**6/10- Less Developed Countries/Nigeria**

Assigned Reading:


**6/13- Political Violence/Globalization**

**Research Papers Due in Class**

Assigned Reading: