

Introduction to Comparative Politics

**Political Science 2500
University of Nebraska Omaha
Spring 2018**

**Monday & Wednesday 10:00-11:15 am
Arts and Sciences Hall 392**

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Course Description

How do politics and government operate in countries across the globe? Why are some countries democratic while others are not? What makes an authoritarian country democratize? How do different political institutions affect political behavior? Why do some attempts at social revolution succeed while others fail? How do economics and politics interact? These are the kinds of big questions dealt with in the field of Comparative Politics. This course will introduce you to the comparative study of domestic politics in countries around the world. By comparing political institutions, culture, actors, behavior, and issues in different countries across the globe, you will learn about the politics of particular countries as well as political science concepts and theories explaining domestic politics in general.

Each week of the semester, we will focus on a different topic that is important to comparative politics. During most weeks, we will also examine that topic in a group of countries representative of different types of political systems around the world, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, China, Japan, India, Iran, and Nigeria. We will also focus in detail on one additional country during Week 15. You will help select that country. Your short research paper for this course will argue for a certain developing country (the choice of the country is up to you, from the list in this syllabus) based on how it fits—or, perhaps does not fit—with the theories and concepts presented during the semester. Convince me that we should study it.

Course Materials

Orvis, Stephen and Drogus, Carol Ann. 2017. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, fourth edition. (O&D on reading schedule)

Individual class readings are available on the Canvas course site under the Files section in folders for their respective weeks.

Evaluation: Your course grade will be based on the following:

Attendance and Participation: 15% (including written assignments, discussions, in-class activities, and periodic quizzes)

Paper: 25%

Exams: 20% each (x3)

Attendance and Participation (15%)

Class attendance is mandatory. But, because certain situations may arise that make it difficult or impossible to attend a particular class session, you will be able to miss *three* sessions of this class during the semester. After that, I will lower your final course grade by 3% per additional absence.

You are expected to do the readings for the course on time (during the week that they are listed in the syllabus), and there are several incentives to do so: First, lectures will be easier to follow if you have completed the readings; Second, the amount of reading is reasonable, but not small. It will not be easy to catch up if you fall behind; Third, we will frequently discuss issues from the readings in lecture. This is particularly true of our coverage of the topics in practice in the countries. Fourth, there will be periodic, in-class quizzes on reading material. Take notes when you read so that you will better retain the information in the readings and be prepared to discuss it.

During the semester, I expect you to keep up-to-date with current events, especially in our countries of focus, by reading [*The New York Times*](#), the [BBC](#), and other **high-quality** journalism. Comparative Politics is the study of domestic politics around the world, which requires knowing what is happening in the world. We will often cover current events in class.

This course requires active student participation. As students in my course, you are expected to do the assigned readings and to come to class prepared to share your questions, comments, and ideas. Plan to ask and answer questions, clarify readings, to discuss course material, and to participate in activities. The classroom offers you a forum to engage with your peers and to learn from each other. I expect everyone to promote an active learning environment by supporting each other intellectually, by reflecting on what you have learned, and by being committed to your education.

A few basic ground rules:

- **Attend class.** Pay attention. Take notes when I lecture. Read your notes after each class. The sooner you read your notes after class, the more of the material you will retain.
- **Put away your electronic devices.** Let this class be a respite from the damage networked mobile devices do to the human brain. In this class, you will engage with other humans, and you will think for yourself.
- Treat everyone in the class with patience, common courtesy, and basic human decency.
- Be curious and ask questions of your classmates, of our readings, and of me.
- When you speak, remember that you are in dialogue with the entire class. Speak to and listen to all of your classmates.
- You are responsible for your own learning and accountable for your own work—you are ultimately in charge of your own educational experience.

Paper (25%): Hard-copy due in-class on Wednesday, April 4.

In approximately *five double-spaced pages* (12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1" margins), answer the following question: ***What country should we study in Week 15, and why?*** In your answer, address specific concepts and issues that we have discussed in the course. How will the country help us to better understand any or all of the concepts and issues we have examined? Does it fill a void, providing an example of something important that the other countries we are looking at do not? Why will it be interesting for your fellow students (and me) to examine politics in this particular state? While it will be tempting to do so, do *not* simply describe a lot of the country's basic history or facts in your paper. Cover only the analytically relevant information needed to make the points about the country's value as a case study, centered on course concepts.

Next, while short, this is a *research paper*. You must utilize current, relevant information from high-quality sources, including at least one peer-reviewed, scholarly source. I will provide research instruction in class. Additionally, I expect college-level writing. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization are all part of the paper grade.

This assignment offers an opportunity to deepen your understanding of existing concepts and explanations in Comparative Politics by testing those ideas on less-studied countries. Scholarship in Comparative Politics often focuses on the "big" countries of the world (i.e. the historical great powers of the world; the largest countries; the most analytically consequential—as you can see from those selected for coverage in the Orvis and Drogus textbook), but does a concept or theory developed to explain politics in one of these "big" countries explain politics in lesser-studied countries equally well? This assignment is your chance to find out. I am asking you to apply the concepts we have learned in class to a lesser-studied country. There are *three restrictions* on the choice of countries: First, it must be outside of Europe. Second, the country must be in the bottom fifty in the world in population size. Third, the country must have formal political independence—no territories belonging to another country—no Falkland Islands, for example. Please see me if you have any questions on the assignment.

Appropriate Countries for the Research Paper Assignment

Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Bahrain; Barbados; Belize; Bhutan; Botswana; Brunei; Cape Verde; Comoros; Djibouti; Dominica; Equatorial Guinea; Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji; Gabon; Gambia; Grenada; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana; Kiribati; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mauritius; Namibia; Nauru; Palau; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and Grenadines; Samoa; Sao Tome and Principe; Seychelles; Solomon Islands; Suriname; Swaziland; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; Vanuatu

Exams (3 total, 20% each)

In-class exams will consist of multiple choice questions and questions requiring written responses. Mastery of both the lecture material and the assigned readings will be necessary for the exams. *Do not miss exams. If an emergency arises and you cannot make it, please contact me beforehand to request a makeup exam. The ability to make up work missed will be at the discretion of the instructor. Make up exams will be more challenging in format and content than the in-class exams. Un-excused absences from exams will result in a grade of "zero" for that exam.*

UNO Writing Center

The UNO Writing Center offers free one-on-one consultations with trained consultants to all students, faculty, and staff. Their goal is to help writers improve their writing skills and confidence in all types of writing, in all subject areas, and at all stages of the writing process. For more information about their hours and locations or to schedule an appointment, visit their website at www.unomaha.edu/writingcenter or visit them at their main location in Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 150.

Academic Integrity

You must maintain academic integrity at all times. Plagiarism/cheating are serious academic crimes, and I will pursue any infringements seriously and actively. At a minimum, any infringement will result in a grade of zero on the assignment. For more information on University of Nebraska Omaha policies on academic integrity, please see: <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-conduct-and-community-standards/policies/academic-integrity.php>

Social Sciences Student Learning Outcomes

This course is part of the UNO Social Sciences General Education Curriculum. In line with UNO priorities, this course has the following student learning outcomes. After completing the course, successful students shall be able to do the following:

- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of interactions between human motivations, institutional forces, and/or social behavior;
- use critical thinking and reasoning skills to analyze theories, perspectives, and/or concepts relative to the discipline(s) studied;
- identify multiple methods and modes of inquiry and their appropriate application; and
- communicate ideas and explain concepts and analyses using the language of the discipline(s).

Global Diversity Student Learning Outcomes

This course is part of the UNO Global Diversity General Education Curriculum. In line with UNO priorities, this course has the following student learning outcomes. After completing the course, successful students shall be able to do the following:

- recognize the cultural, historical, social, economic, and/or political circumstances that produce different social and cultural systems;
- demonstrate specific knowledge of the cultural, historical, social, economic, and/or political aspects of one or more countries or nations other than the United States;
- explain the interrelations among global economic, political, environmental and/or social systems; and
- explain ways in which identity is developed and how it is transmitted within and by members of the group or groups.

Special Accommodations

Accommodations are provided for students who are registered with the UNO Accessibility Services Center and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact Accessibility Services Center (MBSC 126, Phone: 402-554-2872, TTY: 402-554-6015) or go to the website: <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/inclusion/disability-services/>.

Late Policy

On daily/weekly assignments, no late work will be accepted. For the paper assignment, late papers will be penalized by 5% per day late. For example, a paper that earns an 85% but is one day late would receive a grade of 80%.

Schedule of Class Meetings

Week	Topics	Date	Day	Assignments
Part I: A Framework for Understanding Comparative Politics				
1	Introduction and orientation to the course	1/8 1/10	M W	O&D, Ch. 1
2	Analytical Framework: Structure and Agency	1/15 1/17	M (MLK Day, no class) W	O&D, Ch. 2
3	The Modern State	1/22 1/24	M W	O&D, Ch. 2 continued
4	States, Citizens, and Regimes	1/29 1/31	M W	O&D, Ch. 3
5	States and Identity	2/5 2/7	M W	O&D, Ch. 4 Exam I
Part II: Political Systems and How They Work				
6	Governing Institutions in Democracies	2/12 2/14	M W	O&D, Ch. 5
7	Institutions of Participation and Representation in Democracies	2/19 2/21	M W	O&D, Ch. 6
8	Research Instruction Contentious Politics: Social Movements, Political Violence, and Revolution	2/26 2/28	M W	O&D, Ch. 7
9	Authoritarian Institutions	3/5 3/7	M W	O&D, Ch. 8
10	Regime Change	3/12 3/14	M W	O&D, Ch. 9 Exam II
11	UNO Spring Break (March 19-23, no classes)			
Part III: Political Economy and Policy				
12	Political Economy of Wealth	3/26 3/28	M W	O&D, Ch. 10
13	Political Economy of Development	4/2 4/4	M W	O&D, Ch. 11 Paper Due
14	Public Policies when Markets Fail: Welfare, Health and the Environment	4/9 4/11	M W	O&D, Ch. 12
15	<i>Politics in ???</i>	4/16 4/18	M W	TBA
16	Conclusions and Review	4/23 4/25	M W	Exam III