

## Comparative Politics Political Science 265H:01 Spring 2008

*T, H*

*12:30 – 1:50*

*AB1 Room 310*

*Office Hours: T 2-3:30*

*H 2-3:30*

*or by appointment*

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### Course description

This course is a survey of important issues and trends in world political systems. American politics is placed in a comparative context in a course that includes the terminology, methods and concepts of comparative politics. The basic assumption in this course is that to understand any political system or phenomenon, we have to look at it not by itself but in a context of other systems or phenomena. For instance, the best way to understand how legislators are elected is to examine multiple countries' ways of electing theirs.

**Prerequisite: POL 261**

### Course objectives and goals

The three goals of this course are informative, skill-building and critical- theoretical. These may be understood as follows:

#### informative

On this most basic level, the course aims to provide factual information about various countries and their political systems. The purpose here is to expose class participants to knowledge about new places and to allow / prepare for more informed world citizenship.

#### skill-building

Thus course will call for using and developing research skills. Participants will not only have to receive information presented to them but also engage in finding things out for themselves. In this sense, the course will be useful beyond its own limits since these skills will be useful in other intellectual pursuits as well.

#### critical-theoretical

Acquiring new information and enhancing research skills will contribute to the growth of class participants as critical thinkers. The ultimate goal of the semester is to enable participants to ask (and answer) questions about why and how it makes sense to compare

certain political systems. In addition to being informed, participants will also have the opportunity to become reflective members of their larger community.

### Course text

Comparative politics: Domestic responses to global challenges – Charles Hauss. Fifth edition. Wadsworth. ISBN: 0495159759

### Assignments

#### In-class essay exams

Closed-book, essay-types exams in blue books. Questions will ask for comparisons of certain aspects of the countries discussed in the section since the last exam. Exams are non-cumulative. There will be a choice of questions.

#### Research times

In order to best prepare the take-home final exam, each class participant will be required to formulate a research topic. There will be no series of questions or lists of topics to choose from. Instead, you will have to create your own topic: it will have to cover some aspect(s) of two countries discussed in the course. If one of the countries is the United States, there must be a total of three countries covered.

Class time on March 27 will be devoted to a discussion of participants' research topics. After this, participants will be given time to carry out original research during the week of April 1. Class will not meet during this time: participants will be given the times of class meetings specifically to work on their final project. (It is understood that research for the take-home final will not only be done during these times, though.)

#### Final exam

The final exam consists of writing up your individual research.

At the time assigned by SHSU for the final exam in the course, you will have to come and turn in the project named in your research topic assignment as a research paper. The paper will have to rely on research you did and as proof of your work, it will have to list the sources that you used. You are only allowed to use academic / scholarly sources. You will be penalized for using Wikipedia or any other online encyclopedia. It is a good idea to only use the Internet as a portal to reach scholarly publications, in venues such as JSTOR. If you wish, you may use your textbook as one of your sources, although you have to be aware that you will be penalized for repeating what the book says or comparisons that the book makes.

It is essential that you begin working towards your final exam early on. Find a topic that is of interest to you and use the entire semester to work on it. You may want to write your final project on a topic that you also present on.

#### Presentations

Each tier of the course will end with presentations. These will be the times right after an exam. The entire class meeting on these days will be devoted to short (approx. 5 minutes) presentations about the countries discussed in that tier. It is also possible to only include one country from the particular tier and to compare it to another one from the course or to compare it to a country that is not discussed in this course at all.

Each participant will have to sign up to do two presentations, in two different tiers. These presentations will be smaller-scale versions of the final projects: comparing two or three countries (three if the US is one of them) on some aspect of their political system.

### Attendance

Regular class attendance is to be understood as a graded requirement for this course and is therefore properly listed as an assignment. Each class meeting will begin with an attendance check. Each absence will mean one point off of the total 20 points for attendance.

### Grading plan

There will be a total of 200 points you can earn in this class. They will be distributed as follows among the different parts of the course:

presentation 1	10 points	5%
presentation 2	10 points	5%
exam 1	30 points	15 %
exam 2	40 points	20 %
exam 3	40 points	20 %
final	50 points	25 %
attendance	20 points	10%

Throughout the course of the semester, your grades will be numbers, not letters. If you want to convert your number grade to a letter grade, use the standard grading scale that will also yield your final grade in the class. For instance, if an assignment is worth 40 points and you got 32 points, that is 80 % and therefore a low B-level performance.

Grades will be assigned on the standard grading scale:

A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and below.

### Course policies

The policies that govern this course are included on the BlackBoard site of the course. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and abiding by, the contents of the 'Course Policies' document and that everything in it has the same force as other items on the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the document early on.

Tentative course schedule

Date	Day	Theme	Reading (chapters in Hauss)
17-Jan	H	Introduction to the course	
22-Jan	T	Comparative method	Hauss 1
24-Jan	H	UK	Hauss 4
29-Jan	T	UK	Hauss 4
31-Jan	H	France	Hauss 5
5-Feb	T	France	Hauss 5
7-Feb	H	Germany	Hauss 6
12-Feb	T	Germany	Hauss 6
14-Feb	H	exam 1	
19-Feb	T	presentations	
21-Feb	H	US	Hauss 8
26-Feb	T	US	Hauss 8
28-Feb	H	Russia	Hauss 9
4-Mar	T	Russia	Hauss 9
6-Mar	H	China	Hauss 10
18-Mar	T	China	Hauss 10
20-Mar	H	exam 2	
25-Mar	T	presentations	
27-Mar	H	research topics discussion	
1-Apr	T	research – no class meeting	
3-Apr	H	research – no class meeting	
8-Apr	T	India	Hauss 12
10-Apr	H	India	Hauss 12
15-Apr	T	Mexico	Hauss 16
17-Apr	H	Mexico	Hauss 16
22-Apr	T	Iran	Hauss 13
24-Apr	H	Iran	Hauss 13
29-Apr	T	exam 3	
1-May	H	presentations	
6-May	T	recap	
8-May	H	recap	

final to be scheduled by SHSU