About the Course

Office Hours and Contact Info

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Office: WIB240 (Across from the wave pool on the Price campus)
Office Hours: TBA

Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to comparative politics, a subdivision of political science. In order to understand the structure of this course you need to understand the content and the framework.

Content: This course is divided into three parts. 1) Western Democracies: The first section of this course focuses on the two main styles of democracy, the presidential system and the parliamentary system. In this section, we will focus on the US, the UK and France. 2) Post-Communist States: Communism was the main competing ideology to liberal democracy. In this section, we will look at two Communist inspired countries, Russia and China. 3) Theocracies: A theocracy is a government based on religious principles. In this section, we will focus on Iran and Israel. If we have time, we may look at a social issue within a comparative perspective.

Framework: In this course, there is an emphasis on comparing the executive branch, legislative branch, policy-making process and electoral system of each country.

Navigation Tabs: There are six navigation tabs located on the Canvas homepage. The following provides a summary of the content under each of the tabs:

- Getting Started: Under this tab you will find a detailed description of the course, including the required textbook, an explanation of exams and assignments, the grade scale and other important information.
- Western Democracies: In the first section of this course we will focus on the US, the UK and France. Under this tab, you will find the lecture outline, a page of links relevant to the material, World Factbook pages for each country covered, a link to the multiple choice exam, and links to the essay questions.
- Post-Communist Countries: In the second section of this course we will focus on Russia and China. Under this tab, you will find the lecture outline, a page of links relevant to the material,
World Factbook pages for each country covered, a link to the multiple choice exam, and links to the essay questions.

- Theocracies: For the least section of this course, we will focus on Iran and Israel. Under this tab, you will find the lecture outline, a page of links relevant to the material, World Factbook pages for each country covered, a link to the multiple choice exam, and links to the essay questions.

- Study Guides: Under this tab, you will find a study guide for each of the three multiple choice exams. The study guide covers the textbook. Each study guide will indicate which chapters to read and which terms and sections to focus on. There is also a tips page for preparing your study guide.

- Other Material: This is a catch all tab. Currently, at the beginning of the course, there is the fist chapter of the textbook and a reading for the first section located under this tab.

**Media Gallery:** The media gallery is located on the left hand side of our Canvas page. When you go into the media gallery click on "playlists". There will be three lecture playlists, one for each section of this course. The lectures are about 10-15 minutes long. They follow the lecture outlines which are located under each section tab.

There is a textbook for this course which will provide you with information about the basic terms, theories and frameworks used within comparative politics. We will also be reading journal articles, specifically articles from *Foreign Affairs*. We will be watching documentaries and media clips.

Due to uncertain circumstances, this course is designed to work as a face to face, online or blended course. The following information assumes the course will be taught as a face to face class. The course may need to change format later in the semester.

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**Objectives**

Objectives are the things I hope to convey, or teach, in this course. Here are some of the things I hope you get out of the course:

- A basic understanding of what comparative politics is, and how it fits into the discipline of political science
- The ability to approach any country and be able to gain an understanding of policy-making within that country
- The ability to identify critical junctures in the development of political institutions and the policy-making process
- A basic knowledge of some of the critical junctures and current events within our focus countries
- Development of a personal values and curiosity about the world

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**Textbook**

The first two chapters of this book are available under the "Other Material" tab on the Canvas homepage.

Discussion

According to the Socratic method, learning occurs best through discussion. I truly believe this, however, due to the Covid crisis our in-class time is uncertain. I plan to make the basic lectures, reading material and other material available online. For our in-class time I will always have something prepared. Most often I will spend time on aspects of the lecture, going into detail on the required journal readings, or playing and discussing relevant media clips. Our in-class time is for discussion and I hope we can use it for that. Please note that the in-class portion of all of your courses will end the week before Thanksgiving.

Exams

There are three exams in this course, one per module. There is a multiple choice section and there are essay questions to complete. Carefully read the following information:

Multiple Choice Exam: (40-60 points each) There are three multiple choice exams. There are 20-30 multiple choice questions, worth 2 points per question. The content for the multiple choice questions comes from the textbook. There is a study guide located under the "Study Guide" tab on the Canvas homepage. The study guide will tell you which chapters to read, and which concepts and chapter sections make up the content of the questions.

The multiple choice exam can be found under the navigation tab or under the "Assignments" tab on the left hand side of Canvas. You will be taking the exam from your home computer. You will have access to the textbook during the exam, but the exam is timed. Once you open the exam, you have 60 minutes to complete it. I recommend that you read the chapters and use the study guide to take notes. Late exams may be turned in for up to half credit until December 6th.

Essay Questions (80-120 points per exam): This course is divided into three parts. Each part will have 3-4 essay questions worth 20 to 40 points each. As we go through each part, the essay questions will be gradually introduced. In other words, you will not have a big essay exam presented to you at the end of each section. Essay questions will be added, approximately, every 7-10 days. This will give you more time to work on them. It will also give you time to do revisions, if you choose to do so.

Because you have extra time to work on the questions, and our class size is small, I will accept re-submissions. You may complete a question. I will grade it with a tentative score. You may keep that score, or use the suggestions I provide and resubmit the answer a second time. When you receive a tentative score, this means that your answer will not receive a score lower than what I assigned but it
may actually be a couple points higher. I will need at least five days to provide tentative scores and suggestions.

Grading Scale

Here is the grade scale for this course:

- 93-100% = A; 90-92% = A-
- 87-89% = B+; 83-86% = B; 80-82% = B-
- 77-79% = C+; 73-76% = C; 70-72% = C-
- 67-69% = D+; 63-66% = D; 62% = F

Notice that you need at least a 63% to pass the class. Anyone who is .5 or higher will automatically have their grade rounded up to the next higher grade. For example, a final grade of 86.5% or 86.6% will be entered as an 87% B+. As the professor, I reserve the right to round a grade up .5% for effort shown. For example, let’s say a student has a final grade of 86.3%. Their grades have continuously improved, they took advantage of extra credit and they took the optional comprehensive exam to replace a low test grade. This student’s grade would be entered as an 87% B+. Under no circumstances will I raise a grade more than .5%.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will result in 1) a written form submitted to Logan’s ethics board, 2) an failing grade on the assignment for which the plagiarism occurred. If plagiarism occurs again, this will result in 1) a second notification to Logan’s ethics board which may result in a dismissal from the university, 2) a failing grade in the course.

Plagiarism most often occurs in one of two ways. It occurs when students are using another student’s notes, word for word, to answer an exam essay question. It also occurs when students use online material from the internet (often sources like wikipedia or sparknotes). Students often cut and paste sections of the text and insert it into their essays. I do grade a lot of exams, but duplicate answers and answers in which the concepts and description are way above an entry level student’s knowledge does stick out.

I urge you to come see me if concepts in the book or lecture are unclear. Learning takes time and effort. Please don’t mistakenly think a source online will clear up all your answers. I guarantee I can do it better! If you are an off campus student we can set up Skype time or a chat in Canvas.

If I suspect you of plagiarism we will sit down and talk about it before any action is taken. You may have access to your written answer and you will be asked to explain certain parts of it. I will do my best to provide questions that are reasonable.
Classroom Accommodation For Students With Disabilities: USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.