

POL 243: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Term 1, 2004

Aparna Thomas, Instructor
Amanda Swygart-Hobaugh, Consulting Librarian

Office: 305, South Hall

Office Hours: MWF 11-12, TR 2-3 and by appointment

Email: athomas@cornellcollege.edu

Classroom: 302, South Hall

Class meets: Generally 9-11 M-F (with some exceptions).

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is an introductory course to the field of “comparative politics,” in which we will examine the world’s different political systems by contrasting and comparing the key aspects of their political systems, and by seeking generalizations about them. In this course, we will focus our attention on the three predominant types of political systems in the world: advanced industrial democracies, the current and former communist systems, and political systems in developing countries. Our principle theme will be the dilemmas inherited in moving toward democracy or in maintaining a stable democracy.

As a step towards understanding the nature of these different political systems, we will undertake a discussion of the various ideological/theoretical explanations that help us draw comparisons and reach conclusions across the different countries. We will closely examine the structures and process in certain countries that are particularly important “case studies” in each of three types of political systems. We will also discuss several global challenges for the all political systems in the 21st century in the final sections of the class.

More specifically, by the end of this course you will have some grounding in comprehending:

- Basic terms and concepts used in comparative political studies.
- The major aspects of liberal democratic and non-democratic ideologies.
- The major political economic features of democratic and authoritarian regimes.
- The political history, key institutions, political cultures, political parties, interest groups, political issues, public policies, and the major political conflicts of eight political systems: Britain, France, Japan, Russia (and the former Soviet Union), China, Mexico, India and South Africa.
- Some challenges that face all countries in the 21st century, such as terrorism, economic development and social justice, globalization, HIV/AIDS epidemic, poverty, and women and politics.

READINGS

Two books are required for this course. The students are expected to keep up with all the required readings and be prepared to participate in class discussions. The two required books are:

- Howard J. Wiarda, *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Concepts and Processes* (Second Edition). Orlando, FL., Harcourt College Publishers, 2000.
- Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges* (Fourth Edition). Belmont, CA., Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003.

In addition to the required readings, students are strongly encouraged to read a daily newspaper with extensive coverage of both national and international news/issues (Examples are *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Washington Post*).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

1. **Two Examinations:** There will be two exams. The first exam is worth 25% of the final grade and the second exam is worth 35% of the final grade. The exams will include both essay and short answer/identification questions. The exams will cover the readings as well as class discussions. Make-up exams will not be given unless in the case of emergencies.
2. **Term Paper and Presentations:** Students are required to write a research paper of 8-10 pages on an important political problem in a country of your choice (with the exception of the United States). The detail requirements are given on page 3 of the syllabus. *All students need to get their term paper topics approved by the instructor. Unapproved paper topics may not be accepted.* You should write a one-page description of your topic and bring it to the instructor on the day of your appointment. The paper is due on September 22, by 5 pm. We will have paper presentations from September 20-22. Sign up sheets will be distributed. No late papers will be accepted, unless you get consent from the instructor in advance. The term paper and presentation will comprise 30% of your final grade.
3. **Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Students will be expected to participate actively in sharing their ideas on various classroom discussions. The instructor will take attendance throughout the term. The students who fail to maintain a regular attendance cannot expect to score well on classroom participation that will comprise 10% of the final grade.

4. Grades Breakdown:

Exam 1- 25%

Exam 2- 35%

Term Paper and Presentation- 30%

Attendance and Participation- 10%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The following section is reprinted from Compass, the Cornell Student Handbook. Please see me if you have any questions.

A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty.

Dishonesty in academic work includes both cheating and plagiarism. Please refer to the Cornell Student Handbook for more details or come and talk to me.

A safe guide is to provide a full citation for every source consulted. Sources may include, but are not limited to, published books, articles, reviews, Internet sites, archival material, visual images, oral presentations, or personal correspondence. In addition, students should always keep previous drafts of their work in order to provide documentation of their original work. Finally, due to disciplinary differences, students should consult their professor, a librarian, and/or the Writing Studio for specific instructions on properly providing citations for sources.

TERM PAPER AND PRESENTATION

In the course of this semester each student will be involved in a substantial research project. The paper should utilize several sources (5 as a minimum) that contain different views on the selected topic. It should be 8-10 pages long (excluding bibliography). Students are required to present the paper in class. The presentations will be 15-20 minutes each.

You are required to select your topic by Friday, September 3 at the latest. The written statement of your selected topic must be submitted at the time of your individual paper conference with me. Only topics relevant to this course are acceptable.

An excellent research paper and oral presentation must conform to the following criteria:

- good, clear and complete description of the problem
- clear thesis statement on the selected problem (your own argument) developed out of empirical evidence or theoretical perspective
- theoretical framework(s) that explain your problem the best
- empirical evidence and/or plausible examples to support your argument
- your own contribution to the problem -- e.g., unique arguments supported by evidence that others missed, synthesis of previous findings or new empirical updates of previous findings that prove one side to be correct
- possible predictions
- few errors in grammar, punctuation, excellent spelling and writing style as well as proper citation
- complete and appropriate bibliography

SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: The contents in this syllabus may be changed during the term to reflect the progress of the course. The instructor will announce the changes in the classroom. All readings are in parentheses and should be completed before class.

Week 1—August 30- September 3

**Monday – 9-10 a.m- Course Introduction
10:15-11:15 a.m.- Meet in Library re Information Literacy**

Tuesday- Methods and Theories in Comparative Politics (Hauss Ch 1, Wiarda, Ch 1,2)

Wednesday- Meeting with Amanda Swygart- Hobough, Consulting Librarian, in Room 126 of the library. We will meet in 2 groups, from 9-10 and 10-11. Specific instructions will be given in class the day before.

Thursday- Political Development and Political Culture (Wiarda, Ch 3, 4)

**Friday- Challenges and Alternatives to Development (Wiarda, Ch 5)
Paper Topic Due!
1-3 p.m- Individual Paper Conferences by appt (my office)**

Week 2- September 6-10

Monday- Advanced Industrial Democracies (Hauss, Ch 3, 4) Case Study: Great Britain

Tuesday- Advanced Industrial Democracies: Case Studies: Japan and France (Hauss Ch 5 & 8)

Wednesday- EXAM 1

Thursday- Democracy and Democratization: Transitions (Wiarda, Ch 6, Hauss Ch 12, 14)

Friday- Communist and Post-Communist Systems (Wiarda, Ch 7, Hauss Ch 9)

Week 3- September 13- 17

Monday- Communist and Post Communist Systems: Case Studies: Former Soviet Union and China. (Hauss, Ch 10, 11)

**Tuesday- The Developing Nations (Wiarda, Ch 8).
Case Studies: Mexico and South Africa (Hauss, Ch 13, 15)**

**Wednesday- Future of the Developed Nation (Wiarda, Ch 9)
Case Study: India (Haus, Ch 13)**

Thursday- Challenges in the 21st Century (Wiarda, Ch 10, Additional readings may be announced)

Friday- EXAM 2

Week 4- September 20-22

Monday- NO CLASS (time to prepare for presentations)

Tuesday- Paper Presentations

Wednesday- Paper Presentations

PAPER DUE BY 5 p.m.