

# POLS 250: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2010  
MWF 11:00-11:50 am  
Quigley Hall, Room 0208

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## Introduction to Comparative Politics

**1) Course Description:** Comparative Politics is the study of domestic political institutional frameworks of different countries, aided with the use of evidence to explain the differences and, or similarities between them. Comparative Politics research includes and is not limited to; configurations of political parties and institutions, social and economic governmental policies, foreign policy decision-making as well as the study of political processes such as social movements, revolutions and democratization between countries

**2) Course Objectives:** This course is dedicated to the systematic evaluation of the political configurations and workings of both the advanced industrial countries and those of the developing world. Specifically, the first half of the course places focus on the institutions of advanced democratic countries relatively similar to that of the United States and explores why each country surveyed pursued the unique economic and social policies they adopted respectively. Britain, Sweden and Germany will be our case-studies for this purpose. The second half of the course is structured to evaluate the process under which less developed countries democratize. In doing so, we will explore how theory may help explain ways in which authoritarian regimes maintain power, the conditions in which democracy may emerge and the potential problems these countries face in the process. The countries we will explore in case-study format here will be Indonesia, Benin and Mexico.

## **3) Course Requirements**

- **Class Preparation & Attendance:** Your success in this class depends heavily upon your attendance and participation. You are expected to come to class having read the material assigned for the day.
- **Quizzes:** There will be seven (5 short answer) quizzes given through the semester. There are no make-up quizzes. Missed quizzes will be given a zero. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.
- **Short Papers:** After each country studied, you will provide me with a one page, double-spaced paper **explaining a newspaper article, and how it relates to class material on the country**

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**studied.** In particular, I am looking for how does what you've learned help you better understand what the journalist is describing? You must print out a copy of the article and staple it to your paper. Papers are due in class at the next meeting following the conclusion of our discussion of the country in question. No late papers will be accepted. The following newspapers are acceptable examples of sources to use for your country focused papers. You may use these or other similar newspapers. They are:

Chicago Tribune  
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/>

New York Times  
<http://nytimes.com/>

Los Angeles Times  
<http://www.latimes.com/>

The Guardian (London)  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

BBC News  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

- **Exams:** The midterm exam will be held in class on Friday, March 5. The final exam is currently scheduled for Tuesday, May 11, from 12:50 to 2:50 pm, in our classroom; it will focus on material from the second half of the course. Two review sessions will be held before each exam.

- **Grading:**

Attendance	10%
Quiz #1	5%
Quiz #2	5%
Quiz #3	5%
Quiz #4	5%
Quiz #5	5%
Quiz#6	5%
Paper#1	4%
Paper#2	4%
Paper#3	4%
Paper#4	4%
Paper#5	4%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

#### 4) Course Policies

- **Absences:** Success in this course is contingent on attendance and participation; therefore, multiple absences will result in a reduction of your overall letter grade, while excess absences may result in failure of the course. You are permitted three unexcused absences through the semester. Any absence in excess of this allowance must be supported with a written excuse or will be detrimental to your overall grade. Please plan accordingly. More than 5 absences (unexcused or not) will result in an automatic failing grade.
- **Missed Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. Papers are due, typed, at the beginning of the class period. Missed assignments will be counted as a 0 which will inevitably reduce your overall grade for the course.
- **Cheating & Academic Dishonesty:** Any student found to be in violation of the University's policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty will receive an F in this course and be reported to the appropriate authorities. If in doubt, please consult the university handbook.

#### 5) Textbooks & Class Materials

- There are no required Textbooks for this course. All relevant course material will be available through Blackboard or the Library Reserves.

#### 6) Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

##### **Week 1: Intro & Britain**

Monday, January 18: MLK Day (No school)

Wednesday, January 20: Introduction to the Course

Friday, January 22: Institutions and Parties

##### **Week 2: Britain**

Monday, January 25: Social Policy

Wednesday, January 27: Economic Policy

Friday, January 29: From Thatcher to New Labor

##### **Week 3: Britain round up & Sweden.**

Monday, February 1: Britain Review

Wednesday, February 3: Institutions and Parties (*Britain Paper Due*)

Friday February 5: Social Policy

**Week 4: Sweden**

Monday, February 8: Economic Policy

Wednesday February 10: Postmaterialism: gender equity

Friday, February 12: Sweden review

**Week 5: Germany**

Monday, February 15: Institutions and Parties (*Sweden Paper Due*)

Wednesday, February 17: Social Policy

Friday February 19: Economic Policy

**Week 6: Germany round-up & Review**

Monday, February 22: Postmaterialism: the environment

Wednesday, February 24: Germany Review

Friday, February 26: Three (other) countries (*Germany Paper Due*)

**Week 7: Review & Midterm**

Monday, March 1: Midterm Review

Wednesday, March 3: Midterm Review

Friday, March 5: **Midterm**

**Week 8: SPRING BREAK** (March 8-12)

**Week 9: Democratic Transitions & Indonesia**

Monday, March 15: Introduction to Democratic Transitions

Wednesday, March 17: Authoritarianism in Indonesia

Friday, March 19: Crises

**Week 10: Indonesia**

Monday, March 22: Democratic Transition

Wednesday, March 24: Democratic transition cont...

Friday, March 26: Issues and Problems

**Week 11: Indonesia round-up & Benin**

Monday, March 29: Indonesia Review

Wednesday, March 31: Authoritarianism in Benin (*Indonesia Paper Due*)

Friday, April 2: Crises

**Week 12: Benin**

Monday, April 5: Democratic transition

Wednesday, April 7: Democratic transition cont...

Friday, April 9: Issues and Problems

**Week 13: Benin Round-up and Mexico**

Monday, April 12: Benin Review

Wednesday, April 14: Authoritarianism in Mexico (*Benin Paper Due*)

Friday, April 16: Crises

**Week 14: Mexico**

Monday, April 19: Democratic transition

Wednesday, April 21: No Class (Midwest Political Science Conference)

Friday, April 23: No Class (Midwest Political Science Conference)

**Week 15: Mexico cont...**

Monday, April 26: Democratic transition cont...

Wednesday, April 28: Issues and Problems

Friday, April 30: Mexico Review

**Week 16: Review**

Monday, May 3: Four (other) countries (*Mexico Papers Due*)

Wednesday, May 5: In-class review for final

Friday, May 7: In class-review for final (Instructor Evaluations)

**Week 17: Official Finals Week**

Tuesday, May 11: 12:50- 2:50PM: **FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED**