

Introduction to Comparative Politics
Fall/2021
Smith 245
Monday 18:00 – 21:00

Instructor: Mr. Murad Meshanni
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Office Hours: **Location TBD** | Mondays 11:30 – 12:30 and by appointment

Emails sent during work-hours should expect a turnaround response within approximately 1 hour. Emails sent after work-hours will be responded to within 2 hours. Please do not expect a response to emails sent after 22:00 and before 06:00.

Course Description

This course introduces students to foundational concepts, themes, puzzles, and theories in the comparative study of politics. The emphasis of this course will be placed on analyzing three of the most important aspects in the field: economic growth, democratization, and political conflict. By focusing on these aspects, this course will examine some of the core questions in the field: Why are some countries democratic and others not? What are the roots of global economic disparity? How can we use a comparison of cases (countries, culture, regions, people, etc.) to understand how politics works?

Learning Outcomes/Objectives

By the end of this course, the goals are as followed:

- To familiarize students with the major themes, concepts, and puzzles within comparative politics
- To bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world political issues
- To practice and strengthen written and professional skills in a virtual world
- To learn how to better one's own position/argument with empirical evidence
- To help students become more self-aware about their own political biases and to develop their abilities to evaluate such biases in an informed manner

Teaching Methods

To clarify any preconceived notions about this class, this is not purely a lecture course. This requires you to be properly caught-up on the readings and that you will be able to discuss the readings with the class in an informed and rational manner. It is my belief that an informed discussion (conducted by the class as a whole) is the best way to tackle the subjects that we will be focusing on. While I will provide guiding comments and frameworks throughout each class, I expect participation from everyone.

Without a firm grasp of these readings, it would be impossible to have any thoughtful discussion; therefore, it is imperative that you complete all the assigned readings and that you attempt to draw parallels between the works throughout the weeks. This is not to say that I expect you to

have complete mastery or understanding of the texts after an initial read, but I do expect you to give each work the time that they require to get a general understanding of what is being discussed. Furthermore, it is likely that the readings will yield more questions than answers, and that is okay. Should any questions arise, I ask that you jot them down and bring them up in class. It is very likely that at least one other person in the room is confused by the same topic/issue or that they have the same question. Asking thought-provoking questions is a surefire way to lead the discussion towards getting everyone to better understand the material.

In order to maintain this teaching format, I will assign each student a set number of additional readings [provided on Canvas] that they will then lead the discussion on during that week of class. On any given day, the leaders will offer a brief summary of the assigned readings [usually no more than an additional chapter] and then present three thought-provoking questions to the class. The leaders are also expected to provide their own answers before opening the floor up to their classmates for comments or rebuttals. Note: All students are expected to read the additional readings, not just the leaders. For the week(s) that you are presenting as a leader, I request that you submit to me your questions and answers via email no later than 14:00 on the day before you present. Students that are not presenting are expected to have remarks or follow-up questions for the discussion points for the day. Failure to provide input in the discussions will bear significant consequences in grading.

Required Textbooks

1. O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl J. Fields, and Donald Share. 2020. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. (Cases)
2. O'Neil, Patrick H. 2020. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. (Essentials)

The required texts are available for purchase at the Rutgers-Newark University Bookstore. These books are also easily available in online stores (e.g., www.amazon.com, www.bn.com, www.abebooks.com).

All other readings will be found in their respective folders on Canvas.

Requirements/Grading:

1000-point grading system

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Attendance/Participation 20% (200 points) | A = 905 – 1000 |
| World News Report 15% (150 points) | B+ = 855 – 904 |
| Short Responses 10% (100 points) | B = 805 – 854 |
| Midterm Essay(s) 25% (250 points) | C+ = 755 – 804 |
| Final Essay 30% (300 points) | C = 705 – 754 |
| | D = 655 – 704 |
| | F = 654 – Below |

- **Attendance/Participation**

- Attendance is mandatory for this course and will be taken each class. Since this course only meets once per week, it is imperative that you attend every class. You are allowed one (1) unexcused absence without penalty in this class. Missing class without proper, official documentation will affect your grade. Each unexcused absence after the first will result in the deduction of five (5) points per class missed. If four (4) or more sessions are missed, you will not earn credit in this class.
- If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your classmates. The slides used in the class will be uploaded to Canvas, but the real, detailed information and discussion will be had in the classroom, not on the slides. Remember, your attendance is directly linked to your ability to contribute to class discussions. Merely attending class without providing any insight will only yield a portion of the attendance points.
- In addition to our in-person classes, Discussion Boards will be opened for each day of class. The purpose of the Discussion Board is to ensure that every student has the opportunity to ask pertinent questions. These boards will be monitored by me for a given period before rolling-over into the next one. Questions asked on Discussion Boards will count towards your overall Attendance/Participation grade. This is simply another avenue for you to obtain your “points” in this part of the grading criteria.

- **Short Responses (e.g., questions and answers from leaders)**

- The brief summaries and questions that I have requested to be emailed to me will account for ten percent of your grade. Note: there are no exceptions to this assignment.

- **World News Report**

- Now, more than ever, we live in a 24-hour news cycle. At any given moment there is breaking news in one part of the world or another. As students of comparative politics, it is in your best interest to pay attention to the world around you and to absorb as much of this news as possible. For this assignment, every student will give one (1) presentation on a topic/country of their choice, but you must relate it to the course material that we discuss. The topic/country must be from a recent news article (within the past two weeks of your assigned presentation date) and you must demonstrate that you understand both the article and the relevance of it to the course material. The purpose of this assignment is to build the professional skills of giving a short presentation and to help relate the theoretical with the real- world. A rubric will be provided prior to the first set of presentations.

- **Midterm**

- In this course, your “midterms” will consist of two short essays. This course is broken up into two main sections: Foundational information and case studies. The

midterm essays will be given during each of the sections. As students of comparative politics, your task is to link the course material to an important issue in a specific country of your choice. This assignment will test your ability to source credible information and to support your position(s) with evidence. The midterm essays are to be 2-3 pages long (12-point [standard] font, double spaced). Midterms must have footnotes in addition to full bibliographic information in them.

- **Final**
 - The final for this course will be a paper (5 – 7 pages) on a specific question or questions that I will provide prior to the last day of class. Finals must have footnotes in addition to full bibliographic information in them.

General Class Guidelines

1. In order to protect the health and wellbeing of all members of the Rutgers-Newark community, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during class meetings. Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app found at: [myRutgers Portal](#).
2. Be respectful of everyone in the room. In this class, you might have different opinions and positions than your fellow classmates, but I urge you to be respectful. Disruptive students will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.
3. Computers are allowed in class, but I request that you only focus on the material. Cellphone use is strictly prohibited in the classroom. If you need to answer a call or a text, please excuse yourself to the hallway. Students caught browsing the internet, playing games, texting, etc. will have points deducted from their grade.
4. Be understanding and patient. We are living in unprecedented times and some things might be touch-and-go as we all find our footing this semester.

Academic Integrity:

As directly stated on the Academic Integrity at Rutgers website:

Principles of academic integrity require that every Rutgers University student:

- Properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others
- Properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work
- Make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration
- Obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions

- Treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress
- Uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to insure that:

- Everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments
- All student work is fairly evaluated, and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others
- The academic and ethical development of all students is fostered
- The reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. (The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy)

Note: Violations of academic integrity will be met with a zero-tolerance policy. Failure to adhere to the aforementioned rules will result in the immediate failure of the assignment and/or course in addition to any other consequences as outlined by the [University Code of Student Conduct](#).

4. **Your grade is non-negotiable. The grade that you earn is based solely on the work that you put in. I will not provide extra credit or a curve in this class. Please do not ask me to entertain this idea.**

General Paper Guidelines

- The papers must meet the outlined page requirement (cover pages and bibliographies do not count towards the page count)
- 1-inch margins all around
- 12-point font (please use a standard font)
- Citations are expected to be done in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition | Footnotes. Please refrain from using endnotes or parenthetical citations in your papers.
- **CITE YOUR QUOTES/PARAPHRASING. PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY CAPACITY. PLAGIARIZED PAPERS WILL BE FAILED AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN. REMEMBER, PARAPHRASING WITHOUT CITING IS PLAGIARISING.**
- Number all your pages in the top right of the heading in the following manner: “Your name here” “#”
- Proofread your paper. You will be marked off for typos and grammatical errors.

- I will not accept email attachments for papers. They MUST be submitted through Turnitin on Canvas.
- The penalty for late papers will be applied at a rate of 15 percentage points per day after the due date, up to a maximum of two days late. After two days, the work will be counted as a non-submission (a zero). Note: Submissions after the deadline time on the submission date will count as a day late.

AGAIN, ALL PAPERS MUST BE SUBMITTED THROUGH TURN-IT-IN ON CANVAS!! NO EXCEPTIONS!!

| Topic | | Readings |
|--|--|--|
| Week 1: Wednesday (Sept. 8) | Introduction | Syllabus |
| Section 1: Foundational Information | | |
| Week 2: Monday (Sept. 13) | What is Comparative Politics and What is the State? | <i>Essentials:</i> Chapters 1 and 2 |
| Week 3: Monday (Sept. 20) | Identity and Culture | <i>Essentials:</i> Chapter 3 [additional readings on Canvas] |
| Week 4: Monday (Sept. 27) | Political Economy | <i>Essentials:</i> Chapter 4 [additional readings on Canvas] |
| Week 5: Monday (Oct. 4) | Democratic Regimes and Non- Democratic Regimes | <i>Essentials:</i> Chapters 5 and 6 |
| Week 6: Monday (Oct. 11) | Why do democracies endure and why do they break down? | Readings will be provided on Canvas |
| FIRST MIDTERM PAPER DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15 AT 23:59 | | |
| Week 7: Monday (Oct. 18) | Political Norms | Readings will be provided on Canvas |
| Section 2: Cases | | |
| Week 8: Monday (Oct. 25) | United States | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 3 |
| Week 9: Monday (Nov. 1) | United Kingdom | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 2 [additional readings on Canvas] |
| Week 10: Monday (Nov. 8) | Japan | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 6 [additional readings on Canvas] |
| SECOND MIDTERM PAPER DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12 AT 23:59 | | |
| Week 11: Monday (Nov. 15) | Russia | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 7 [additional readings on Canvas] |
| Week 12: Monday (Nov. 22) | China | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 8 |
| Monday (Nov. 29) | NO CLASS | CHANGE IN DESIGNATION |
| Week 13: Monday (Dec. 6) | South Africa | <i>Cases:</i> Chapter 13 |
| Section 3: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly | | |
| Week 14: Monday (Dec. 13) | Globalization and the Digital Divide | <i>Essentials:</i> Chapter 11 [additional readings will be posted on Canvas] |
| FINAL PAPER DUE DATE TBD | | |