Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring/2020
HAH-411
Monday 18:00 – 21:00

Instructor: Mr. Murad Meshanni
Email: murad.meshanni@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Monday 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 oral skills
- 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 in the room.

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 Blackboard] 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**


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](http://www.amazon.com), [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com), [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)).

Note: You are required to bring the assigned textbooks for the day to class.

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

**Requirements/Grading:**

1000-point grading system

- **Attendance/Participation | 20% (200 points)**
  - A = 905 – 1000
  - B+ = 855 – 904
- **World News Report | 15% (150 points)**
  - B = 805 – 854
- **Short Responses | 10% (100 points)**
  - C+ = 755 – 804
- **Midterm Essays | 25% (250 points)**
  - C = 705 – 754
- **Final Essay | 30% (300 points)**
  - D = 655 – 704
  - F = 654 – Below
• **Attendance/Participation**
  o 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.
  o 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 Blackboard, but they are a skeleton at best. The real 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 showing up for class without providing any insight will only yield a portion of the attendance points.

• **Short Responses (e.g. questions and answers from leaders)**
  o 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**
  o 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 they 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**
  o 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 after 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
  o The final for this course will be a take-home paper (5 – 7 pages) on a specific question or questions that I will provide on the last day of class. Finals must have footnotes in addition to full bibliographic information in them.

General Class Guidelines

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 course and 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 Blackboard.
- 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 BLACKBOARD!! NO EXCEPTIONS!!
Class Schedule:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday (Jan. 27)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td><strong>Section 1: Foundational Information</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 2:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday (Feb. 3)</td>
<td>What is Comparative Politics and What is the State?</td>
<td>Essentials: Chapters 1 and 2</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday (Feb. 10)</td>
<td>Identity and Culture</td>
<td>Essentials: Chapter 3 [additional readings on Blackboard]</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday (Feb. 17)</td>
<td>Political Economy</td>
<td>Essentials: Chapter 4 [additional readings on Blackboard]</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday (Feb. 24)</td>
<td>Democratic Regimes and Non-Democratic Regimes</td>
<td>Essentials: Chapters 5 and 6</td>
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**FIRST MIDTERM PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 6 AT 18:00**

| Week 7: | Film and discussion: *Brazil 1985* | N/A |
| **Section 2: Cases** | | |
| Monday (Mar. 9) | NO CLASS | SPRING BREAK |
| **Week 8:**<br>Monday (Mar. 23) | The United States | Cases: Chapter 3 |
| **Week 9:**<br>Monday (Mar. 30) | France | Cases: Chapter 4 [additional readings on Blackboard] |
| **Week 10:**<br>Monday (Apr. 6) | Japan | Cases: Chapter 6 [additional readings on Blackboard] |

**SECOND MIDTERM PAPER DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 3 AT 18:00**

| Week 11: | Russia | Cases: Chapter 7 [additional readings on Blackboard] |
| **Week 12:**| China | Cases: Chapter 8 [additional readings on Blackboard] |
### Section 3: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

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<tr>
<th>Week 13: Monday (Apr. 27)</th>
<th>Globalization and The Dark Side of Globalization</th>
<th>Essentials: Chapter 11 [additional readings on Blackboard]</th>
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<td>Week 14: Monday (May. 4)</td>
<td>The Digital Divide</td>
<td>Readings will be posted on Blackboard</td>
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**FINAL PAPER DUE DATE TBD**