

Political Science 211
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT

M W 11:00 – 12:15

Winter 2016

215 Porter

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“Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.”
Alexis de Tocqueville, 1830

“A man who has tasted only his mother’s soup has no basis to claim that hers is the best.”
African proverb

“Politics is a pendulum whose swings between anarchy and tyranny are fueled by perpetually rejuvenated illusions.”
Albert Einstein

Course Rationale (from EMU)

From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the rise of ethnic and religious nationalisms to the new challenges of a global marketplace, the world’s politics are in transition. As people and events around the world become more interconnected, it is increasingly vital to understand the dramatic political changes going into the 21st century in order to gain global awareness and perspectives on the diverse world in which we live. This course offers an introduction to the study of politics and political issues in countries around the world, with particular focus on cases selected to reflect the diversity of societies and political systems. In comparing specific national responses to common problems, we will be learning not only about how governments work and how people change their form of government, but also about methods of comparative analysis (i.e., how to gain perspective through comparison); and about how the global context shapes and interacts with diverse peoples and governments. The course material is organized thematically; countries of diverse economic, social, and cultural types will be compared regarding a variety of topics (such as democracy, authoritarianism, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, development, and globalization).

Learning Outcomes (From EMU Area III: Perspectives of a Diverse World)

In the **Global Awareness** course, students will:

1. Explore specific global issues influencing diverse nations and/or cultures, along with their interrelations within the global community.
2. Explore their own culture and cultural practices and how these relate to the cultures and cultural practices of others in the global community.
3. Explore the social and historical dynamics that create and influence nations, governments, global alliances, and global conflicts.
4. Explore the causes and consequences of social, cultural, and racial intolerance in the world.
5. Analyze and synthesize information from diverse sources to make informed decisions regarding global issues.

Course Description

This class will teach you about politics around the world, beginning with theoretical foundations in comparative politics, histories defining the “state” as well as the role of the three major comparative approaches of structure, institutions and culture in state and nation development. Subjects include, but not limited to, democracy, the political roots of economic development (e., capitalism, Marxism/communism, socialism, etc.), the roots of policy making as well as the role of society – both civil and “uncivil” - in explaining variations in political development.

Course Objectives

I have set three main goals for this course:

1. Gain exposure to some of the most important perspectives and theories which inform our understanding of comparative politics
2. Compare and contrast the variety of ways that different countries have chosen to shape their political institutions and processes, and assess the costs and benefits of these choices
3. Develop a basic understanding of the methods which political scientists use to understand politics. You will learn the use of the comparative approach, and its limits, as one of our most important methods for deriving generalizations about politics and lessons about public policy

Required Textbook (online order)

Klesner, J. "Comparative Politics; an Introduction". McGraw-Hill Education. 2014

10 digit ISBN: 0-07-352643-6

13 digit ISBN: 978-0-07-352643-0

Course Resources

All course material, including reading materials, slides and any assigned homework, will be available on EMU Canvas.

Course Requirements

The course grade will comprise of two in-class exams, participation (which includes homework) and a final exam. Grading breaks down as follows:

Assignments		
Exam I	10 Feb	30%
Exam II	23 Mar	30%
Final Exam	25 Apr	30%
Participation	All Semester	10%
TOTAL		100%

GRADING SCALE			
A	92+	C	69-75
A-	89-91	C-	67-68
B+	86-88	D+	64-66
B	82-85	D	60-63
B-	79-81	D-	55-59
C+	76-78	F	<55

Evaluation and Grading Policy

Exams 90%

It is expected that you will be present for exams. **Make-up exams will be considered only for extreme circumstances, determined by the instructor.**

Tardiness to an exam is unacceptable. If you are more than 15 minutes late to an exam, you will not be allowed to take it.

All exams will be multiple choice/short answer essay. Due to the amount of information in the textbook, the exams will not be cumulative but rather cover the material presented for the appropriate period.

The final exam is required. Students who chose not to take the final will receive a failing grade for the course. **The final for this course will be on 25 April from 9:30 – 11:00.**

Attendance Policy/Participation 10%

There is quite a bit of information to be covered and attendance to lecture is the best way to absorb and retain the material presented. However, understanding life can sometimes bring disruptive events, you are each allowed 3 absences. More than three absences will result in a deduction of 1/3 a letter grade (e.g., you could have had an “A” but it is now reduced to an “A-“). Each additional accumulation of 3 absences further reduces the grade (e.g., 6 absences results in a B+ for participation and so on) Any absences due to religious holidays should be made known to me at the beginning of the semester and will not count.

Tardiness Tardiness in excess of 15 minutes will be regarded as an absence. If you have special circumstances or a situation, please discuss them with me.

Participation is a portion of your grade and discussion is highly encouraged. That being said, there are a few “rules” I would like to implement:

1. Arrive on time or endure the above mentioned consequences
2. Do not depart prior to the end of the discussion. Your attendance will not be honored.
3. Be respectful and open minded to other opinions (in political discussions, this can be a struggle!) In other words, please behave civilized.
4. Side “chatter” is prohibited. This includes cell phone use and “texting”. **Please have cellular phones turned off.**

Eastern Michigan University Code of Conduct/Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty of any sort (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is strictly prohibited and is not tolerated. Violators will be reprimanded appropriately. Please reference the University Academic Integrity website for unacceptable behavior.

<http://www.emich.edu/campuslife/myfy/academics/academicintegrity.php>

Special Needs/Accessibility

If you are registered with the EAS office and require special accommodations, please see me so that we can set up appropriate arrangements.

CLASS	DATE	ASSIGNMENT
1	6 Jan	Introduction/Syllabus
2	11 Jan	Klesner Chapter 1: What is Comparative Politics
3	13 Jan	Klesner Chapter 1: What is Comparative Politics
4	20 Jan	Klesner Chapter 1: What is Comparative Politics
5	25 Jan	Klesner Chapter 2: Critical Thinking About Politics
6	27 Jan	Klesner Chapter 2: Critical Thinking About Politics
7	1 Feb	Klesner Chapter 2: Critical Thinking About Politics
8	3 Feb	Klesner Chapter 3: States and Institutions
9	8 Feb	Klesner Chapter 3: States and Institutions
10	10 Feb	Exam I
11	15 Feb	Klesner Chapter 4: States and Nations
12	17 Feb	Klesner Chapter 4: States and Nations
13	29 Feb	Klesner Chapter 4: States and Nations
14	2 Mar	Klesner Chapter 5: Democracy
15	7 Mar	Klesner Chapter 5: Democracy
16	9 Mar	Klesner Chapter 5: Democracy
17	14 Mar	Communism
18	16 Mar	Communism
19	21 Mar	Communism
20	23 Mar	Exam II
21	28 Mar	Comparative Culture
22	30 Mar	Comparative Culture
23	4 Apr	Comparative Culture
24	6 Apr	Civil Society
25	11 Apr	Civil Society
26	13 Apr	Political Economy
27	18 Apr	Political Economy
FINAL EXAM IS 25 APRIL 9:30-11:00		

Please be advised that the syllabi dates, topics, readings, and related activities, may be subject to change and readjustment at my discretion

Please note these important dates:

January 12: last day to add a class on line (after that until March 7 requires department permission)

January 18: MLK Holiday (campus events; no classes)

March 23: last day to withdraw from a class with a "W" grade