



## Political Science 351: Comparative Policies

### Course Syllabus

Spring 2010

**Instructor:** Dr. Katia Levintova

**Office:** MAC A327

**Office Hours:** M/W, 1-2PM, Tu/Th, 2-3PM

**Email:** levintoe@uwgb.edu

**Phone:** (920) 465-2045 (office)

**Course Number:** POL SCI 351

**Course Title:** Comparative Politics

**Time:** Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:50PM

**Place:** MAC 206

**D2L:** course materials, dropbox submission folders for reaction papers and discussions available

**Prerequisites:** Pol Sci 100 or 101

**Gen Ed:** World Culture

#### Required Readings:

Gabriel Almond et al., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, 9<sup>th</sup> updated ed., Pearson/Longman, 2010, ISBN: 9780205585960

Additional readings (3) are available on D2L.

Throughout the semester, I will email current articles on the class material from the national print media, which will be required readings as well. You will have to write seven short reaction papers on emailed articles (check the dates and details in the syllabus).

In addition, you are required to read your group's list of articles for formal debates and debate papers (see debate handouts).

#### Catalogue Description:

Comparative Politics examines fundamental concepts in the study of the processes and outcomes of politics in a variety of country settings. The course illustrates the rich diversity of political life, shows available institutional alternatives, and explains differences in political regimes and outcomes.

**General Education Designation:** This course fulfills World Culture general education requirement.

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Comparative politics is a rather misunderstood designation of one of the branches of political science. What exactly is comparative politics? One definition is the study of the domestic politics of countries other than the United States. Accordingly, our focus will be on studying other cases, both industrialized and developed like the US and the late comers to development. In particular, we will study eight countries -- Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, India, Mexico, and Iran. These countries were selected because they represent a variety of global political experiences.

But surprisingly, the case studies that we will look at this semester are **not** what makes comparative politics what it is. Comparative politics is as much about **specific methodology and research topics** as it is about understanding countries of the world. The term comparative politics really refers not to what we study, **but how we study it**. Comparative political scientists (or “comparativists”) believe ours can be the most interesting field within political science because we often ask broad and important questions in our comparisons. For example, what causes social revolutions? Why did such revolutions occur in France, Russia, and China, but not in Britain and Germany? Might similar explanations help us understand revolutions in Mexico and Iran? Another important question we ask addresses connections between politics and economic development, poverty alleviation, and human well-being. Or we may try to understand the root causes of political violence. Is anyone capable of it, or is the violence the product of particular culture and society?

Our major organizing theme this semester however will be **democracy and its various manifestations** around the world. What factors cause democracy to emerge? Can democracy occur in any culture? Are democracy and capitalism compatible? What dangers do democracies face? Once democracies are consolidated, are they relatively safe or can they be undermined? By comparing these different countries, we will work to specify the factors that make democratization more or less difficult. This is one of my favorite subjects to teach and I hope you too will enjoy comparative politics, the coolest subfield of political science! ☺

## II. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

It is expected that at the end of the semester students will be able to:

- describe patterns of politics, especially those related to democracy and democratization, in different region of the world
- master public rhetoric, persuasive writing, and critical thinking
- see the world from various perspectives
- exercise problem-solving skills, such as problem identification and analysis, solution formulation, implementation, and assessment as well as apply hands-on class experiences to real life situations (simulation and debates)
- have a fundamental understanding of contemporary global issues and problems through the study of beliefs, values, and ways of life in countries other than the United States.

## III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**1. Exams:** There will be **2 exams**; first exam (assessing your mastery of foundational material) and a comprehensive final. First exam (**10 percent** of your overall grade) will be in the format of short answer and medium length essays, while the comprehensive final (**20 percent** of the grade) will be in the format of long comprehensive essays. First exam will be

given on **February 11 in the beginning of class**. The comprehensive final will be given on **May 13** (10:30AM-12:30PM, in regular classroom).

**2. Parliamentary Simulation and Simulation Papers:** To facilitate active learning, we will have a simulation of party strategies and coalition building in a country which uses proportional representation as its electoral system (modeled after Germany). Each student will be assigned to one of the five major German parties vying for the representation in Parliament. Specific details will be provided in forthcoming handouts. The simulation participation will count for **10 percent** of the final grade. The simulation paper and a short post simulation reflection paper will be worth **10 percent**. **They are due in paper form on March 9 and 11 respectively (in the beginning of the class).**

Even though this is a group activity, you will be graded **individually** based on your own paper and your own simulation participation. In other words, if you are active and true to character, your grades for simulation participation and paper will reflect it, irrespective of other group members' performance.

**The goals of the simulation are:**

1. Bring to life some of the key topics central to a comparative politics course, such as electoral systems, coalition governments, and party systems.
2. Engage students in cooperative learning and problem-solving activities.
3. Take away from the simulation some practical skills that students might be able to use in an internship or future job in the "real world."
4. Foster the ability to see the world from various perspectives, both by encouraging students to work with others whom they may not already know and by allowing them to assume alternative identities for the simulation.

Below are steps you must follow in preparation for the **Simulation**:

1. Read the summary of the German party system in Almond et al. (ch. 10).
2. Get detailed information on German parties (both your own party and its potential coalition partners) from the following web sites:
  - a) Library of Congress -- <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/detoc.html> – scroll down until you see "Chapter 7: Government and Politics," then look for links to each party. However, this is a very outdated source.
  - b) You can use this site for a quick reference to German parties: [http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs\\_e/bundestag/groups/index.html](http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/groups/index.html)
  - c) Each party has an email address included in its website. Use it to request English language documents. Students in previous semesters emailed the parties and got quick responses that helped them to write papers and prepare for the simulation. It works!
  - d) Web pages of particular parties (these are much more up-to-date sources):
    - **Social Democrats'** web site describes what the SPD stands for: <http://www.spd.de/menu/1682660/> (in German, use on-line translation services to read and navigate the site); also try this site: <http://www.spdfraktion.de/> (Parliamentary group of SPD, also in German). *Warning:* Research for this party might be more challenging than research for other parties.
    - **Christian Democrats'** web page: <http://www.cdu.de/en/3440.htm> (in English or try German-language full version); also try this site: <http://www.cduscu.de/> (Parliamentary group of CDU/CSU, in German, use on-line translation services to read and navigate this site).

- **The Left Party's/Die Linke's** (formerly Party of Democratic Socialism) political program is available here: [http://die-linke.de/fileadmin/download/international/programmatische\\_punkte.pdf](http://die-linke.de/fileadmin/download/international/programmatische_punkte.pdf); it also has extensive English-language website: [http://die-linke.de/politik/international/english\\_pages/](http://die-linke.de/politik/international/english_pages/). Or try these official websites in German: <http://die-linke.de/> and <http://www.linksfraktion.de/>.
  - **Free Democratic Party:** <http://www.fdp.de/> and <http://17wp.fdp-fraktion.de/> (in German only), but this website (in English) provides their political program: [http://www.fdp-bundespartei.de/files/363/wiesbadg\\_engl.pdf](http://www.fdp-bundespartei.de/files/363/wiesbadg_engl.pdf). *Warning:* Research for this party might be more challenging than research for other parties.
  - **Alliance 90/the Greens:** <http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/rubrik/12/12034.english.html> (parliamentary group, in English), but there is also a full version in German: <http://www.gruene.de/> (use on-line translators to read and navigate that site).
3. Read Germany's *Der Spiegel* regularly -- it provides detailed information on each political party: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,,00.html>
  4. Write a short **(3-4 pages) simulation paper** due in paper form at the beginning of the class session immediately before the simulation (**March 9**).
  5. In the paper and during in-class simulation, you should demonstrate:
    - a. an understanding of your own party (its ideology, political program, especially four categories we are interested in, its history, main players, and success/failures)
    - b. how it relates to other parties involved in the simulation, and
    - c. what kinds of compromises it is willing to make with potential coalition partners?
  6. Write a **short post-simulation reflection paper (1 page)** about the lessons you learned from this activity, including what compromises were achieved at the actual simulation and why, were they realistic, what your party failed to achieve, what are the differences between proportional representation and majoritarian (plurality) electoral system we have in the US, which one, do you think, is more democratic, etc. This paper is due in paper form at the beginning of the class immediately after the simulation (**March 11**).

**For more details, see simulation handouts distributed in class and available on D2L.**

### **3. Formal in-class debates and debate papers**

There will be two formal in-class debates. Students will be divided into 4 groups (see debate handouts). Debates will take place on **April 20 and 22**. Debate paper (**5 pages in length**) is worth **15 percent** of your grade; in-class debate performance is worth another **10 percent**. **Debates are essentially individual assignments and will be graded individually.**

**Groups A and B** will debate the topic of whether or not China should still be called a communist country and whether Chinese transition is preferable to the Russian one. At the heart of this argument is the sequencing debate: should economic liberalization precede political democratization, or should both transitions happen simultaneously and can market economy function effectively without democracy?

**Group A** will represent a point that China is still a communist country, with restrictive political system, tight control by the communist party, and essentially has a governed, not free, market; hence we cannot call China's transformation complete. It might be orderly and economically sound, but it is less democratic than the Russian transition. And despite the recent setbacks, it was worth for Russia to pursue multiple transitions at once.

**Group B** will argue that China is not only liberalizing its economic system, but is gradually moving towards political liberalization as well; it is a much more successful post-Communist transition in which a rising middle class will eventually demand and support democracy, unlike the outcome of Russian transition, where following disastrous economic policies there are no longer popular support for democracy.

**Groups C and D** will debate the issue of democracy in the global South. If groups A and B debate transitions to democracy, groups C and D essentially reflect on the issues of democratic stability and consolidation. Is democracy sustainable in relatively poor, multi-ethnic countries with the history of political violence, corruption, and colonization? What makes democracy endure in non-Western context(s)?

**Group C** will argue that India and Mexico provide examples of consolidated democracy taking root outside of western context and that democracy is a better alternative for developing countries.

**Group D** will argue that the uneven economic development, secessionist movements, widespread violence, severe social stratification, the lack of the rule of law, persistent corruption, etc. puts severe stress on democracy in global southern countries, making their democratic prospects uncertain at best, as exemplified by India and, especially, Mexico.

For debate papers (**5 pages long**), you have to marshal evidence that support your particular position from the outside readings (see **Debate Readings Assignment handout and additional readings posted on D2L for the debates under Content/Debate Materials**). During your in-class debate participation, you will have to contribute to your group's position by articulating one empirical point in its support (**4-5 minute individual presentation/contribution**). See handouts on debate participation and debate papers. We will also discuss and prepare for debates in class.

**4. Reaction papers:** Each student will write 7 short reaction papers in response to the emailed articles discussing recent developments in the countries we will study this semester. I will be sending collections of country-related articles almost weekly once we move into our comparative exploration starting on week 3. Reaction papers should be about 2 pages long, double-spaced, font 10-12, with normal margins. They should contain:

1. Important and relevant points from the emailed articles.
2. Your interpretation of how these articles illustrate concepts discussed in the textbook and/or lectures. Or, based on the articles, you can try to compare a particular country to other countries we already talked about.
3. Your papers should be well-written, be grammatically correct and free of spelling and punctuation errors.

Reaction papers are due on **February 16, February 23, March 23, March 30, April 6, April 13, and April 27**. They should be submitted to **Comparative Politics D2L/dropbox** on due dates, before the class period. **Each reaction paper counts as 2% towards your final grade (14% total).**

**5. Attendance and participation:** The final **11 percent** of your grade will be based on attendance and civil participation in class discussions.

According to UW-Green Bay official policies, "students are expected to attend class. In the event of illness or death of a family member, the Dean of Students Office will assist with notification of instructors. The instructor **may drop** students who do not attend classes during the first week of the semester unless they notify the instructor in advance of the reason for nonattendance and indicate intentions to complete the class. **The instructor, prior to the drop deadline, may also drop students who attend classes the first week but not thereafter.**"

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the lecture periods. It will serve as a component in calculating your attendance grade. Students who attend every class can count on **10 percentage** points for attendance. I will allow each student 2 unexcused absences a semester. Students who miss additional class sessions will see a deduction in their attendance grade. For every unexcused absence thereafter, I will deduct two percentage points. In other words, if you miss 5 class sessions (in excess of 2 allowed absences) without a properly documented excuse, you will not have any attendance percentage points. **If you miss more than 8 class sessions without a legitimate excuse, you will receive an "F" in this class, irrespective of your actual performance.**

**One final point will be given for active participation in class, at my discretion!**

Below are some guidelines that generally produce meaningful and productive conversations and discussions as opposed to just using a class as one's political soapbox (these guidelines are also essential for any meaningful democratic deliberation):

- Stop blaming and start affirming.
- Do more listening and less telling.
- Engage, don't enrage.
- Feel deeply and be passionate, but don't vent.
- Explain, don't complain.
- Turn down the volume and turn up the sensitivity.
- Be curious, not furious.
- Inquire, don't require.
- Appreciate the process as much as the product.
- Let generosity trump animosity.

#### **IV. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

**Exam 1** (February 11) -- 10%

**Simulation Participation** (March 9 and 11) – 10%

**Simulation Paper and Post-Simulation Reflection Paper** (March 9 and 11) – 10%

**Debate Participation** (April 20 and 22) – 10%

**Debate Paper** (April 20 and 22) – 15%

**Reaction Papers** (7) (February 16, February 23, March 23, March 30, April 6, April 13, April 27) – 2% each, 14% total

**Attendance and Participation** – 11%

**Comprehensive Final** (May 13) -- 20%

**Grading Scale:**

The following percentage points and corresponding letter grades will be used in this course (determined at the end of the semester)

**92-100: A    89-91: AB    82-88: B    79-81: BC    72-78: C    69-71: CD**  
**60-68: D    Below 60: F**

**V. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES**

**Plagiarism:** Students are responsible for reading and understanding the University's policy on plagiarism. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and copying or undocumented use of materials from any source, including websites, constitute academic dishonesty, and may be grounds for a grade of "F" in the course and/or disciplinary action. See the Dean of Students' University Policies page on Academic Misconduct:

[http://www.uwgb.edu/deanofstudents/policies\\_procedures/students/pdfs/uws014.pdf](http://www.uwgb.edu/deanofstudents/policies_procedures/students/pdfs/uws014.pdf).

**Disability Accommodations:** As required by federal law and university policy, students with documented disabilities who need accommodation must contact the Disability Services Office at 465-2841. Reasonable accommodations can be made unless they alter the essential components of the class. Contact the instructor and Disability Services Coordinator in a timely manner to formulate alternative arrangements.

**Make-up Examinations:** Make-up examinations will not be given except for medical reasons documented by a physician prior to the date of the exam or quiz.

**Submission of Assignments:** Written assignments cannot be submitted by email (except in emergencies) and will not be accepted after the deadline specified on the syllabus.

**Classroom Etiquette Issues:** As a courtesy to your fellow students, **no laptop computers, ipods, and cell phones will be allowed in the classroom, unless approved by the instructor.** Research has shown that handwritten notes promote better material retention – so it will be in everybody best interest! Classroom technology is evolving and so is our sense of its proper and responsible usage. I will also ask you to limit food and beverage consumption in the classroom; please eat before the class, not during the lecture.

## **Schedule of Classes**

### **Week 1 (January 26 and 28)**

**Introduction, what is comparative politics, how we compare, major concepts and issues**

Almond et al., chs. 1-2

### **Week 2 (February 2 and 4)**

**Institutional Context I. Political Inputs: Political Culture, Public Opinion, and Political Parties**

Almond et al., chs. 3-5

**Debates and Simulation Instructions given**

### **Week 3 (February 9 and 11)**

**Institutional Context II. Political System and Political Outcomes (Public Policy)**

**\*\*\*\*Exam 1 (Theory and Methods) February 11\*\*\*\***

**First Democracies: UK**

Almond et al., chs. 6, 7, and 8

**Additional instructions for simulation**

### **Week 4 (February 16 and 18)**

**First Democracies: France**

Almond et al., ch. 9

**New Poll Numbers for simulation released (Feb. 16)**

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 1 due February 16\*\*\*\***

### **Week 5 (February 23 and 25)**

**Breakdown of Democracy and Democracy Imposed from Outside: Germany**

Almond et al., ch. 10

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper #2 due February 23\*\*\*\***

### **Week 6 (March 2 and 4)**

**Movie: Good Bye, Lenin (2 point extra credit discussions on D2L)**

**"Party Meetings" in class (March 4)**

**Day of Simulation Instructions given (March 4)**

### **Week 7 (March 9 and 11)**

**\*\*\*\*Simulation: Elections, Coalition Formation, and Debriefing\*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*\*Simulation paper due on March 9, before class\*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*\*Short Post-Simulation reflection paper due on March 11, before class\*\*\*\***

**International Organizations and Democratization: EU (March 11)**

**\*\*\*\*Spring Break – no classes (March 16 and 18)\*\*\*\***

### **Week 8 (March 23 and 25)**

**Unfinished Transitions: Russia**

Almond et al., ch. 12

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 3, due March 23\*\*\*\***



**Week 9 (March 30 and April 1)**

**Unfinished Transitions: China**

Almond et al., ch. 13

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 4, due March 30\*\*\*\***

**Week 10 (April 6 and 8)**

**Democracy outside the West: Mexico**

Almond et al., ch. 14

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 5, due April 6\*\*\*\***

**Week 11 (April 13 and 15)**

**Democracy outside the West: India**

Almond et al., ch. 17

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 6, due April 13\*\*\*\***

**Week 12 (April 20 and 22)**

**Formal Debates and Debate Papers due**

**Week 13 (April 27 and 29)**

**Democracy with Adjectives?: Iran**

Almond et al., ch. 16

- Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, "The Arab Aspirations for Democracy," in Larry Diamond and Marc E. Plattner, eds. *How People View Democracy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008 – available on D2L (Content/Readings)
- This article is not about Iran; rather it is about democracy in the Middle East/North Africa, asking questions Is democracy possible in Islamic societies and how might Islamic democracy look like?

**\*\*\*\*Reaction Paper # 7, due April 27\*\*\*\***

**Week 14 (May 4 and 6)**

**Lessons and exam review**

- Larry Diamond, "Introduction," in Larry Diamond and Marc E. Plattner, eds. *How People View Democracy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008
- Russell J. Dalton, Doh C. Shin, and Willy Jou, "How People Understand Democracy", in Larry Diamond and Marc E. Plattner, eds. *How People View Democracy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008 – both readings available on D2L (Content/Readings)

**Final Exam: Thursday, May 13, 10:30 AM-12:30 PM, in regular classroom**