

University of West Georgia
Fall 2018
Comparative Politics
POLS 3401-01
Meets: TR 12:30-1:45pm, Pafford 111

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Comparative Politics is the study of the political forces, institutions, and practices of countries in order to describe, explain, and predict political events.

This is an introductory course, but it is not a typical introductory course in that it does not include general descriptions of country-specific political systems. Instead, it aims to introduce students to the main concepts, methods, and contemporary issues in the sub-field of comparative politics. Then, it aims to show students how to compare by engaging them in a comparative research project.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify theories of comparative politics.
2. Explain the meaning of central concepts in comparative politics research.
3. Describe the comparative method and its relation to comparative research.
4. Develop a comparative research project that employs comparative theories and the comparative method.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Common Language for course syllabi:

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Required Readings: There are no required textbooks to purchase for this course. Instead, all required readings will be available via the CourseDen website and their respective discussion schedule reviewed each week in class.

Attendance: You cannot participate, contribute, and learn if you are not in class. Therefore, attendance is required for this course. **Students who miss more than 4 lectures will incur a penalty worth 10% of their Final Grade or the equivalent of a letter grade.** Please be aware that I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.

Participation: The weekly structure of class will include a mixture of lectures and in-class activities, so please be prepared and ready to participate in whatever activities are planned for each session.

Exams: There will be no exams in this class.

Reading Responses: You cannot learn about comparative politics and contribute to the class if you do not read the assigned literature. Therefore, you are required to complete five (5) reading responses during the first half of the semester. **Each reading response is worth 10 percent of the final grade.** The responses are due as scheduled, and no extensions will be granted.

Additional information about the reading responses will be discussed as the semester progresses. For now, it suffices to say that an important component of the course is to read carefully and critically in order to identify, summarize, and evaluate the main ideas and arguments in the assigned readings.

Research Paper Project: You are required to complete a research project for this course. **The research paper project is worth 50% of the Final Grade.**

To ease anxiety over completion of this requirement, it is divided into 5 steps: (1) Research Question Proposal, (2) Annotated Bibliography, (3) Literature Review, (4) First Draft, and (5) Final Draft.

That is, you will ask a relevant question on a topic of your choice; select relevant literature related to your topic and question (annotated bibliography); summarize, evaluate, and synthesize the scholarly literature related to your research question (literature review); select and arrange evidence appropriately (develop a research design that takes into account research question, theoretical framework or explanation, case selection, and if appropriate data analysis (first draft); peer-review your first draft and make necessary changes and then submit your final draft.

Grade Calculation – Grades will be calculated as follows:

No.	Requirements	Word Count	Due Date	% Grade
1	Reading Responses (5) Research Paper Project	350-500	See weekly schedule	50
3	Research Question Proposal	500	Tuesday, 09 October	10
4	Annotated Bibliography	1500	Tuesday, 23 October	10
5	Literature Review	2500	Tuesday, 13 November	10
6	First Draft	3500-5000	Tuesday, 04 December	10
7	Final Draft	5000	Thursday, 13 December	10

Please note that **NO curves** or adjustment of scores will be made. Extra credit will be awarded for attendance to special events such as lectures, films, etc. Additional information about the research paper project will be discussed as the semester progresses.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Civility is very important in the conduct of politics, and it is of paramount importance in fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom. Therefore, (1) since we will deal with controversial issues on a regular basis, and since it is vital to the success of this class to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility – **personal attacks will not be tolerated.** (2) Please arrive on time. (3) Please turn cell phones to airplane mode during class.

COMMUNICATING with your professor and each other:

All e-mail communication will proceed through official UWG accounts (i.e. CourseDen, official UWG Gmail). **I prefer that you contact me directly at: jperalta@westga.edu**

Discussion board: There is a discussion board called “Ask the Instructor a General Question.” Please ask general information or assignment questions there so that everyone may see the answers. If you need to contact me on a different matter, please contact me through the e-mail tab of

the course website. For this class to work effectively, and for you to remain informed of course developments and latest updates, please login to the course website approximately every 48 hours.

Response Time and Netiquette: We will adhere to the following protocols:

(1) If you ask me direct questions in CourseDen via e-mail or the discussion areas, I will generally reply within two working days or 24-48 hours (weekend and holidays are not working days).

(2) Communicating in an online environment takes special consideration and care, so please abide by basic Internet etiquette or netiquette when communicating online. For example, e-mails must be properly addressed and use appropriate language, tone, and grammar; avoid using acronyms (text message abbreviations); please do not shout (i.e. write using ALL CAPS or large fonts); and keep in mind that your posts are public and cannot be retracted or deleted.

DISCLAIMERS

No student can claim any rights based upon any omission, ambiguity, vagueness, or incompleteness contained in this syllabus. The instructor retains the right to amend this syllabus without prior notice.

Fair Use:

All "Website" content and "Course Materials" for this course are intended for the sole use of the enrolled members only; for the purposes associated with it; and may not be retained, altered, shared, or further disseminated without explicit authorization from the copyright holder.

Tuesday	Thursday
	8/16 What is Comparative Politics?
8/21 What are comparative theories?	8/23 What is the comparative method? Response 1 due by 8pm
8/2 Why do some countries become democratic, while others remain undemocratic?	8/30 In-class discussion
9/4 In-class discussion	9/6 Response 2 due by 8pm
9/10 Why do some countries become wealthy, while others remain poor?	9/13 In-class discussion
9/18 In-class discussion	9/20 Response 3 due by 8pm
9/25 Why do ethnic or nationalist conflicts emerge in some countries but not in others?	9/27 Response 4 due by 8pm In-class discussion
10/2 What are researchable questions? Response 5 due by 8pm	10/4 (No Class - fall break)
10/9 Research question proposal due in class (Monday, 10/8 last day to withdraw with W)	10/11 Research Day
10/16 How to find and report relevant literature (annotated bibliography)?	10/18 Research Day
10/23 Annotated Bibliography due in class	10/25 Research Day
10/30 How to write effective literature reviews?	11/1 Research Day
11/6 Research Day	11/8 Research Day
11/13 Literature Review due in class	11/15 What is a research design?
11/20 Thanksgiving – no classes	11/22 Thanksgiving – no classes
11/27 Research Day	11/29 Research Day
12/4 First Draft due in class	12/6 – Last day of class
12/11 (No classes – finals week)	12/13 Final Draft Due 11:00-1:00 pm via CourseDen