

POLS 3360 Comparative Government: Western

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Dr. Andrew J. Drummond
ajdrummond@ualr.edu

Course Prerequisites: POLS 1310 or junior standing

Course Overview

This course examines the many ways in which we can make meaningful comparisons across political systems and/or across time. Special emphasis will be placed on comparing the structures and functions of government, and on the theoretical and methodological approaches useful in undertaking cross-national comparisons. Students will learn the logic behind successful comparative inquiry and will be given opportunities to test their hand at it. The course will make ample use of both qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches as we compare across a five-country battery comprised by the United States, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. In addition to this battery, students will become familiar with some of the difficulties that face old and new democracies in this truly global era, with a primary focus on how social capital and political culture impact democratic performance and stability.

Learning Objectives

In keeping with the UALR Political Science department's mission "to provide students with both a substantive knowledge of politics and the skills necessary to make use of that knowledge effectively", this course will focus on developing and enhancing the following knowledge and skills goals:

1. The history, characteristics, and impact of political institutions and systems, including international, national, state, and local governments
2. The behavior of individual actors at both the mass and elite levels
3. The processes involved in creating government policy and the impact of those policies
4. Analysis/Research – the ability to pose and answer questions effectively
5. Argumentation/Persuasion – the ability to use logic and evidence to build a persuasive argument
6. Written and Verbal Communication – the ability to communicate ideas clearly on paper or through oral presentations
7. Working in Groups – the ability to effectively coordinate with others on a project

Required Readings

1. Almond, G. A. , G. B. Powell, K. Strøm and R. J. Dalton. *Comparative Politics Today* 9th Edition. (Noted hereafter as *CPT*)
2. Snyder, J. *From Voting to Violence*.
3. Putnam, Robert D. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*.
4. Online Readings (On Blackboard, marked here with *).

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

- 40% Midterm
- 10% Five Response Papers (1 page each) on selected readings marked with #.
- 10% Presentation
- 40% Final Paper

Course Expectations, Descriptions of Assignments, and Grading Policy

-- The primary components of this course include a midterm examination and a final paper. The midterm examination will test your knowledge of the course concepts and the case study materials we cover as we do our comparisons. I will give you more information about this test we move through the first two weeks. The final paper will be a 10 to 12 page write-up of two cases of your selection (one of which can be a case from our initial battery of 5 countries). Part of the idea behind the paper is to successfully compare using the logic of inquiry we will discuss at length in class. Your choice of cases is up to you – the options are nearly limitless within the initial constraints outlined here and others I will provide to you later in the course. There will be a prompt handed out closer to the midterm which provides additional information. There will also be library days worked into the class where students will have an opportunity to conduct the research necessary to complete the final paper (and the presentation).

-- The presentation will be on one half of your comparison in the final paper. If you have chosen to compare a country with one of the countries in our battery, your presentation must be on the country that is new to us. The presentation will be about 10 minutes in length and is worth 10% of your grade. You must hand in a bibliography with it that lists at least 5 sources of scholarly information on your case. This is partly to help jump-start your final paper and allow me structured time in class to give you good feedback for your comparison. Watching other students' presentation and the feedback they receive will also help you in your research. Students must attend all of these presentations and should be ready to ask their own questions of their classmates.

-- The response papers are short 1 page papers responding to selected readings for the week. They are due at the beginning of the week in question (and not after the fact). The selected readings that are eligible for these responses are marked with the # sign in the reading list. These are your responsibility to track and keep up with. You do not need to do all of them, just 5. If you would like to do more than 5, you may do up to 7 with the best 5 counting toward your grade. Each response is worth 2%.

Plagiarism/Cheating

Those found to have cheated in the class will receive an automatic failing grade for the assignment or test in question, which may result in a failing grade for the course.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos—please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://ualr.edu/disability/>.

Grade Breakdown

Letter Grades (% Range)	
A (90-100%)	Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the course concepts and communicates clearly their larger significance. Student has engaged fully with the readings and the result is a cogent and thoughtful response / paper.
B (80-90%)	Student has engaged with the readings and demonstrates an ability to apply them to his/her answers or writing, but demonstration of the larger significance of the response is lacking; less thoughtful.
C (70-80%)	Student demonstrates a working knowledge of the course material, but response does not provide evidence of critical engagement with the readings; not demonstrably thoughtful.
D (60-70%)	Student does not demonstrate an adequate mastery of the course material and readings.
F (Below 60%)	Student demonstrates little understanding of course concepts and readings.

Reading Schedule

***The order of readings in the syllabus is subject to change. Please check the course website regularly for announcements.

Week 0 8/20 *Introductions*

Week 1 8/25 *What is Comparative Politics?*

*A. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method" Arend Lijphart

B. Ch. 1 *CPT*

8/27 *Comparing Political Systems*

*A. “An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems” David Easton

B. Ch. 2 *CPT*

Week 2

9/1 *The Structures of Government*

A. Ch. 6 *CPT*

9/3 *Comparing Structures*

A. United States (pp. 718-21 *CPT*)

B. Germany (pp. 267-72 *CPT*)

C. Russia (pp. 366-74 *CPT*)

D. England (pp. 163-173 *CPT*)

E. Brazil (pp. 516-21 *CPT*)

Week 3

9/8 *#Government Performance in Comparison*

*A. “Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies” Christopher Anderson and Yuliya Tverdova

*B. “Presidentialism in Latin America” by Scott Mainwaring

9/10 *Institutional Change in Italy*

A. Chs. 1 and 2 *MDW*

Week 4

9/15 *Political Culture*

A. Ch. 3 *CPT*

9/17 *Comparing Culture*

A. United States (pp. 713-18, 722-25 *CPT*)

B. Germany (pp. 257-67, 272-278 *CPT*)

C. Russia (pp. 359-66, 374-78)

D. England (pp. 153-163, 173-79)

E. Brazil (pp. 507-16, 521-28)

Week 5

9/22 *#Analyzing Culture*

*A. “Political Institutions and Political Socialization” by Anders Westholm and Richard Niemi

*B. “A Culturalist Theory of Political Change” Harry Eckstein

9/24 #*Culture and Stability*

A. Chs. 3 - 5 MDW

Week 6

9/29 *Inputs: Interest Articulation*

A. Ch. 4 CPT

10/1 *Comparing Participation*

A. United States (pp. 725-33 CPT)

B. Germany (pp. 279-84 CPT)

C. Russia (pp. 378-86)

D. England (pp. 179-86)

E. Brazil (pp. 529-37)

Week 7

10/6 #*Social Capital and Collective Action*

A. Ch. 6 MDW

10/8 #*Trends in Political Participation*

*A. “Political Participation and the Life Cycle” Norman Nie, Sidney Verba, and Jae-on Kim

*B. “Protest Cycles and Political Process: American Peace Movements in the Nuclear Age” David S. Meyer

Week 8

10/13 *Midterm Examination*

10/15 *Interest Aggregation*

A. Ch. 5 CPT

Week 9

10/20 *Comparing Aggregation*

A. United States (pp. 733-41 CPT)

B. Germany (pp. 285-93 CPT)

C. Russia (pp. 386-93)

D. England (pp. 186-91)

E. Brazil (pp. 537-45)

10/22 #*Comparing Electoral and Party Systems*

*A. “The Psychological Impact of Electoral Rules: Measuring Duverger’s Elusive Factor” Andre Blais and R. K. Carty.

*B. “Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment in Advanced Industrial Democracies” by Russell Dalton.

- Week 10 10/27 *Outputs: Government Policies*
- A. Ch. 7 *CPT*
- 10/29 *Comparing Outputs*
- A. United States (pp. 741-51 *CPT*)
B. Germany (pp. 293-305 *CPT*)
C. Russia (pp. 393-402)
D. England (pp. 191-99)
E. Brazil (pp. 545-57)
- Week 11 11/3. *#Democracy as a Good*
- *A. “Liberal Democracy as a Global Phenomenon” Francis Fukuyama
- *B. “Is the Third Wave Over?” Larry Diamond
- 11/5 *#Library Day or Types of Nationalism*
- A. Snyder (chs. 1-3)
- Week 12 11/10 *#Library Day or Nationalism in France, England, and Serbia*
- A. Snyder (ch. 4)
- 11/12 *#Library Day or Democratization in the Post-Communist Countries*
- A. Snyder (ch.5)
- Week 13 11/17 *#Library Day or Nationalism in Developing Countries: Peace or Democracy?*
- A. Snyder (ch. 6-7)
- 11/19 *Library Day* (only if we have not yet had one in one of the above slots)
- Week 14 11/24 *Research Day*
- 11/26 *No Class Thanksgiving Break*
- Week 15 12/1 *Presentations*
- 12/3 *Presentations*

Final Paper due electronically over email by 5PM on 12/11