

Syllabus GVPT 280, Fall 2012
Comparative Politics and Governments

Classroom TYD 2109

Monday and Wednesday 1:00-2:15PM

Instructor: Isabella Alcañiz

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00AM-12:00PM and by appointment

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 PM

Course Description:

In this course we explore the central theoretical tools and the main themes in comparative politics. This course is designed to give students knowledge on indispensable concepts of comparative politics. We study how key political and government structures work, with a particular focus on the fundamental institutions of democratic regimes. Students in this course will alternate: one week the assigned reading will cover concepts and theory, the next, a case study where students apply the learned concepts to the political system of a country.

Course Objectives:

Survey major themes in Comparative Politics.

Master key concepts and theories used in the field.

Train to think “causally,” going beyond description (and normative prescriptions).

Acquire in-depth knowledge in a critical subfield of Comparative Politics: Democratization.

Acquire familiarity with different kinds of data and data analyses used in Comparative Politics.

Course Readings:

Course textbook: Comparative Politics Today: A World View

By G. Powell, Jr., K. Strom, and R. J. Dalton (**PDS**) Latest Edition, Longman Publishers. Available at the UMD Bookstore or online.

In addition to the textbooks, I am assigning other readings and class hand-outs that will be available to you on Blackboard in the folder of the week they are due (under Course Documents). It is your responsibility to check the weekly folders regularly for these additional readings.

Students attending this class MUST read the assigned materials before class. Student participation is crucial. What's more, as this is a class about politics, students are welcome (encouraged, even) to use the first 5-10 minutes of class to discuss current international and domestic political events (we have the US presidential election this semester, so it's a very exciting time to study politics).

Course Evaluation is based on the following:

Five short in-class quizzes (10 % of final grade)
One first in-class midterm exam (25% of final grade)
One take-home exam (25% of final grade)
One final in-class comprehensive exam (35% of final grade)
Class participation throughout the semester: 5%

Short In-Class Quizzes:

Students will take seven short in-class quizzes to test their knowledge on the assigned readings. I will drop the two lowest scores and the remaining 5 scores will make up 10% of your final grade. There will be no make-up quiz, except with written medical justification (that is, a doctor's note). Unexcused absences on a quiz date count as zero and thus will be one of the two (lowest) grades dropped.

In-Class Exams:

These exams will use a combination of short-answer questions, definitions of concepts (IDs), and multiple choice questions to test your knowledge and understanding of the assigned readings, class lectures, and class discussion. The final in-class exam is comprehensive, which means that the test will cover the whole semester. The midterm exam is on Wednesday October 14. Because our class meets at a non-standard time we do not have a date for our final examination, yet. As soon as we do, I will send an announcement. Still, the final exam (in TYD 2109) will fall within the week of December 13-19 so please make sure that if you are traveling during the winter break you schedule your travel after these dates.

Take-Home Exam:

For this assignment you will need to provide essay-type answers to a few research questions. I will grade your work on both content and presentation style (clarity of argument, how well edited your writing is, etc.). You will need to make sure you quote and cite properly all your sources and list all your bibliography in a separate page. The paper must follow proper citation rules. Please use the guidelines of the American Political Science Association when citing your bibliography. You can find them at: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html> You are expected to do outside research (beyond the textbook and please only use reputable sources such as political science journals or news sources like the NYT or the BBC- unfortunately, no Wikipedia allowed). I will post the questions (and guidelines) on Blackboard in the Week 12 Folder. I will make this available to students on Monday October 29, two weeks before the assignment is due. Students must bring a hardcopy of their take-home exam to class the day it is due (Monday November 12).

Make-up exams will only be allowed with written medical justification.

Special Note on Attendance:

Class participation is very important and can bring you up (or down) a grade. It goes without saying that you cannot get any credit for participation if you are not in the classroom. I will check attendance regularly at the beginning of class but please note that I will not count you present if you are late.

Academic Honesty Notice:

Regarding Academic Honesty, please read carefully the following statements from the UMD Teaching Policies and Guidelines: “The student-administered University Honor Code and Honor Pledge (shc.umd.edu/code.html) prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge, “I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination or assignment.” Compliance with the code is administered by the Student Honor Council, which strives to promote a community of trust on the College Park campus. Allegations of academic dishonesty should be reported directly to the Honor Council (4-8450) by any member of the campus community. For additional information, consult the Office of Student Conduct (studentconduct.umd.edu).”

This course has a policy of zero tolerance with any instance of academic dishonesty. All potential violations will be forwarded to the Student Honor Council.

Students with Disabilities:

Students who anticipate problems with fulfilling course requirements because of the way they see, hear, read, or get around campus should advise me within the first two weeks of class. Special arrangements will be made in cooperation with staff at the Disability Support Services (301-314-7651 or 301-314-7693 or LasInfo@umd.edu)

Week 1 August 29
Go over syllabus

Week 2 (No class on September 3, Labor Day) September 5

Comparing Politics

Comparative Politics Today by Powell, Dalton, & Strom (PDS)

PDS: Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

Also, go to Gapminder.org (the link is in your Blackboard folder), click on Gapminder World, look at the graphs, play with different combination of variables, and put together your own graph.

Week 3 September 10 and 12

Regime Transitions

O'Donnell, G. & Schmitter, P. 1989. Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Read pp. 6-36.

Week 4 September 17 and 19

Case Study on Russia (Transitioning State)

PDS: Chapter 12

Week 5 September 24 and 26

Electoral Rule and Multiparty Competition

PDS: Chapter 5 and only pp. 102-106 of Chapter 6 (From *Democracy and Authoritarianism* up

to *Limitations on Government Power*)

Week 6 October 1 and 3

Case Study on France (Majority-Coalition Party System)

PDS: Chapter 9

Week 7 October 8 and 10

MONDAY: MIDTERM EXAM REVIEW

WEDNESDAY: IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8 October 15 and 17

Movie: Paradise Now! (Palestine, 2005)

Week 9 October 22 and 24

Political Socialization and Civil Society

PDS: Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

Week 10 October 29 and 31

Case Study on Iran (Theocratic State)

PDS: Chapter 16

MONDAY: TAKE-HOME EXAM QUESTIONS POSTED ON BLACKBOARD (in folder week 12 when it's due)

Week 11 November 5 and 7

Welfare Policies

PDS: Chapter 7

&

Alesina, Alberto, E. Glaeser, and Bruce Sacerdote. 2001. "Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?" Abbreviated Version, pp. 141-151.

Week 12 November 12 and 14

Case Study on England (Welfare State)

PDS: Chapter 8

MONDAY: TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS

Week 13 November 19 (No class Wednesday 21st)

Democratization (I)

Huntington, S. 1991. The Third Wave. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Read pp. 3-46 up to *Declining Legitimacy and the Performance Dilemma*.

Week 14 November 26 and 28

Democratization (II)

Bogaards, Matthijs. 2012. "Where to draw the line? From degree to dichotomy in measures of democracy." Democratization 19 (4): 690-712

Week 15 December 3 and 5

Movie: The Lives of Others (Germany, 2006)

Week 16 December 10

Wrap up and Review for Final Exam