ISC131: Introduction to Comparative Politics
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

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Course Goals and Description
This course introduces students to important concepts, themes, and approaches in the comparative study of politics. The range of Comparative Politics is broad and the field is united by the comparative method. The goal of the course is to introduce the student to the main themes of Comparative Politics while at the same time introducing them to important methodological debates. Topics covered in this class include the state, the nation, regime type, electoral systems and political parties as well as questions of ethnic identity, conflict, civil war, nation-building, and revolution.

Learning Outcomes:
As a result of completing this course, you will:
1. Improve your presentation skills.
2. Develop skills of analytic argumentation and improve the clarity and effectiveness of your writing.
3. Understand the comparative method.
4. Learn how to read and interpret state of the art texts.
5. Learn about the main themes in Comparative Politics.
6. Understand the origins of states, nations, and regime types.

Class Policies
The following policies are important. Read them carefully.

Grading
There are four components to your grade:
• Class Participation: 20% - Students will have to read 1-2 texts per class. They are academic articles or chapters. They aim to introduce the issues and debates for each class and they are the beginning and not the end of the discussion. Active participation in the class is strongly encouraged. You are encouraged to bring with you news stories that are relevant to our class.
• In class midterm: 30% - The midterm will consist of two parts. The first part will be a short knowledge quiz (multiple choice and identification questions) that will count for 75% of your grade. The second part will count for 25% of your grade and will require you to write a Policy Note to a leader. You will be given two questions/topics and you will be expected to write on one of them. Please do not bring with you any notes or reading materials.
• 2 Short assignments: 20% of your grade – Students will have to write two short assignments on themes covered in class or on specific cases (a country, a group, a conflict, etc).
• **Final Paper: 30%** - There will be an in-class closed-book final that will follow the same structure as the midterm.

If you would like me to re-grade your midterm or the final paper, you must submit a *written* request, explaining why you believe you did not receive the proper grade. I reserve the right to raise or lower your grade. There will not be opportunities to do extra-credit work to improve your grade.

**Make-up exams**
Make-up exams are allowed only if you have consulted with me in advance.

**Late Work**
Late assignments will lose one third of a full grade (e.g., from an A to a A-, to B+ etc.) for each day after the deadline. There are only two exceptions to the late-assignment policy: illness or family emergency. If either of these circumstances applies, you must provide *written documentation* (such as a doctor's note if you are ill), and you must communicate with me *before the assignment is due* (i.e., emailing me on the morning the assignment is due and saying you are sick is not acceptable for avoiding a penalty). I am willing to accommodate documented requests, but you must communicate with me *before* the assignment is due.

**Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance will be formally recorded and participation incorporated into your final grade. Please come to class on time. Feel free to bring a cup of coffee/tea or water, but please don’t bring food. Cell phones must be turned off. Laptop volume must be set to “mute.” In case of medical and other emergencies, make sure you notify me in advance and submit relevant documents later.
Course Schedule:

**July 2. What is Comparative Politics?**


**July 3. Defining the State**


**July 4. Defining the Nation**


**July 8. Regime Type**

Alvarez, Mike and José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, and Adam Przeworski. 1996. “Classifying political regimes.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 31: 3-34.

**Freedom House**

**July 9. What kind of culture is associated with democracy? Does culture explain democracy?**


**July 10. What are the micro foundations of democracy? Why do democracies emerge?**


July 11. What makes democracy endure? Why do democracies break down?

July 15. Do all voting systems lead to the same results?


July 17. Review

July 18. MIDTERM EXAM

July 22. Case Selection: Does the world produce all relevant cases?

July 23. Why are there revolutions?

July 24. What leads to civil war?

July 25. Why do ethnic groups fight?

July 29. Explaining Patterns of Political Violence


July 30. Why are people willing to die for their nation?

http://keithdarden.wordpress.com/books/ [chapter 1]


July 31. How do domestic political institutions impact the way a government behaves in the international arena?


August 1. How do states choose their nation-building policies toward non-core groups?


August 5. Nationalism and Self Determination Movements


August 6. Review

August 7. FINAL EXAM