

Political Science 103

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2017

TU/TH 11-12:20pm
Davis 101
Office Hrs. –Wednesday 10-12 & 1-3:00 pm (or by arrangement)
eagles@buffalo.edu

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1013 Clemens
645-8440

The Course:

Comparative politics is one of the main sub-disciplines of Political Science. It is defined at least in part as a ‘method’ of political inquiry – comparing political phenomena is a basic way of coming to an understanding of many important questions concerning political life. More generally, though, ‘comparative politics’ refers to the study of the politics and government of some country other than your own. Our objective in this class will be to introduce you to the search for broad similarities and differences in the study of political systems, their institutions and processes. Our empirical focus will be on the politics and government of advanced industrial democracies such as the United Kingdom and other Anglo-American and European countries.

Among our specific **learning objectives** for this class will be:

- Introducing you to the idea of comparing in political science, how we do this, and why;
- Acquainting you with the necessary intellectual tools to make meaningful comparisons between and among countries;
- Challenging you to understand how and why countries differ across a wide variety of dimensions of their political life, including core governmental institutions, political parties and interest groups, bureaucracies, etc.
- Encouraging you to consider how and why America is different (exceptional) from other countries of the world.

The assessment of these objectives will take place through UBClicks questions, three examinations and a number of class discussion sessions.

Readings:

There is one required textbook for this course, but there will be several short supplementary readings made available to you on UB Learns.

Kenneth Newton and Jan W. Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, 2nd edition, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (paperback; ISBN 978-0-521-13679-2)

I have not requested that the University Bookstore acquire copies of this book. Please order a copy as soon as possible from Amazon.com or other provider, where used copies are available if you prefer to save some money.

Requirements:

Students are expected to be regular in their class attendance and to participate in class discussions. Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. Grades will be based on attendance and performance on three exams. Exams are closed book and will be scheduled during regular class meetings. They will be based on materials from the lectures and from your readings. The exam format will be multiple-choice questions exclusively. Exams are non-cumulative (i.e., the second exam will be based only on material covered after the first exam, and the third will be based on materials covered after the second).

I will be making use of “UBClicks” in this class This will enable me to monitor your progress from time to time by including multiple-choice questions in the lecture slides and also to keep a record of attendance (for the purposes of assigning the 10% participation grade). For this I ask that you create a Turning Account through UB Learns, obtain a license code (a four-year license code comes with a clicker that is available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore for approximately \$70), and register your device. If you have a smart phone or intend to bring a tablet or laptop to class, these devices can be used as well – you will only need to purchase a \$20 annual license and download the ResponseWare app to your phone or laptop/tablet, and register your device with TurningPoint.

Detailed step-by-step instructions guide you through this process are available at:
<https://www.buffalo.edu/ubit/service-guides/teaching-technology/learning-resources-for-students/ubclicks/getting-started-with-clickers.html>

Please complete these steps at your earliest convenience so that we can make full use of this interesting educational technology. Let me know promptly if you have any problems.

Examinations:

- a) First examination - Thursday, March 2nd - (30%)
- b) Second examination - Thursday, April 13th - (30%)
- c) Third examination – Thursday, May 11th - (30%)
- d) Attendance and participation in class discussions – 10%

Extra credit assignment: All students are eligible to volunteer for one ‘extra-credit’ assignment that could add up to 5% to their grade in the course. To take advantage of this, students must notify the instructor and at that time they will receive an assignment – usually involving a presentation in a class, or participation in a brief debate in a class session – and their grade (out of 5) will be added to their total from the other required class assignments. The precise nature of these opportunities will be discussed further in class.

Disability Policy: If you have any disability which requires reasonable accommodations to enable you to participate in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608, and also the instructor of this course during the first week of class. ODS will provide you with information and review appropriate arrangements for reasonable accommodations.

Academic Integrity: The instructor will strictly enforce the University’s policies with respect to academic integrity. A full discussion of these policies can be found at <http://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu/>. As a UB student, you are expected to be familiar with these policies and to fully adhere to them.

Final Grades: Final letter grades will be determined using the following conversion from percentage grades:

- A (86% and above); A- (80-85%); B+ (77-79%); B (74-76%); B- (70-73%); C+ (67-69%);
- C (64-66%); C- (60-63%); D+ (57-59%); D (54-56%); D- (50-53%); F < 50%

Readings/Topics:

1. **The Study of Comparative Politics**
Reading: Newton & Van Deth (hereafter N&VD) – Chapter 1 (pp.1-10)
2. **Basic Units of Analysis – States and Democracy**
Reading: N&VD – Part 1 – Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 13-67)
3. **Organizing Political Power –Constitutions and Political Institutions**
Reading: N&VD – Part 2 – Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 15 (pp. 69-168 and 315-336)

4. **Civil Society and Political Life**
Reading: N&VD – Part 3 - Chapters 14, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 (pp. 291-313 and 169-288)
5. **Public Policies**
Reading: N&VD – Part 4 – Chapters 16, 17, and 18 (pp. 337-399)
6. **What Have We Learned? – How & What to Compare?**
Reading: N&VD – Postscript (pp. 400-413)