

Syllabus: PSC 211 Comparative Politics



Legislative Building, Brasilia

Course description

211 (Formerly POS 150) Comparative Government and Politics

(Satisfies International and Foreign Culture requirement.) Major conceptual, methodological, and theoretical tools in comparative politics. Distinguishes between developed and developing systems, and examines contemporary issues of the developed systems and problems of underdevelopment. 3 credits.

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Office hours: Monday 12:45-2:00
Wednesday 1:00-1:45
Friday 12:45-2:00

Why you should take this class?

This class will teach you about politics around the world, focusing on subjects like democracy, the political roots of economic development, and how America's political system compares to that of other countries. If you are interested in political science as a concentration, this class will prepare you for more advanced subjects. If you just want to understand what is going on in the world, this class will provide you with useful theoretical frameworks, as well as factual background on some of the most important countries in the world.

What this class is about.

This class offers some basic analytical frameworks for analyzing and comparing culture, social structure, and institutions. We then use these frameworks to understand (1) the relationship between democracy and economic development and (2) the relative centralization of political authority across countries. We will use theoretical arguments and a wide range of case studies to address several questions: Why are some countries democratic and others not? How does democracy affect economic development and political conflict? Why do some countries centralize power while others threaten to fall apart through secession and civil war? We will use examples from a wide range of countries including Brazil, China, England, Japan, Nigeria,

and the United States. The lessons drawn from these countries will prepare you to analyze other countries of your own choosing in the two papers that are assigned. At the end of the course, you should be able to analyze political events around the world, drawing on the theoretical explanations provided in the class.

Readings

Readings total approximately 85 pages per week and should take you about three hours, depending on how fast you read. The only book required for this course is *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* 8th edition by Almond, Powell, Strom, and Dalton. It is published by Pearson Longman and available in the UNLV bookstore. It is highly recommended that you stay abreast of world events through reading a magazine such as *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, or through careful monitoring of newspapers and internet news sources.

Requirements

Class Participation

You are expected to participate actively and intelligently in class discussions. As a rule of thumb, you should plan to spend about an hour or two going over your notes from the readings and preparing for class each week after you have completed the readings. If you must miss a class, please notify the instructor in advance. More than 4 unexcused absences or unprepared sessions in classes meeting twice a week will jeopardize your class participation grade at a rate of 5 points per absence. In classes meeting once per week, more than 2 unexcused absences or unprepared will jeopardize your class participation grade at a rate of 10 points per absence.

Exams and papers

There will be three exams and two papers. The first is a background paper that describes the political (and economic and social, as they apply) institutions of your two country-cases. What systems of government do they have? How are leaders chosen? What do the party systems look like? Remember to say something about economic systems, gender roles, ethnic or religious groupings, and other phenomena that are politically important. Remember to choose the two countries based upon some logic of comparison, such as "most similar" or "most different" systems. The second paper asks that you look critically at a particular institution, such as the party system, or concept, such as nationalism, and evaluate what has been written on that topic. You should use sources from outside the course syllabus and textbook, and you should choose your concept or issue so that it will offer a useful tool with which to analyze your two country-cases. All papers will be professional in appearance, follow standard APA format (see the brochures available in Lied Library if you need more information) and contain a list of references.

Key dates

Section 01: (M-W) hourly exams will be given on September 21, November 2, and December 14.. The two papers are due October 5 and November 30.

Section 03: (F) Hourly exams will be given on September 23, November 4 and December 16. The two papers are due October 7 and December 1.

Calculating the final grade:

Content area	Points	Number of events	Possible points	
Tests	100	3	300	

Papers	100	2	200	The total points earned will be averaged and assigned letter grades based on the table below.
Participation	100	1	100	
Total			600	

93 +	A	74-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
84-86	B	64-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	- 59	F

WebCT

This course will use WebCT as the primary way of communicating with students outside of the classroom. Most lecture notes will be posted there a day or so in advance of the class. Links, notices, and supplemental information will also be found there.

Policies

Your right to learn. The classroom is a safe space for the discussion of issues pertaining to the course. Behaviors that interfere with the rights of others, including, but not limited to ringing cell phones, beepers, and distracting conversations are not allowed.

Cheating: There will be none. Any attempt at gaining outside assistance on exams, in any form, will result in failure of the entire course.

Late papers: Late papers will be accepted at the convenience of the instructor and are subject to a 10% grade reduction per day late.

Religious Holidays: Any student missing quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of a religious holiday shall be given an opportunity to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of session 1 of her or his intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering a test or examination at an alternative time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not reasonably have been avoided.

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Resource Center for coordination in your academic accommodations. The DRC is located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex in Room 137. The DRC phone number is 895-0866 (TDD: 895-0652).

General: The policies of the University of Nevada Las Vegas as stipulated in the Student Handbook, are included in this syllabus by reference. That document provides important information and procedural guidelines.