

POLS 2801 – COMPARATIVE POLITICS

FALL SEMESTER 2009

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Thomas E. Rotnem

OFFICE HOURS: TTH, 12:30-1:30, M 9:00-12:00

OFFICE PHONE: (678) 915-7523 (If no answer, please leave detailed message.)

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REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:

- 1) McCormick, John. 2010. *Comparative Politics in Transition*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Wadsworth Cengage: Boston, MA.
- 2) Moreover, at least 20-25 brief newspaper/journal articles will be handed out in class (most marked with an asterisk [\*] below); these should be read and their contents are testable.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Comparative politics involves the systematic study and comparison of the world's political systems. It seeks to explain differences, as well as similarities, among countries. Further, it looks for trends, for changes in patterns, and it tries to develop general propositions or hypotheses to describe or explain these trends.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS: Students will be able to:

- 1.) Demonstrate the value of comparative study in the evaluation of cross- national political phenomena, institutions, and behavior.
- 2.) Evaluate the major strengths and weaknesses of presidential and parliamentary systems, focusing in particular upon the American and British cases.
- 3.) Understand the important distinctions between the opposing regime types of liberal democracies and totalitarian states, while discussing how the Marxist-Leninist ideology informed the development of the latter regime type.
- 4.) Differentiate between the newly industrializing countries (NICs) and the less developed countries (LDCs), while demonstrating an awareness of the different theories that help explain the developmental progress (or lack thereof) in the economic and political realms of such states.

Additional course objectives:

- 1) Describe the analytical tools and concepts that political scientists utilize in comparative analysis.
- 2) Describe and explain the key characteristics of “liberal democracies.”
- 3) Explain the role of political culture in affecting a given nation’s political system.
- 4) Describe the key characteristics of the communist political systems of the former Soviet Union and present-day China, while evaluating the significant problems that attend post-communist transformation.
- 5) Analyze contemporary political issues in the different countries and political systems examined during the course, i.e., the American, British, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian political systems.
- 6) Demonstrate the ability to present information orally in an effective manner.
- 7) Conduct research that is methodologically sound, logical, analytical, and reveals critical thinking skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES & ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Lectures will be used together with class discussion. In addition, audio-visual materials will also be used to reinforce lectures and class discussions. Students **WILL BE EXPECTED to read the required text and other course handouts and be prepared to participate** in class discussion. (As this is a small class, much will be expected from students in terms of classroom participation.)

The questions for the exams will be drawn from readings and classroom lectures. [NOTE: While the readings and lectures are designed to complement each other, they do not cover identical material. Thus, in order to do well in this course, the student is **strongly** encouraged to both attend lectures and do all the readings. Please recognize that a **strong** relationship exists between attendance and class performance.]

EVALUATION:

Requirements:

1. Exams I, II, and III	60%
2. Individual Research Project	15%
3. Presentation of Research Project	5%
4. Attendance & participation	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

EXAMS will include a variety of types of questions including both objective and essay

(identifications & essay) questions. **Dates of tests will be set no less than one week in advance.**

INDIVIDUAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS require that students choose a particular issue of interest to examine. Comparative topics of interest are many and varied. The choice of topic is open, but should be germane to the course. Please choose a topic of interest to yourselves, making sure that you discuss with me the topic of your research project before conducting preliminary research.

Research projects will relate to our analyses of political systems in a chosen country or countries. The project might examine a political phenomenon across different time periods in a single country or compare similar or different political phenomena across two or more countries, using the “most-similar” or “most-different” methods of analysis. Projects are due at the beginning of class on November 24, 2009.

In addition, information concerning individual research projects will be shared with the class in the form of a class presentation (to be completed during the last weeks of class, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup>). Paper presentations that are cogently and concisely organized and delivered AND include ancillary materials (e.g., transparencies, outline hand-outs, graphs/charts, etc.) **WILL** be rewarded.

More information on presentation requirements and expectations will be provided to you during the semester.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: As stated previously, attendance is strongly encouraged and a strong relationship ordinarily exists between classroom attendance and performance. Students will be prepared to answer questions on the required readings, as well as participate actively in classroom discussions of them. Furthermore, *at least* once per semester, it is to be expected that every student will lead the presentation of a selected reading/topic.

NOTE: In cases where a student’s final grade is on the borderline, the instructor will use discretion to assign the higher grade based upon the student’s exceptional classroom participation and attendance.

#### GENERAL POLICIES:

**VISTA8:** Where possible, VISTA8 will be used by the instructor to: 1) deliver course-related information to students in a timely fashion; and 2) post lectures and other course-related reading material, assignments, or data. The instructor assumes that students are checking the site frequently for updates. The instructor also assumes that during the first week of class POLS 2801 students will make sure they are able to access this class through VISTA8 and have full functionality.

NOTE: In the event that a swine flu epidemic/pandemic interrupts normal university operations during the Fall 2009 semester, we will continue our class utilizing VISTA8. (Thus, it behooves students to take the VISTA8 tutorial, at their earliest convenience.)

**Make-up policy:** No make-up exams or incompletes will be given and no late assignments, papers, or presentations will be accepted, except in cases of **documented** medical, family or job emergency.

**Disruptive Behavior & Academic Dishonesty:** “A faculty member reserves the right to remove any student from his or her course if the student's behavior is of a disruptive nature or if there is evidence of academic dishonesty. In instances of disruptive behavior and/or academic dishonesty, the faculty member will discuss the circumstances with the student(s) before taking final action. In the event the student cannot be reached, he or she will be given the grade of "Incomplete" until such time as he or she can be reached. The student shall have the right of appeal of the faculty member's decision:

- first to the faculty member's Department Chair
- then to the appropriate school dean,
- and, if necessary, to the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Removal from a course under this provision will result in a grade of "F". A grade of "F" issued under these circumstances shall not be superseded by a voluntary withdrawal, and will be included in the student's cumulative grade point average calculated for graduation purposes” (Undergraduate Catalog, “Academic Regulations” section, p. 66).

**Disruptive behavior** will not be tolerated in this morning class. Students engaging in disruptive behavior, e.g., talking during class, receiving cell phone calls, *sleeping/snoozing*, entering class late, leaving class early, surfing the Internet at non-class-related websites, etc., **WILL** be penalized. Such behavior is not only distracting to the instructor, but also is annoying to your colleagues. Should you have a problem or a particular extenuating circumstance, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the counselor working with disabilities at (678) 915-7361 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

**Finally:** If you have a question, **please ASK!**

Grading Scale:

A= 100-90

B= 89-80

C= 79-70

D= 69-60

F= 59- 0

**IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:**

August 25 - Class begins

August 27 - Last day of drop/add period  
August 28 - Schedules canceled for non-payment  
September 25 - Petition to graduate deadline  
October 13 - Last day of regular withdrawal period  
November 25-27 - Thanksgiving Holiday  
December 10 - Last day of Class  
January 11, 2010 - First day of Spring 2010 classes

## **TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE AND READING REQUIREMENTS**

### **Weeks One/Two:**

*"Comparative Politics" – Introduction to Course:*

- syllabus
- research presentation topics
  
- Lectures:
- Comparative Politics: What Is It?
  - Introductory concepts, definitions, and theories
  - Why compare? Theory-building in Comparative Politics
  - Most-similar vs. most-different country analyses
- Liberal Democracies
- A Basic Comparator: The U.S. System

*READ:*

"Preface" and "Introduction," McCormick  
"Liberal Democracies," pp. 33-47, McCormick  
Chapter 1, McCormick  
\* Stuck in the Middle  
\* In Deep Crisis, Germany Starts to Revamp Vast Welfare State  
\* A Third Year of Decline

### **Weeks Three/Four:**

The Quintessential Parliamentary System: Great Britain

*READ:*

Chapter 2, McCormick

- \* Feel Like You're Being Watched?
- \* Scotland the Brave?

\* Israel's Impasse: How a Fractured Knesset Hinders Peace

## **EXAM I – Week Five**

### **Weeks Five/Six/Seven:**

Political Culture and its Impact Upon Democratic Development: Japan

*READ:*

Chapter 3, McCormick

\* War on the Samurai

\* A Fiscal Frailty

\* Shrine Visits Mar Talks Aimed at Smoothing Japan-China Ties

### **Weeks Seven/Eight:**

Communist Development and the Legacies of Communism: *Problems along the Way toward Post-Communist Transformation*

*READ:*

“Communist and Postcommunist Countries,” pp. 195-209, McCormick

### **Weeks Nine/Ten:**

The Russian Federation: *Ready for Take-off?*

*READ:*

Chapter 4, McCormick

\* Window on Eurasia: Russia's Return to Authoritarianism Reflects a Basic Cycle of Russian History

\* Illiberal Capitalism: Russia and China Chart Their Own Course

\* The Myth of the Authoritarian Model

\* Gas Pressure: Why Putin is Squandering World Prestige in his Squabble with Kiev

### **Weeks Ten/Eleven:**

China: The 9,000 Pound “Asian Tiger”

*READ:*

Chapter 5, McCormick

- \* Chinese to Soar Up the Super-Rich Ranks
- \* China's Virtual Cops Pinpoint Web Dissent
- \* Modern Rulers Embrace Silence They Inherited
- \* China Promotes Old-Fashioned Values
- \* Chinese Feel Force of Focus on Stability
- \* China: From Prison to Freedom
- \* When Will the Chinese People Be Free?
- \* The Great Leap Backward?
- \* Trouble at the Margin
- \* Social Divide Stirs Separatist Pressures

## **EXAM II: Week 12**

### **Weeks Twelve/Thirteen:**

Newly Industrializing Countries: *India on the Rise*

*READ:*

"New Democracies," pp. 305-321, McCormick  
How Development Leads to Democracy, Inglehart and Welzel

Chapter 7, McCormick

- \* Surging with Self-Confidence and Ambition
- \* The Rise of Sex Selection in India
- \* India's Democratic Challenge
- \* Fear of Influence

### **Weeks Thirteen/Fourteen:**

LDC's and the World of Islam: *Poverty as Pre-requisite for Radicalism?*

*READ:*

"Less Developed States," pp. 417-433, McCormick  
"Islamic Countries," pp. 483-498, McCormick

The Iranian Political System: *Opportunity for Reform?*

*READ:*

Chapter 9, McCormick  
\* Selected additional readings

**Weeks Fifteen/Sixteen:**

**Individual Research Project Presentations: Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>**

**EXAM III – December 10th**

**\*\* NOTE: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course.  
Deviations **MAY** become necessary. \*\***