

PLSC 113

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Instructor: Christine Sylvester LNG 77 csylves1@binghamton.edu Office Hours: Weds. 10-11AM & 1-2PM, or by appointment	Class: Tues. & Thurs. 4:25-5:50PM CW 102 Binghamton University Fall 2019
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Course Description

This course will examine the innerworkings of political systems around the globe by exploring how and why governments differ between countries. With the aim of developing the tools needed to critically evaluate arguments about the political world, this course begins by introducing the tools commonly employed by political scientists. We then progress to explore between country variation in regimes, dictatorships, democracies, systems for political representation, and political behavior.

This course is organized topically but will draw on a wide range of country examples to apply approaches for analysis. By the conclusion of this course students should: 1) be able to analyze and critique arguments about politics, 2) have an understanding of the different types of political systems and how those systems result in different outcomes, and 3) have gained deeper knowledge of some countries.

Course Requirements

This seminar is grounded in core reading materials. All students are expected to come to class each week having completed all the assigned readings. Final grades for the course will be tabulated from course assignments, presentations, and three examinations. The distribution of these components is as follows:

Media Journal Assignments & Presentations (16%): Throughout the course students will keep a media journal. Each entry entails keeping abreast of current affairs and world politics for at least one of the following countries by identifying and reading a news article on politics (broadly defined) and drafting a short summary and commentary on it. The countries students may choose from include: the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Brazil, Colombia, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Nigeria, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Each selected article should come from a reputable news source (see below) and be recent, within the last month. Each journal entry should run at least a couple of paragraphs and should include: a very brief description of what the story is about before diving in to offer some analysis or commentary on its significance. I will look favorable on entries which relate to concepts we have covered in class, the degree to which it reflects change or continuity, or its overall significance. As long as you meet the assignment requirements for journal entries you will get B. Higher levels of engagement and analysis will increase your grade. Students will complete a total of six journal entries, with two submitted each month (September, October, and November). It is at the student's discretion which weeks within each month they wish to submit their entries, but only two per month will be graded. Entries should be submitted on MyCourses electronically through Turnitin (a plagiarism detection program) no later than Friday at 11:59PM to count for credit for the previous week. Entries submitted through any other format will not receive credit. The courses MyCourses page will include an upload link for every week of term,

but it is the student's responsibility to upload their assignment to the correct week. Entries should be double-spaced, use 12-point Times New Roman font, normal (one-inch) margins, and employ a proper method of citation (both in-text and bibliography). Failure to abide by these formatting requirements will result in a grade deduction (for example, an assignment receiving an A will be reduced to an A- etc.). Failure to employ a proper method of citation may be construed as plagiarism and result in disciplinary action. The lowest entry grade will be dropped.

Three times during the term students will present a brief elevator talk for one of the articles they previously chose to write about. These presentations will take place in class on Oct 3, Oct 31, and Nov 26 and cannot be made up, please plan accordingly. The elevator talks are designed to prepare each student to represent a policy issue or event. Being able to articulate a point and persuade your audience orally is just as important as being able to do so with your writing. Imagine you are a staffer for a member of congress and one morning on your way into work you find yourself alone in an elevator with the Congressperson. You have 120 seconds to tell them (i.e. myself and your classmates) about the policy issue or event and why it is the most important issue they will address that day. No notes, computers, smartphones, or any other aid besides your memory. You will be graded on the quality of your presentation as well as the substance and persuasiveness of your argument.

Reliable In-depth News Sources:

- The New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/>)
- The Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>)
- The Economist (<https://www.economist.com/>)
- The Wall Street Journal (<https://www.wsj.com/>)
- Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>)
- Time (www.time.com)
- Spiegel International Online (<https://www.spiegel.de/international/>)
- Al Jazeera (<https://www.aljazeera.com>)

Exams: There will be three exams which consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Each exam will be worth 28% of the final course grade. The first two exam dates are listed in the course schedule. The final exam will be held during the scheduled final exam time for this course. Students are responsible for making sure they are present on exam days. Make-up exams will be given only in the case of an emergency situation, such as injury or severe illness, for which the student can provide documentation. It is up to the instructor to decide what constitutes an emergency situation.

Grading Scale: Your semester grade will be computed on a 100-point scale as follows: 95-100 = A; 91-94 = A-; 88-90 = B+; 84-87 = B; 81-83 = B-; 78-80 = C+; 74-77 = C; 71-73 = C-; 65-70 = D; 0-64 = F.

Textbook: Each student will need a copy of Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2018. *Principles of Comparative Politics*, 3rd ed. Washington, DC. Sage/CQ Press. (Available for purchase at the campus bookstore or from online retailers like Amazon.)

General Education Information

N Requirement (Social Science) This course fulfills a N requirement. Students will learn major concepts, models and issues of political science. They will gain an understanding of the methods used by social scientists to explore social phenomena including, when appropriate to the discipline, observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.

G Requirement (Global Interdependencies) This course fulfills a G requirement. This course will study how multiple distinct world regions have influenced and interacted with one another and how such interactions have been informed by their respective cultures or civilizations.

General Course Policies and Additional Resources

Announcements. Course announcements will be posted to the classes MyCourses page. Each student should ensure they have access to MyCourses and check it regularly for updates.

Attendance and comportment. Arriving after lecture has commenced is disruptive to both the instructor and other students, especially in such a small class space, please be mindful of this. Further, this class is an encouraging and supportive environment and as such students should refrain from disruptive behavior such as side conversations, whispering, or offensive remarks. I reserve the right to ask students to leave if they are disruptive.

Rules governing late submission of assignments. It is your responsibility to ensure that I receive your assignments on time. Late assignment grades will be reduced for each 24-hours the assignment is late. The date of presentations is outlined in this syllabus and owing to time limitations cannot be rescheduled.

Grade appeals must be submitted in writing. If you have a concern regarding your grade on an assignment you may write a one-page letter explaining your specific concerns and request your assignment be regraded. This letter should be submitted to me in hard-copy along with the original graded assignment within one week of the assignment having been returned to the class or instructor assignment comments being posted online. Once I have reviewed and considered your request I will respond in writing. The revised grade may be higher, lower, or the same as your original grade. Under no circumstances will I discuss appeals to your grade with you in person.

Electronic policy. Cell phone use in class is disruptive and discourteous to others, as such, cell phones should be silenced and stored so they are not visible. Students using their cell phones during class will be asked to leave and will be marked as absent for that day. Laptops will be used to aid collaborative work and may only be used when you have been instructed. Students using laptops or tablets outside of these designated times or for purposes other than the task at hand will be asked to leave and marked as absent for that day. No other electronic devices may be used in the classroom and class sessions may not be recorded.

Disability-Related Equal Access Accommodations. Students wishing to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify me by the second week of class. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are required and I encourage you to contact SSD in UU-119 to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. Their website (www.binghamton.edu/ssd) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines.

Academic Integrity. Binghamton University provides explicit guidelines in the Student Academic Honesty Code (<http://www2.binghamton.edu/watson/about/academic-honesty.html>). I expect the work you submit for grading to be yours and yours alone. Not acknowledging another's work with proper references, taking credit for someone else's work, letting your work appear in another student's paper, or fabricating "results" are grounds for failing the assignment and/or the course in addition to any penalty imposed by the university. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please ask me. You may also find the library's tutorials on academic honesty useful to review (Tutorials on academic honesty can be found at <http://library.binghamton.edu/research/tutorials/WebTutorials/web/index.html>).

Resources for Students in Distress. If you are experiencing undue personal or academic stress at any time during the semester or need to talk with someone about a personal problem or situation, I

encourage you to seek support. I am available to talk with you about stresses related to your work in my class. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis may require additional professional support. Binghamton University provides a variety of support resources:

Dean of Students Office: 607-777-2804
Decker Student Health Services Center: 607-777-2221
University Police: On campus emergency, 911
University Counseling Center: 607-777-2772
Interpersonal Violence Prevention: 607-777-3062
Harpur Advising: 607-777-6305
Office of International Student & Scholar Services: 607-777-2510

University Tutoring Services. UTS offers free tutoring for undergraduate students at Binghamton University. All UTS tutoring appointments must be scheduled online through TutorTrac at tutortrac.binghamton.edu. Students log in using their PODS username and password. Walk-in tutoring is also available for select courses. If you have any questions about UTS, call 607-777-9235, email uts@binghamton.edu, or visit the website: <http://www.binghamton.edu/tutoring>.

Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics, readings, assignments, and exams that will be covered in this course. I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule, including exam dates, and it is the student's responsibility to be aware of these changes. Date changes will be announced well in advance during class. **All readings are required.**

22 August – Introduction

27 August – The Science of Politics: Clark, Golder, and Golder (henceforth 'CGG') ch. 2-3

29 August – Commitment, information, and Strategy: no assigned reading

3 September – The Modern State I: CGG ch.4

5 September – The Modern State II: no assigned reading

10 September – Democracy or Dictatorship: CGG ch. 5

12 September – Determinants of Democracy I: CGG ch. 6

17 September – Determinants of Democracy II: CGG ch. 7

19 September – Determinants of Democracy III: CGG ch. 8

24 September – Review

26 September – Midterm Exam #1

1 October – NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanah)

3 October – Media Journal Elevator Talks

8 October – Dictatorships: CGG Ch. 10

10 October – Group Decision-Making I: CGG ch. 11

15 October – Group Decision-Making II: no assigned reading

17 October – Group Decision-Making III: no assigned reading

22 October – Elections and Electoral Systems I: CGG ch. 13

24 October – Elections and Electoral Systems II: no assigned reading

29 October – Elections and Electoral Systems III: no assigned reading

31 October – Media Journal Elevator Talks

5 November – Review

7 November – Midterm Exam #2

12 November – Party Systems I: CGG ch. 14

14 November – Party Systems II: no assigned reading

19 November – Regime Types: CGG ch. 12

21 November – Political Institutions: CGG ch. 15

26 November – Media Journal Elevator Talks

28 November – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

3 December – Political Institutions: no assigned reading

5 December – Review

Date TBD – Final Exam