

Section 1

Bellevue College

Bellevue, WA 98007-6484

Political Science and International Studies Program

Introduction to Comparative Politics

(POLS 204, Item 5377 OAS)

Summer 2012 (June 25-August 9)

Credit: 5 -- No pre-requisite, but POLS& 101 would be advantageous.

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Course Overview and Objective

This comprehensive introductory course looks at how political authority operates and is organized in different political systems, the structures through which decision-making takes place, the channels of citizen participation, and the attitudes and practices that determine policy outcomes. A primary objective is to provide students with the basic tools to compare the variations amongst societies based on individual priorities and values and to see how these lead to outcomes that are sometimes similar but other times different. Our focus takes us well beyond the highly-industrialized and transitional societies to the developing areas where most of the world's people live. Thus, we give equal attention to the global south, distinguishing among societies whose economic and social progress show them making great strides, those that are making little or no progress, and those that are best examined through Islamic cultural lenses. The common theme throughout this course is change—its causes, effects and impact on the structure and decisions of governments.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of various political systems, institutions and processes
2. Evaluate the ways in which different countries have shaped their political institutions and public policies and the costs and benefits of these choices
3. Demonstrate understanding of the nature of the democratic transitions underway in the formerly communist societies
4. Determine the opportunities and challenges of globalization in different political systems
5. Demonstrate understanding of the major perspectives and theories that inform comparative politics
6. Apply the comparative method to generalize about political systems

Required Text (Available at the BC Bookstore):

McCormick, John. 2012. *Comparative Politics in Transition*. Seventh Edition. Wadsworth Cengage (ISBN 1111832579).

Recommended: Bok, Derek. *The State of the Nation: Government and the Quest for a Better Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1996 (ISBN 0-67429211-1)

Essential Online Resources

http://www.wadsworth.com/politicalscience_d/special_features/ext/cprc/

www.politicalresources.net; www.electionworld.org

www.ipu.org; <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs>

www.un.org; www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

www.amnesty.org; [UNESCO](http://www.unesco.org); [CIA World Factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook)

You are encouraged to read daily one of these newspapers: *The Monitor*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *Le Monde*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Financial Times* (London), *The Guardian Weekly*, *The Independent* (London). You can get a student subscription, access some on-line, or read them at the BC Library. Also, follow the news on NPR (<http://www.npr.org/>), PRI--The World (<http://www.pri.org/the-world.html>), BBC (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>), Aljazeera English (<http://www.aljazeera.com/>), and France24 (<http://www.livestation.com/en/france24/en>). Critical resources can be found at Websites include Global Perspectives (<http://www.livestation.com/en/france24/en>), Global Perspectives (<http://www.cotf.edu/earthinfo/main.html>), Global Policy Forum (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/index.php>), and Yale Global Online (<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/>).

GRADING

The following weighted distribution will assess how well students have achieved the course objectives:

Online Assessments ¹	25%
Comparative Country Study	25%
Final Exam (Multiple Choice) ²	25%
Weekly Discussions	25%

Grading: Allocations and corresponding grade points for this course are as follows:

90-100	A	(4.0)
87-89	A-	(3.7)
84-86	B+	(3.3)
80-83	B	(3.0)
76-79	B-	(2.7)
72-75	C+	(2.3)
68-71	C	(2.0)
64-67	C-	(1.7)
60-63	D+	(1.3)
50-59	D	(1.0)
< 50	F	(0.0)

¹ Online assessments will be drawn from the Wadsworth-Cengage Learning website that accompanies our text [here](#). They include weekly Tutorial Quizzes, Internet Exercises and Study Questions. Consult Assessments and Calendar.

² Exam will be available for a twelve-hour period, August 9.

COURSE POLICIES (*Please read carefully!*)

This course will normally involve short lectures, discussions, and web-based assignments that are designed to meet the course objectives and enrich the learning experience.

How to succeed in this course

Read the required text chapters and notes carefully and in a timely manner, submit all assignments by the due dates, and contribute to all the discussion topics.

Academic Expectations

All provisions of the BC regulations concerning cheating and plagiarism--including the attached Social Science Division Policy & Procedures statement-- will be strictly enforced. This is a serious matter, and violations will carry heavy penalties! The basic rule for all written assignment is that if you borrow an idea from the text or any other source, including the web, then you *must* acknowledge it by citing it, *even if it is not a direct quotation*. This is normally done by way of footnotes or endnotes and a Works Cited. Citations should follow either the *Modern Language Association* (MLA) or *American Psychological Association* (APA) style. *Recommended style resource:* Purdue OWL (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/639/2/>).

Special Needs

If you require accommodation based on a documented disability or have emergency medical information to share, or if you need special arrangements, please contact me as soon as possible. If you would like to find out about support services available to you at BC, please contact Disability Resource Center at 425.564-2498.

Campus Support Services

If you are on campus, you should take a guided tour of the Library Media Center's books, journals, abstracts, audio and videotapes collections and find out about on-line resources that could be very useful for research. There is also a Student Technology and Support Center (425.564-5555) and Academic Success Center (425.564.2200).

Key Dates:

July 3: Last Day to withdraw without a "W" posted to transcript: in person by 6:00 p.m. or online by midnight.

July 4—Holiday, No class;

August 9: Quarter ends:

Section 2:
Calendar

Note: This is not a formal contract. Course content and schedule may change, depending on the progress and needs of the class and on unforeseen circumstances. In addition to the required text, the discussions draw on other scholarly material in the subfield.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (06/25-28) Understanding Comparative Politics; The Story of States

McCormick, Chs. 1, 2

Further Reading

Bok, Derek. *The State of the Nation: Government and the Quest for a Better Society* (All)

Kingdon, John W., *America the Unusual*. New York: Worth, 1999 (All)

Brown, Bernard E. "How and Why Compare? In Brown, ed. *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings*, pp. 19-32. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2006.

Putnam, Robert D. "The public Role of Politics," pp. 40-45. *Ibid.*

Eckstein, Harry, "A culturalist theory of political change." *American Political Science Review*, 82, (1988), pp. 789-804.

Inglehart, Ronald & Marita Carballo, "Does Latin America Exist? (And is there a Confucian Culture?): A Global Analysis of Cross-Cultural Differences," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30, March 1997, pp. 34-46.

Collier, David, "The Comparative Method," in Ada W. Finifter, Ed., *The State of the Discipline II*. Washington, American Political Science Association, 1993

Almond Gabriel A, "Capitalism and Democracy," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24, No. 3, Sep. 1991, pp. 467-474.

Discussion: Is the state on its way out?

Part II

Wednesday July 4—No Class

Weeks 2-3 (7/02-05; 09-12): POLITICS IN THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

McCormick, Part I, pp. 57-69; *Ch. 3*: United States; *Ch. 4*: Britain

The World in 2008, *The Economist*, November 15, 2007 (Library Reference collection)

Film: Order! Order! Library A-V Collection (required)

Discussion: Is the United States exceptional? What, if any, are the advantages and disadvantages of a monarchy?

Weeks 4-5 (7/16-19, 23-26): COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST STATES

McCormick, Part II: pp. 193-205; *Ch. 6*: Russia; *Ch. 7*: China

Discussion: Is the authoritarian political culture of the communist era still a factor in Russia politics? Is China still communist?

Part III

Weeks 6 (7/30-8/02): NEW DEMOCRACIES

McCormick, Part III: pp. 289-301; Ch. 8: Mexico; Ch. 9: India

Discussion: What would it take for Mexico to become a liberal democracy? Will India become a 21st century "superpower?"

Part IV and Part V

Weeks 7 (8/06-09) i) LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

ii) ISLAMIC STATES

McCormick, pp. 385-99; Ch. 10: Nigeria

Discussion: Should Nigeria simply accommodate itself to its sharp ethnic divisions and build on it, rather than try to subvert it in the interest of a strong center?

McCormick, pp. 443-55; Ch. 11: Iran

Discussion: What are the prospects of a political opening in Iran, and what must happen to make it possible?

CONCLUSIONS