
POLS 204: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

**Bellevue College
Spring 2019**

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*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.”*

~Marcel Proust

*“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all of our exploring
will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”*

~ T.S. Eliot

*“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Power concedes nothing
without a demand. It never did and it never will.”*

~Frederick Douglass

*“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself,
what am I”*

~Rabbi Hillel

*“The Irish are the blacks of Europe.
So say it loud—I’m black and I’m proud.”*

~The Commitments

*The Irish, who, at home, readily sympathize with the oppressed everywhere,
are instantly taught when they step upon our soil to hate and despise the
Negro....Sir, the Irish-American will one day find out his mistake.”*

~Frederick Douglass

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the subfield of Political Science known as Comparative Politics. Students in this course will be introduced to both the comparative and case study methods. Specifically, through international comparison students will be challenged to understand and critically evaluate how different societies organize their political, economic and social lives. Because this course includes an twelve-day study

abroad trip to Ireland, the two primary country cases this quarter will be Ireland and the United States, with a particular focus on civil rights and sustainability.

The program in Ireland will cover a timeline from the neolithic period to the present day. This historical and cultural context will be introduced as a lens through which students will consider identity, culture, conflict, resolution, and sustainability. The aim is to provide the opportunity for interdisciplinary and comparative thinking about the cultural and anthropological development of the Irish, through the earliest tribal settlements, through colonization, the experience of political, cultural and economic revolution, mass migration, and the emergence of a modern Irish Republic 100 years after independence. The main country of comparison will be the United States, although other nations and states may be discussed as well.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this class, students should be able to:

1. Apply the comparative and case study methods to the study the politics.
2. Compare and contrast different countries politically, economically, and socially.
3. Apply concepts and theories from the field of Comparative Politics to the real world.
4. Compare and contrast diverse viewpoints and articulate well-reasoned arguments regarding contemporary political issues.
5. Distinguish Comparative Politics from International Relations.
6. Demonstrate a greater appreciation, understanding and respect for other countries and cultures.
7. Articulate major aspects of the “Irish Experience” and draw comparisons to other countries and peoples.

COURSE POLICIES

This is a college-level course, which means *you are responsible for your own learning*. I will do my best to facilitate our interactions on-line in a fun and interesting way, and to assess your learning fairly. I expect you to do your best to complete assignments in a timely and appropriate fashion and to actively participate in discussions, assignments and activities. *If you do not understand something please take the initiative to find out the answer*—raise your hand come to my office hours,, email me, etc. I cannot read minds so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

This course involves the discussion of controversial political issues. Remember that reasonable people often disagree. Your challenge and responsibility are to maintain civil discourse. We will achieve this by being respectful of each other and avoiding inflammatory, derogatory and insulting words, phrases and labels. Please use your common sense to avoid any other conduct that might distract or offend those in our learning community. Thank you!

A NOTE ABOUT IDEOLOGY

I have no intention of trying to convert you to my belief system. The issues we will be exploring are often contentious and sometimes there will be no right or wrong answers. That said, there are good and bad arguments. Good arguments are welcome in class (i.e. those that are logically sound and supported by the available evidence); bad arguments will be discouraged.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED EXAMS

Because I believe that one of the major lessons that students learn in college is the importance of meeting deadlines, all missed exams will receive a grade of 0.0. Also, you will be penalized for turning assignments in late unless they have been approved by me BEFORE the date they are due or you can document an emergency. Specifically, assignments turned in within 1 day of the due date will be docked 10%, assignments turned in between 1 and 7 days after the due date will be docked 25%, and assignments turned in between 7 days and the end of the 10th week of the quarter will be docked 50%. Late assignments will not be accepted after the 10th week of the quarter and make-up exams will not be administered unless you receive prior permission from me or you can document a catastrophe (such as being medically unable to take the exam).

DISABILITY RESOURCES

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or a learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC staff as soon as possible. The DRC office is located in B132 and the reception desk phone number is 425-564-2498. For application information and other helpful links the DRC website is <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc>. Deaf students can reach the DRC by videophone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Finally, if you have either an apparent or non-apparent disability and require assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc., please let me know early in the quarter so that we can develop an appropriate safety plan for you. Thank you.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating and plagiarism (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College (http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050P_Student_Code_%28Procedures%29.asp). Such behavior will result in a grade of 0.0 for the assignment/exam in question. Please note that these are serious offences, which can result in possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College and go on your permanent record. If you have questions about academic integrity, please familiarize yourself with BC's Student Code of Conduct and/or send me a message via email.

COURSE MATERIALS

The reading and viewing materials for this course will be made available on our course website. These materials will be made available in the order in which they are assigned. You are responsible for downloading (and reading and/or watching) all course content as it is assigned—most of the content will be free, but I will likely ask you to rent some

movies for the course. For those of you who do not have a printer at home you can print in the student computer lab in the N-Building or if you prefer you can just read the materials on-line. Please note that any material covered by an assigned reading/video may be included on the final exam, regardless of whether it is specifically discussed in person. As adjustments are made to the reading/viewing schedule, you will be informed via the announcement board on our class website. You will get a lot more out of your trip to Ireland if you do the reading/viewing as it is assigned so please try to keep up. If you have any questions or concerns about the reading/viewing, please let me know so that we can address potential issues before they become problems.

KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS

Please keep up with current events related to politics in Ireland and the United States, especially as it relates to civil rights. I would like you to find several news sources that work for you (representing different mediums and viewpoints) and make a habit of engaging with them at least a little every day. For example, you might scan the headlines of a major Irish newspaper like the [Irish Times](#) or the [Irish Independent](#) and then read one or two articles that pique your interest. Then, for the sake of comparison, you might do the same with a major American newspaper like the [New York Times](#) or the [Washington Post](#). Similarly, you might visit the site for [Raidió Teilifís Éireann \(RTÉ\)](#), Ireland's national television and [radio](#) broadcaster, and compare the news coverage on it to the news coverage on [PBS News Hour](#), [NPR News](#), [CNN News](#), [MSNBC News](#) or [FOX News](#). If you have questions about the appropriateness of a particular news source for this class, please ask me (or Steve Scher) sooner rather than later. The purpose of asking you to develop this habit of following political news in this class is to expand your knowledge about what is going on in Ireland (and to a lesser extent in the United States) as it relates to politics and especially civil rights and to hopefully expand your perspective through comparison.

GRADED WORK (Percentages Are Rounded)

Attendance/Participation/Engagement in the U.S.	(100 pts)	10%
Final Reflection	(100 pts)	10%
Comprehensive Final Exam	(100 pts)	10%
Daily Journal in Ireland	(100 pts)	10%
Structured Reflections	(200 pts)	20%
Participation/Engagement in Ireland	(400 pts)	40%
	(1000 pts)	100%

GRADEPOINT CONVERSION CHART

Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	60-66%

B-	80-82%	F	59% & Below
C+	77-79%		

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION/ENGAGEMENT IN U.S. (100 PTS ~ 10%)

Before and after our pilgrimage to Ireland, we will meet approximately eight or nine times. It is expected that you attend the vast majority of these meetings (and that you make up what you miss if you are unable to attend). At the end of the quarter, you will be graded on your level of participation and engagement at these meetings. Please note that my definition of participation and engagement includes being punctual, involved, and respectful of others.

FINAL REFLECTION (100 PTS) (10%)

For your final project in this class, you will write a final reflection on what you learned in the course about: (a) yourself, (b) Ireland, (c) the United States, (d) civil rights, and (e) the comparative and case study methods. This reflection should draw on lectures, the assigned course content, your daily journal and your structured reflections. More details will be provided in class upon our return from Ireland.

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM (100 PTS) (10%)

Throughout the quarter—before, during, and after we visit Ireland—I will keep an updated list of key terms related to Comparative Politics, Irish history and politics, and to a lesser extent U.S. history and politics. This list will be available on Canvas and it will serve as an evolving study guide for the final exam. Your final exam will consist of a mix of question types, including: true-false, multiple-choice, identifications, short answer, and essay questions. A final curated study guide will be made available to you a week before the final exam, but I would encourage you to monitor the evolving list of key terms throughout the quarter.

DAILY JOURNAL IN IRELAND (100 PTS ~ 10%)

While in Ireland you will be expected to keep a daily journal. Field notes are a form of ethnographic/qualitative research that is conducted in many fields including Comparative Politics, Anthropology, and Sociology. Keeping a journal/writing field notes will help you maximize your study abroad experience by providing time and space for you to describe and reflect on what you are experiencing and learning in real time and by providing you a documentary record of your observations, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It is expected that you will hand write daily in a physical journal or notebook. You are encouraged to take notes during lectures, but the primary purpose of this journal is for you to write observations, impressions and reflections throughout the day, on a daily basis. I cannot emphasize enough how valuable journaling is when you study abroad, which is why this assignment is so important. Out of respect for your privacy I will not read your journal unless you ask me, but I will *regularly* check to make sure that you are keeping one. It is not enough for you to try to recreate your impressions and reflections after the fact. The primary purpose of this assignment is to teach you about ethnographic/qualitative research by incentivizing you to be intentional about your

observations, to reflect more often and more deeply on your experiences, and to keep a real time running log that you can refer back to later on.

STRUCTURED REFLECTIONS IN THE U.S. (200 PTS) (20%)

An important component of Comparative Politics is, of course, comparing. Comparisons in the field of Comparative Politics tend to be either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional comparisons are between two like units at one point in time and longitudinal comparisons are of the same unit at different points in time. Our two primary cases this quarter are Ireland and the United States (although you will sometimes be asked to make comparisons to other countries as well) and we will be making both cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons related to the histories, cultures, and politics of each country. At least ten times this quarter you will be asked to engage with material that will require you to reflect on similarities, differences, and connections between the history, culture, and politics (with a special emphasis on civil rights) of Ireland, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other hand. For example, you will be asked to explore concepts like gerrymandering and draw connections between how gerrymandering has manifested both similarly and differently in Northern Ireland and the United States. Similarly, you will be asked to compare news—both in terms of agenda setting and framing—in major Irish and U.S. media outlets, such as the *Irish Times* and the *New York Times*. The prompts for these reflections will be made available on Canvas and they will require you to read, listen to and/or watch something and then reflect on what you learned. Each reflection should be a minimum of 300 words. You will have eleven opportunities to complete ten structured reflections, which means that your lowest structured reflection grade will be dropped.

PARTICIPATION/ENGAGEMENT IN IRELAND (400 PTS ~ 40%)

The most important part of this class will be the twelve days we spend together in Ireland (April 19-May 1, 2019). While in Ireland we will be hosted by Niamh Hamill, the director and lecturer-in-residence at the Institute for Study Abroad (ISA) Ireland, based in Donegal, Ireland. Niamh has a B.Ed. and M.A. in American Studies from University College Dublin, and a Ph.D. in History and Culture from Drew University, New Jersey. Each day Niamh will give our group lectures and lead us on field trips and activities related to Irish history, culture, and politics. At the same time, you will be asked to do extra exercises and activities (for me and Steve) beyond what Niamh asks you to do. Upon our return, you will be graded on your level of participation and engagement during our entire Irish sojourn. Please note that my definition of participation and engagement includes being punctual, actively involved, and respectful of our hosts in Ireland.