

POSC 2401: Comparative Politics

Professor Lowell Barrington

Section 101

Spring 2016, MWF 11:00-11:50; Wehr Chemistry 002

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Course Overview: This course provides an introduction to the comparative study of domestic politics in countries around the world. In this course, you will be introduced to some of the most important concepts, theories, and issues in this subfield of political science. There is some debate about what “comparative politics” means. Many see it simply as learning facts about countries outside the United States. Others believe that it is about comparing political systems in order to generate general statements about politics. In this course, you will be exposed to both of these ideas. You will learn about the domestic politics of a number of important countries. But, you will also be expected to compare them to each other and, crucially, to apply the concepts and theories covered in the course to understand better the politics of these states and domestic politics in general.

Many introductory comparative politics courses spend the first half of the semester on concepts and theories and the second half on specific countries. I take a different approach. Each week, we will focus on a set of concepts and theories important to comparative politics. During most weeks, we will also examine that topic in a group of countries representative of different types of political systems around the world: The United Kingdom (Great Britain), Germany, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, China, India, Nigeria, and Iran, as well as (less frequently) France, South Africa, and Iraq. We will also focus in detail on one additional country during Week 14. You will help select that country. Your short “policy memo” will recommend a certain developing country (the choice of the country is up to you, from the list at the end of the syllabus) based on how it fits—or, more interesting, doesn’t fit—with the theories and concepts presented during the semester. Convince me that we should study it.

Requirements and Grading: You are expected to do the readings for the course on time during the week that they are listed in the syllabus, unless I say otherwise. There are several incentives to do so. Class sessions will be easier to follow if you have completed the readings. The amount of reading is reasonable, but not small. It will not be easy to catch up if you fall behind. From time to time, we will discuss readings in class. This is particularly true of our coverage of the topics in practice in the countries. Along with your attendance, your participation in these and other discussions can affect your final semester grade (see below). There will be twelve quizzes covering the readings during the semester. Finally, on the midterm and final exams, those who bring course readings into their essay answers will receive higher grades—all other things equal—than those who do not.

Three-quarters of your final semester grade will be based on the quizzes (20% total), an in-class midterm (20%), the final exam (30%), and attendance and participation (5%). The remaining portion of the final grade will come from three additional assignments. The descriptions of these assignments are found at the end of the syllabus. They include the short assignment on a leader early in the semester (5%); your discussion posts on D2L (5%), and your “policy memo” (15%). Quizzes will be multiple choice; the exams will be essay-based. In your policy memo, short assignment on a leader, and D2L discussion posts (but not in the in-class exams), spelling, grammar, and other style elements will be taken into account in determining your grade.

Class attendance is mandatory, and it is a small part of your final semester grade. Since situations may arise that make it difficult or impossible to attend a particular class session, you are allowed to miss up to six class sessions during the semester without a major impact on your semester grade. After the sixth absence, I will lower your semester grade by one letter grade (BC to C, for example) with each additional absence. In addition, anyone ending the semester in the “gray area” between two letter grades will be bumped up or down depending on attendance and participation. You should also follow day-to-day events, especially in our countries of focus, during the semester. You can do this by reading weekly news magazines such as *The Economist*, or reputable online news outlets such as cnn.com or the BBC. We will discuss current events from time to time in class.

Readings: There is only one book which you are required to buy, which is my comparative politics textbook (Lowell Barrington, *Comparative Politics: Structures & Choices*, Cengage, 2013). Make sure you buy the second edition (2013). The textbook is available at Bookmarq, but you are welcome to purchase it elsewhere. A used copy is fine; just make sure it is the second edition. Many other selected readings will be on the class site for D2L. Go to <https://d2l.mu.edu/> and log in. On your home page, scroll down to the “2016 Spring Term” tab, look for the “Political Science” sub-tab, and click on the link “POSC 2401 101 Comparative Politics - 1500_1440_101.” Once you reach the POSC 2401 course home page, click on the “Content” link on the taskbar at the top of the page to access the additional readings.

Other Important Details: POSC 2401 falls under the “Individual and Social Behavior” section of Marquette’s Core of Common Studies. As a result, this course will contribute to your ability to understand central concepts, theories, and methods used to explain individual and social behavior in political science; to use knowledge of social scientific methods to analyze examples of individual and social behavior; and to evaluate the applicability of social scientific knowledge for understanding individual and social behavior in particular contexts.

If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services. If you are unsure of what you need to qualify for services, visit ODS’s website at www.marquette.edu/disability-services or contact the Office of Disability Services at 414-288-1645.

While generally a nice person, I take academic dishonesty very seriously. Academic dishonesty violates the core principles (and Honor Code) of Marquette, and it is unfair to your fellow classmates. If you are caught copying during tests/quizzes, plagiarizing on assignments (i.e., representing someone else’s ideas as your own, including by not adequately citing them), or helping someone do either of these, you will receive an F on that assignment, be reported to the Honor Council, and receive any other punishments that are warranted. Don’t test me on this one! Just to be clear, if you take this course, you are accepting Marquette’s Honor Pledge: “I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work. I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others. I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity. My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.” To provide additional incentives for this not to be an issue on the policy memo or early semester short assignment, I will be submitting them to turnitin.com for an originality check after you submit them via the D2L drop box.

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

PART I: Political Science, Comparative Politics, and Leadership

Week 1 (Jan 18-22): Key Concepts: Politics, Power, Society, Nation, and State

Readings:

Lowell Barrington, *Comparative Politics: Structures and Choices*, 2nd edition (hereafter, Barrington, *CPSC*), chapter 1 (“The Comparative Study of Politics”), pp. 1-13.

D2L #1: Lowell Barrington, “Nations and Nationalism: The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, December 1997, pp. 712-716.

D2L #2: “Pride of Place: Landscape in Britain,” *The Economist*.

JAN. 18: NO CLASS, MLK DAY.

Week 2 (Jan 25-28): Science, Political Science, and Comparative Politics

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 1, pp. 13-27.

D2L #1: “‘Conceptualization in Comparative Politics’ Abridged from Sartori Giovanni, ‘Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics’, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, 1970, pp. 1033-1053.”

D2L #2: Jean-Germain Gros, “Comparative Politics Made Simple.” AP Central.

D2L #3: Evelyne Huber, “Letter from the President: The Role of Cross-regional Comparison,” *APSA-CP Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 1-6.

D2L #4: “Off the Map; Data and Development,” *The Economist*.

Week 3 (Feb 1-5): Political Leaders and Their Decisions

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 10 (“Leadership and the Importance of Individuals in the Political Process”).

D2L #1: “Person of the Year, Angela Merkel: Chancellor of the Free World,” *Time Magazine*, 12/21/2015.

D2L #2: “David Cameron Pledges ‘Assault on Poverty’ with Social Reforms,” *BBC News*, 1/11/2016.

D2L #3: “Profile: Narendra Modi,” *BBC News*, 11/11/2015

D2L #4: “Mexico in Crisis,” *The Weekly Standard*, 12/18/2014

FEB 1 (MONDAY), “MOST CHALLENGED LEADER” ASSIGNMENT DUE, D2L DROPBOX, BY 5:00 P.M.

PART II: Economics, Culture, and Identity

Week 4 (Feb 8-12): Economic Structure and Political Outcomes

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 2 (“Economic Class, Development, Systems, and Globalization”).

D2L #1: “Forget the 1%,” *The Economist*.

D2L #2: “The Oil Price Plunge,” *The Nation*, 2/23/2015.

D2L #3: “‘The Looting Machine’ Explains Why Africa Isn’t Rising,” *Chicago Tribune*, 12/30/2015.

D2L #4: “Stress and Challenges: What’s Facing China’s ‘Nine Dragons of Water’,” *Global Asia*, March 2015.

Week 5 (Feb 15-19): Political Culture and Ideology

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 3 (“Ideas as Structure: Political Culture and Ideology”).

D2L #1: “Weird Bedfellows,” *The Nation*, 3/23/2015.

D2L #2: “The Confucian View: Putting East Asian Education into Context,” *Global Asia*, June 2015.

D2L #3: “What Happened to Brazil?,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 9/23/15.

D2L #4: “The Economist Explains: Why Young People Don’t Vote,” *The Economist*.

Week 6 (Feb 22-26): Identity and Social Divisions

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 4 (Identity Structure”).

D2L #1: “Germany’s Identity Crisis,” *Politico*, 10/12/2015

D2L #2: “The Question of Russian Identity,” *Intersection* (<http://intersectionproject.eu/>), 6/17/2015.

D2L #3: “The Myth of a Liberal India,” *National Interest*, November 2015.

D2L #4: “Nigerian Politics: Church, State, and Mosque,” *The Economist*, 12/20/2014.

D2L #5: “Iranian Women Still Face Barriers,” *International Policy Digest*, 12/1/2015.

PART III: Governing Institutions

Week 7 (Feb 29-Mar 4): Political Systems and Their Constitutions

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 5 (“Political Systems and Their Rules”).

D2L #1: “Why Democracies Dominate,” *The National Interest*, July 2015.

D2L #2: “Reforms and Democracy,” *The Economist*, 11/15/2014.

D2L #3: “Iran Shapes the Narrative Through its Constitution,” *International Policy Digest*, June 2015.

D2L #4: “Iranian Devolution: Tehran Fights the Digital Future,” *World Affairs*, Fall 2015.

Week 8 (Mar 7-11): Executives and Legislatures

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 6 (“Legislatures and Executives”).

D2L #1: “Easy Politics, Bad Policies” *The Economist*.

D2L #2: “Mexico – Legislative Elections and Independent Governors,” *Presidential Power: Presidents and Presidential Politics around the World* (<http://presidential-power.com/>), 6/12/2015

D2L #3: “U.S. or Parliamentary System?...” *MinnPost*, 10/02/12.

MARCH 9 (WEDNESDAY): MIDTERM EXAM, IN CLASS.

Week 9 (Mar 14-18): Courts, Bureaucracies, and Militaries

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 7 (“Unelected Components of Government”).

D2L #1: “Britain’s Shrinking Executive,” *American Interest*, 7/1/2014.

D2L #2: “‘Brazil Cost’ Bureaucracy Continues to Hinder Business,” *The Rio Times*, 8/6/2015.

D2L #3: “Nigeria Military Killed Hundreds of Shiites, Activists Say,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 12/15/2015.

MARCH 18: NO CLASS, SPRING AND EASTER HOLIDAY BREAK.

PART IV: Linking Political Elites and the General Public

Week 10 (Mar 28-April 1): Interest Groups and “Civil Society”

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 8 (“Political Participation and Approaches to Linking Masses and Elites”).

D2L #1: “Study: US is an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy,” BBC.

D2L #2: “Russia’s Stolen Future,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 5/1/2015.

D2L #3: “The Politics of China’s Anti-corruption Campaign,” East Asia Forum, 9/15/2015.

MARCH 28: NO CLASS, SPRING AND EASTER HOLIDAY BREAK.

Week 11 (Apr 4-8): Electoral Systems and Political Parties

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 9 (“Political Parties and Electoral Systems”).

D2L #1: “They Said It Couldn’t Be Done: David Cameron’s Surprise Victory,” *The Weekly Standard*.

D2L #2: “What We Got Wrong In Our 2015 U.K. General Election Model,” *FiveThirtyEight.com*.

D2L #3: “Witness to a Landslide; Indian Politics,” *The Economist*.

D2L #4: “The Rise and Fall of Latin America’s Most Successful Progressive Party,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 11/13/2015.

APRIL 8 (FRIDAY), POLICY MEMO DUE, IN THE D2L DROPBOX, BY 5:00 P.M.

THE DETAILS OF THE ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE END OF THE SYLLABUS.

PART V: Understanding Political Outcomes Using Structures and Choices

Week 12 (April 11-15): Regime Transitions: Democratization and Democratic Breakdown

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 11 (“Regime Transitions”).

D2L #1: “What’s Gone Wrong with Democracy?” *The Economist*.

D2L #2: “The Arab Spring: Has It Failed?” *The Economist*.

D2L #3: “Dilemmas of Democracy and State Power in Africa,” *Brookings Research and Commentary*, 1/7/2016.

Week 13 (Apr 18-22): Policy Outcomes

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 12 (“Comparative Public Policy”).

D2L #1: “Germany’s Plan for Migrants Will Reshape Its Future,” *FiveThirtyEight.com*.

D2L #2: “Troubled Euro Needs a Softer Germany,” *The World Today*, Oct/Nov 2015.

D2L #3: “China Ends One-Child Policy, Allowing Families Two Children” New York Times, 10/29/2015.

D2L #4: “The Center Is Not All: How India’s States Are Luring Foreign Investors,” *Global Asia*, June 2015.

PART VI: Conclusion

Week 14 (Apr 25-29): Politics in ???

Readings: TBA.

Week 15 (May 2-May 6): Conclusion: From Separate Countries to Broader Understandings.

Readings:

Barrington, *CPSC*, epilogue, “Structured Choices and the Comparative Study of Politics”.

D2L #1: “The World Events That Mattered Most in 2015,” *The Atlantic*, 12/22/2015.

D2L #2: “Young Voters, Declining Trust and the Limits of ‘Service Politics,’” *The Forum*, Oct. 2015.

D2L #3: Natalie Anastasia, “Surviving Final Exam Stress,” *TB Scene*, 4/22/2014.

FINAL EXAM REVIEW: MAY 2 (MONDAY), IN CLASS.

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, MAY 9, 1:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR SEMSTER ASSIGNMENTS

D2L Discussion Posts

At least five times during the semester, you will post to the class D2L discussion board about a topic/question from a recent class session, a current event in one of the Topic-in-Countries cases related to issues we're discussing that week, or examples from other countries—including the United States—of how thematic elements from the class play out in practice around the world. At least two of these posts should start a new discussion thread, as opposed to being responses to posts in existing threads. (You are expected to respond to existing posts as well.) Along with how coherent, interesting and important your discussion board posts are, spelling and grammar will be taken into account in your grade on these posts. Posts should, on average, be around two (normal-sized) paragraphs in length.

“Most Challenged Leader” Assignment: Due via D2L, February 1 (Monday).

Question: *Which chief executive of the 9 Topic-in-Countries cases is the most “challenged” leader, and why?*

Partly because your textbook is not up-to-date with current leaders in our Topic-in-Countries cases, you will answer the question above by writing a short (400-500 words, Times New Roman 12 pt. font) argument about one of the leaders of the countries we are focusing on most closely this semester. Explain why that leader is the most challenged chief executive of the nine TIC cases. In your answer, consider the difficulties facing that leader that require government response, the social, economic and political structures in which this individual must lead, and any aspects of his or her background or leadership style that contribute to these challenges.

Policy Memo Assignment: Due via D2L, April 8 (Friday).

Question: *What country should we study in Week 14, and why?*

In around 1,500 words (Times New Roman 12 pt. font), answer the question above by writing a “policy memo.” Descriptions of the approach to writing and the typical content of policy memos can be found at the following sites:

<http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/files/memo-writing.pdf>

http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/policy-memo.original.pdf

<https://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/files/writing.pdf>

<http://wilcoxen.maxwell.insightworks.com/pages/275.html>

In your memo, you will make a recommendation regarding which *one* of the countries we should study in Week 14 from the list of countries on the following page. As the links above indicate, there is not a single, universally accepted format for policy memos. In general, however, they should include a “To/From/Subject/Date” heading; a summary (often call the Executive Summary); an introduction/background section, in which the background discussion is very short or skipped entirely; a discussion/options section – in this case *comparing two* of the countries from the list – which highlights advantages/disadvantages of each option; and a recommendation section. If you have room, you could include a short conclusion following the recommendation section, though many policy memos stop with the recommendation.

As you choose which two countries to discuss and which one to recommend, consider the topics that we have discussed in the course. How will your country help us to understand better one or more of the concepts

and issues we have examined? Does it fill a void, providing an example of something important that the other countries we are looking at do not?

While it will be tempting to do so, do *not* describe the countries' basic histories in your memo. Cover only the history, events, or facts about the countries that you need to make your points about which country we should study. Remember, I want to know why you believe that I and your fellow classmates should spend a week studying the country you choose, and simply having some interesting events in its history will not distinguish it from other potential countries we could study.

The majority of the grade on this assignment will be the effectiveness of the memo in convincing me that "your" country is the best one to study. Thus, your argument matters a great deal, spelling and grammar matter quite a lot, and the looks of your memo matter only a bit. Although it is common to use bullet point formatting in memos, they are best reserved for specific lists within the memo rather than for the entire memo's text.

Plagiarism is not acceptable in any form. Direct quotations must be in quotation marks, and you should use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations for sources from which you have borrowed *any* ideas. We will discuss this more in class. While short and in "memo" form, this is a research project. I expect you to find *current* information about the countries. You should look not only at news magazines like *The Economist* but also at academic journals that may carry articles on your country. Also, you can (and should) use the readings from class where appropriate.

A References list should be included as an additional page of the memo. This page will not be included in the word count. It is reasonable to have *at least* 10 sources that you actually reference in the memo.

Possible Countries for the Policy Memo Assignment

Antigua and Barbuda	Liberia
Bahamas	Maldives
Bahrain	Marshall Islands
Belize	Mauritania
Benin	Mauritius
Bhutan	Namibia
Botswana	Nauru
Brunei	Palau
Burundi	Papua New Guinea
Cabo Verde	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Comoros	Saint Lucia
Djibouti	Saint Vincent and Grenadines
Dominica	Samoa
Equatorial Guinea	Sao Tome and Principe
Eritrea	Senegal
Federated States of Micronesia	Seychelles
Fiji	Sierra Leone
Gabon	Solomon Islands
Gambia	Suriname
Grenada	Swaziland
Guinea	Togo
Guinea-Bissau	Tonga
Guyana	Trinidad and Tobago
Kiribati	Tunisia
Lao PDR	Tuvalu
Lesotho	Vanuatu