

POSC 2401: Comparative Politics

Marquette University, Dept. of Political Science
Spring 2019; Tuesday, Thursday 11:00am-12:15pm, Olin Engineering 202

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 1:00-2:30 or by appointment

Course Overview:

This course introduces the main topics analyzed in the subfield of Comparative Politics. Scholars of comparative politics create and test theories about political and social processes by examining similarities and differences across countries and subnational units within countries. The first portion of this course will be devoted to the essential building blocks of Comparative Politics, including the comparative method and three major theoretical approaches: Economic Structure, Political Culture, and Social Identity. The latter portion of the course will deploy these tools to analyze political systems around the world, including: formal political institutions (legislatures and executives), systems for linking citizens to politicians, and transitions between democratic and non-democratic forms of government.

Course Objectives:

1. Learn about the comparative method and the scientific approach to studying politics around the world
2. Understand key concepts about political systems and how they vary across countries
3. Attain basic knowledge of politics in several countries, with a sense of their political trajectories
4. Engage in debates in political science to explain democracy, development, representation and other important political outcomes

Student Assessment:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

10%	Attendance, Participation
20%	Country Reports
15%	Group Presentations
10%	Pop Quizzes
20%	Midterm Exam
25%	Final Exam

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend every class session and the professor will take attendance. If you must miss a class due to illness or some other exceptional circumstance, please notify the professor no later than the day before class. Per university policy, students with more than four unexcused absences will fail the course.

Participation is also part of your grade. This can take the form of participation in full-group discussion. However, raising your hand and asking a question is not the only way to participate. Throughout the course we will regularly engage in small-group work. For students who are uncomfortable with extemporaneous speaking in front of large groups, being a leader in your group and in sharing your group's findings with the class will be important ways to participate in the class.

Country Reports

Throughout the semester, each student is responsible for posting **at least 10** posts to the D2L discussion page about their countries of expertise (see "Country Experts" below). You will be expected to post 5 *original posts* and 5 *response posts*. These posts should be roughly 200 words long. Each of these posts is worth 2% percent of your grade and will be graded on a check-minus, check, check-plus basis. You may submit up to one of each in any given week. If you end up submitting more than 10 posts, I will count your top 10 grades.

- *Original posts* should consist of at least two paragraphs and must be posted by **Monday**. In the first paragraph, you describe some recent event that occurred in your assigned country, including a link to at least one news article. In the second paragraph, you analyze the causes or potential consequences of that event using material from the upcoming week in the course.
- *Response posts* will also consist of two paragraphs and must be posted by **Wednesday**. The first paragraph will *compare* the event discussed in the original post with a similar event in your country (again including a link to a news source). The second paragraph will suggest an explanation for the different or similar outcomes based on material from the current week in the course. The goal is to compare different countries, so response posts must be posted in response to posts on countries other than your own.

Group Presentations

At two points in the semester, you will give presentations to the class on your expert countries. The first of these presentations will be about 10 minutes long and worth 5% of your grade. This presentation will serve as an introduction of the main traits of your expert country to the class.

The second presentation will be worth 10% of your grade. These presentations will be roughly 20 minutes long and will analyze a case of a social movement or interest group in your expert country. Students will conduct original research to answer the following questions: What forms of political participation does this organization engage in? What are the organization's goals or demands? What influence has the organization had on policy, on its country's regime, or some other important political outcome?

Pop Quizzes

At six points throughout the semester, I will hold pop quizzes to assess your knowledge of the readings. Each of these will be worth 2% of your grade and I will drop your lowest grade. If you have an unexcused absence on a day that a pop quiz is held, this will result in a zero and hopefully be the grade that I drop. If you have an excused absence that you have cleared with me in advance, we will arrange for an alternate assignment.

Midterm and Final Exams

An in-class midterm exam will be held following Part II and we will have a final exam during the university-allocated time slot. These exams will test knowledge of the material covered in readings and lecture and will also ask students to apply theories from class to analyze political differences between countries. The final exam will focus mainly on the second half of the course, but will require you to incorporate knowledge of main concepts from the first part of the course.

Required Readings:

Most of the readings for the course will come from the textbook *Comparative Politics: Structures and Choices*, by Lowell Barrington (“Barrington” throughout the syllabus). Make sure that you get the **2nd edition** of this book, published in 2013.

You are also required to attain a copy of the following book, available at Bookmarq (the university bookstore), or you may acquire it through alternate means.

Putnam, Robert. 1994. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*.

Additional readings each week will be posted to D2L.

You will also be required to conduct **original research** on a regular basis for your country reports. This will probably take place mostly through online searches of periodicals such as the Economist, the New York Times, the Guardian, BBC News, or many others. A subscription to the Economist is highly recommended.

Country Experts:

Every student in the class will be assigned to one of six countries. These countries will be chosen by the instructor and will *not* be among the 12 countries featured in Barrington (UK, Germany, India, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Russia, China, Iran, France, Iraq, or South Africa).

During six class sessions in the first month of the course, we will reserve ten minutes for one of the country groups to present basic facts about their country. These facts will include (but need not be limited to) the “Countries at a Glance” information in Barrington (pp. xxv-xxxvi). Students are encouraged to make these sessions fun and to share cultural elements of their countries, such as music, food, or popular culture.

Throughout the semester, students will have opportunities to apply course material to their assigned countries through D2L posts and in-class group work. This experience will give students an opportunity to attain specific case knowledge about their assigned countries while also offering a built-in study group. Students will also be numbered consecutively within each group.

Discovery Tier:

This course partially fulfills requirements under the *Basic Needs and Justice* theme of the Marquette Core Curriculum's Discovery tier. This theme emphasizes the identification of what constitute "basic needs," the variation in fulfillment of these needs around the world, and the extent to which such variation is connected to understandings of justice. This course not only examines topics like inequality, socially marginalized groups, economic development, and systems of representation, but also addresses public policy approaches to address disparities in these core values. These themes will be a regular focus of class discussion. Connection between course topics and these themes will also be something that you will be asked to address in discussion posts, group work and exams.

Course Policies:

Communication

- *Office hours:* Office hours are for you, the student. Please come to discuss course material, assignments, or any other thoughts or concerns you may have.
- *Checking your email:* I expect you to check your email daily. I will send course announcements over email. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email account that is registered in D2L is the one that you check regularly.
- *Professor's email:* If you have a very short clarifying question, it may be appropriate to email the professor. I only ask that prior to emailing me you consult the syllabus and ask your classmates to see if your question is something that has already been covered.

Laptops and Other Electronic Devices

Research has shown that students retain information better when they take notes by hand than when they take notes on a computer. For this reason, I have a no-device policy in my classroom. Laptops may only be used by those with documented special learning needs that have consulted with me in advance. If you need advice on how to take notes effectively using paper and pen, you can come to office hours and I can suggest note-taking strategies. Cell phones should be turned off during class. If you have a special need to keep your cell phone on, such as to monitor a sick child, see me *before* class and I will make a special accommodation.

Grade Appeals

If you want to appeal an assigned grade, you must submit to me a typed, one-page statement explaining why the grade should be changed. Note that doing so gives me license to adjust the questioned grade either upward or downward. I am happy to discuss your papers and exams during office hours with the goal of helping you to improve your performance the next time.

Academic Dishonesty

All students have participated in training activities at Marquette to learn about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Any instance of academic dishonesty in this course such as plagiarism, copying others' work, or consulting unauthorized sources during exams will be handled according to university policy. Violating students will automatically receive a zero on the assignment or exam in question and be referred to the Marquette University Honor Council: <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/integrity-index.php>. If you have any uncertainty about whether you are adhering to academic honesty standards, please consult with me in advance.

PART I: BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Week 1: Key Concepts (Jan. 15, Jan 17)

Barrington, chapter 1 pp. 1-13 (up through “Nationalism”)

D2L: “The Economist Explains: What is Populism” *The Economist*

Week 2: Political Science and Comparative Politics (Jan 22, Jan 24)

Barrington, chapter 1 pp. 13-27 (starting with “Political Science as a Science”)

D2L: Leigh, Andrew. “Chapter 9: Testing Theories in Politics and Philanthropy.” *Randomistas*.

D2L: “What Makes a Country Good at Football?” *The Economist*.

Jan. 22: Country Expert Selection

Week 3: Economic Structure (Jan. 29, Jan. 31)

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

D2L: “The Country with the World’s Worst Inequality Is…” *NPR*. April 2, 2018.

D2L: “Why it’s Hard to Reduce Informality in Latin America’s Labour Market.” *The Economist*.
Feb. 15, 2018.

Jan 29: Venezuela intro

Jan. 31: Colombia intro

Week 4: Political Culture (Feb. 5, Feb. 7)

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

D2L: Inglehart, Ronald. “The Age of Insecurity: Can Democracy Save Itself?” *Foreign Affairs*.

D2L: “Being the Boss in Brussels, Boston, and Beijing,” *Harvard Business Review*.

Feb. 5: Philippines intro

Feb. 7: South Korea intro

Week 5: Identity and Social Divisions (Feb. 12, Feb. 14)

Barrington, chapter 4 (“Identity Structure”)

D2L: “As Kenya Elections Draw Near, Country Reveals an Electorate Divided by Tribe,” *The Washington Post*.

D2L: “The Culture Veil: The Real Crisis of European Multiculturalism,” *The Nation*.

Feb. 12: Botswana intro

Feb. 14: Zimbabwe intro

PART II: GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

Week 6: Regime Types (Feb. 19, Feb. 21)

Barrington, chapter 5 (“Political Systems and their Rules”)

D2L: Levitsky and Way. “Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field,” *Journal of Democracy*.

Week 7: Executives and Legislatures (Feb. 26, Feb. 28)

Barrington, chapter 6 (“Legislatures and Executives”)

D2L: Khalilzad, Zalmay. “Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq,” *Journal of Democracy*

Week 8: Executives and Legislatures II (March 5)

D2L: Linz, Juan. “The Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy*

MIDTERM MARCH 7

NO CLASS MARCH 12, MARCH 14 SPRING BREAK

PART III: STATE AND SOCIETY

Week 9: Interest Groups and Social Movements (March 19, March 21)

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

D2L: “Europe Could Have the Secret to Saving America’s Unions,” *Vox*.

D2L: “How the Koch Brothers Built the Most Powerful Rightwing Group You’ve Never Heard Of,” *The Guardian*.

Week 10: Political Parties and Voter Linkages (March 26, March 28)

D2L: Gay, Robert. *Popular Organization and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro*, Chapter 4 and Conclusion

Week 11: Civil Society and Social Capital (April 2, April 4)

Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 3-14, Chapter 4, and Chapter 6

Week 12: Student Presentations (April 9, April 11)

NO CLASS APRIL 16, 18 EASTER

PART IV: REGIME CHANGE

Week 13: Democratization (April 9, April 11)

Barrington, chapter 11 (“Regime Transitions”)

Week 14: Democratic Decline (April 30, May 2)

D2L: “One-Third of the World’s Population Lives in a Declining Democracy,” *The Washington Post Monkey Cage*

D2L: “The Arab Winter,” *The Economist*.

FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY MAY 10, 3:30PM