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PSC 120.01: Introduction to Comparative Government and Politics

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PSC 120 -- INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Fall 2008

MWF 10:10 - 11:00, Social Science 356

Professor Christopher Muste

Office: 416 Liberal Arts

Office Hours: Wednesday 11-12 and 2-4; and by appointment

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Teaching Assistant: Shohina Touraeva

Office: 345 / 347 Corbin Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the major types of political systems in different countries, and to examine the effects of different political systems on the way countries are governed and on the lives of their citizens. It will also introduce you to the main concepts that political scientists use to make sense of the wide variety of political systems that exist.

The course begins by presenting and explaining the principal concepts used in comparative politics to study countries' political systems. We will then use these concepts to analyze the political systems of industrialized democracies as a group, and more specifically the similarities and differences in the political systems of three industrialized democracies – the United States, Great Britain, and France – and the emerging European Union. Next, we will examine the main characteristics of communist and post-communist countries, and the changes taking place in the Russia and China. Then we will examine the large group of less developed or “third world” nations, and focus on India, Iran, and Mexico. We will conclude by exploring some of the problems and opportunities citizens and countries will likely face in the coming years.

In addition to addressing these questions, this course satisfies the General Education Social Sciences requirement. The goal of this requirement is to enable you to 1) describe the nature, structure, and historical development of human organizations and/or relationships, 2) comprehend the role of theory in explaining social phenomena, 3) generate and/or interpret social science data, 4) assess and evaluate the significance of social science phenomena.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Introductory courses are intensive by nature and build on the knowledge gained in earlier parts of the course, which means that your investment in keeping up with the class will pay off in terms of how much you will learn, how interesting class will be, and how well you will do on the exams and research paper. This requires doing the readings before each class and being prepared to contribute to class discussion and ask questions – even in a large class such as this intelligent questions and discussions are critical components of learning. There will be two midterms (each worth 25% of the course grade), an exam during finals week (30% of the course grade), and one research and analysis paper (20% of the course grade) due in mid-November. Grades will be assigned according to the following percentages:

A = 93-100	B+ = 87-89.9	C+ = 77-79.9	D+ = 67-69.9	below 60=F
A- = 90-92.9	B = 83-86.9	C = 73-76.9	D = 63-66.9	
	B- = 80-82.9	C- = 70-72.9	D- = 60-62.9	

* **Makeup exams will be permitted only if I have been notified prior to the missed exam and if I agree that the absence was necessitated by a serious, documented emergency.**

* **All three exams and the research & analysis paper must be completed in order to pass the course.**

* **Check your calendar now to make sure you do not have anything that conflicts with the exams.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode> .

The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is “representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own.” This is a serious academic violation that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University. **I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating in this course.** See the UM plagiarism warning at <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#plagiarism> and the Student Conduct Code at <http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode> .

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

CLASS COURTESY:

In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in a class this size, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so it is possible to get to the classroom on time from all other campus buildings; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class and disturbs other students and the instructor. Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. Please don’t read a newspaper or other non-course material, eat during class, or use text messaging, web browsers, or similar communications. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand instead of discussing it with your neighbor. We’ll all benefit if we just keep in mind the reason we’re in the room together.

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:

You can drop on Cyberbear until September 15, and from then until October 6 using a drop slip signed by me. After October 6, you must go through the more formal and difficult “late drop” petition process. I will sign late drop petitions for only one week after the first exam grades are posted, and after that only under extraordinary circumstances, as stated at <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#add> . Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met – the policy is at <http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#incomplete>

GENERAL EDUCATION SOCIAL SCIENCES REQUIREMENT:

In order for this course to satisfy your University of Montana General Education Requirement in the Social Sciences, you must take the course for a letter grade, and must earn a C- or better.

DSS STUDENTS:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

E-MAIL AND BLACKBOARD:

Every registered UM student has an official UM e-mail account, and students registered for this course have a Blackboard course account. I may use your official UM e-mail to send you important announcements, and the exam and research paper grades will be posted on Blackboard. See the last page of this syllabus for instructions on how to access your UM e-mail and Blackboard accounts.

READINGS:

The main readings for this course will be from this textbook:

Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, 6th edition, available from the UM bookstore. It is also available online as an e-book at www.ichapters.com

I may also hand out or post online other articles for you to read at various times in the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Dates Subject to Change by Professor

August 25 - 27 Introduction - Chapter 1

August 29, Friday NO CLASS DUE TO ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

September 1, Monday NO CLASS DUE TO LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 3 -5 Introduction, Chapter 1 - continued

September 8 - 12 Industrialized Democracies, Chapter 2

September 15 - 19 The United States, Chapter 3

September 22 - 26 Great Britain, Chapter 4

Sept. 29 & October 1 France, Chapter 5

OCTOBER 3 - FRIDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #1 - BRING SCANTRON

October 6 Research Paper Assignment - Hand Out and Discuss

October 6 - 10 The European Union, Chapter 7

October 13 - 17 Current and Former Communist Regimes, Chapter 8

October 20 - 22 Russia, Chapter 9

October 24 - 29 China, Chapter 10

OCTOBER 31 - FRIDAY (TENTATIVE DATE) EXAM #2 - BRING SCANTRON

November 3 -7 Less Developed Countries, Chapter 11

November 10 - 14 India, Chapter 12

November 17 -21 Iran , Chapter 13

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS PAPER DUE IN CLASS

November 24 Mexico, Chapter 16

November 26 & 28, WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

December 1 - 3 Mexico, Chapter 16, continued

December 3 - 5 Danger... and Opportunity, Chapter 17, and Course Review.

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 8:00 - 10:00 A.M. - BRING SCANTRON