Spring 2-1-2010

PSC 220.01: Introduction to Comparative Government and Politics

Peter Koehn  
*University of Montana - Missoula*, peter.koehn@umontana.edu

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**Recommended Citation**  
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Introduction to the cross-national and comparative study of contemporary political systems. Focus on structural/behavioral similarities and differences, common and diverse aspirations/struggles, globalization and local responses, and domestic-foreign linkages. Reference to major illustrative countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia (including Central Asia), Africa, and Latin America.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should understand patterns of governance and political diversity/complexity around the world, be able to explain similarities and differences among key political institutions and the role of political culture, be familiar with different theoretical and analytical approaches to the comparative study of political systems, and be capable of interpreting current events based on sound conceptual understanding and empirical grounding. This course also is intended to provide the basic grounding for advanced study of comparative politics at the upper-division level, experience in intercultural and transnational analysis and understanding, and the basis for life-long learning about different political systems and key human concerns and aspirations.

Required Texts

(2) Fiona Yap (ed.). *Comparative Politics 09/10*. [CP] 2010
All other required readings are on e-res. Password: psci220

Course Requirements

Students are expected to complete readings on schedule, to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussions and debates. Assessment will be based on the following:

*Class participation* (including debates) = 10%
*Journal Observation #1* (due 12 March) = 10%
*Journal Observation #2* (due 23 April) = 10%
*Essay quiz* (30 April) = 10%
*First examination* (26 Feb.) = 20%
*Second examination* (19 March) = 20%
*Third examination* (14 April) = 20%
*Fourth examination* (10 May) = 20%

The highest 3 of the 4 examination grades will be counted in determining final grades for the course. Make-up exams are only possible for documented medical reasons. Reported final grades will reflect pluses and minuses. For credit/no-credit grading, students must attain an overall grade of D- to receive a “CR.” Students must follow the Catalog’s policy
on incompletes, disability accommodations, and plagiarism. The instructor will deny late-drop petitions (after the 45th day of instruction).

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

**Part I: Overview**

25, 27 Jan  A. Comparing political systems  
*H, Chpt. 1  

29 Jan  B. Types of political systems and political actors  

1 Feb  C. Development, underdevelopment, and overdevelopment  

3 Feb  *Affluenza VT07357 (59 minutes)

5 Feb  D. The global/local vortex  

**Part II: Western Europe**

8, 10 Feb  A. Great Britain  
*H, Chpt. 4  
*Lyall, “Britain’s Unpopular Leader is Ripe Target” (2009) e-res

12, 17 Feb  B. France  
*H, Chpt. 5

19, 22 Feb  C. Germany  
*H, Chpt. 6  
*CP, #16

24 Feb  Debates 1, 2  
*CP, #21

26 Feb  **First examination**

1 March  D. EU and the New Europe  
*H, Chpt. 7  
*CP, pp. 143-144; #38  
*Erlanger, “Seeking a Sea Change, Green Coalition Gathers Strength” (‘09) e-res

3 March  Debate 3

**Part III: Russia and Central Asia**

3, 5 March  A. Russia  
*H, pp. 203-215; Chpt. 9  
*CP, #15
8 March B. Post-Soviet States
*H, pp. 215-218

10 March Debate 4

**Part IV: The Global South**

10 March A. Colonial legacy; inequalities
*H, Chpt. 11
*Payne and Nassar, “Global & Domestic Inequalities” (2003), pp. 88-95 e-res
*Sengupta, “Inside gate, India’s Good Life; Outside, Servants’ Slums” (’08) e-res

12 March B. Ethnic politics
*Payne & Nassar, “Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict, & Conflict Resolution” (’03) e-res
*Chua, “An Explosive Combination” (’03) e-res

12 March Debate 5

15,17 March C. Military rule and semi-authoritarian states
*Mydans, “Myanmar Constitution Guidelines Ensure Military Power” (’07) e-res
*CP, #11, 5

17 March Debate 6

19 March **Second examination**

22,24 March D. Iran
*H, Chpt. 13
*Sodaro, “Power in Iran” (2008) e-res
*CP, #17, 23
*Slackman, “Iran’s Powerful Top Cleric” (2006) e-res
*Slackman, “Hard-Line Force Extends Control of Iran’s Society” (2009) e-res

24,26 March E. Afghanistan and Iraq
*Brinkerhoff, “Local versus Central” (2007) e-res

26 March F. Democratic Transitions and Regressions
*CP, #6, 7
*Diamond, “Democratic Rollback: Resurgence of the Predatory State” (’08) e-res
*Graham, “Morocco” (2007) e-res

5 April Hugo Chavez DVD01879 (54 minutes)
*CP, #13
*Romero, “Chavez Scores Victory in Bid To Lift Term Limits” (2009) e-res
7 April  G. Mexico  
*H, Chpt. 16  
*CP, #18  

9 April  H. South Africa  
An Irresistible Vision: Mandella (DVD00825)  

12 April  Debates 7, 8  

14 April  Third examination  

16 April  No class. Attend National Conference on Undergraduate Research.  

**Part V: China**  
19-21 April  A. China’s political system  
*H, Chpt. 10  
*CP, #19, 33  

23 April  The New Leap Forward: CCP in the 21st Century DVD00844 (52 minutes)  

26 April  Democracy in China: A Billion Small Voices video VT09008 (30 minutes)  

26 April  B. Hong Kong, SAR  
*Jacobs, “Memo from Hong Kong” (2009) e-res  

28 April  C. Democracy in comparative perspective  
*CP, #1, 3, 4, 8, 32  
*Ottaway, “Tyranny’s Full Tank” (2005) e-res  
*Weinthal & Luong, “Combating the Resource Curse” (2008) e-res  

30 April  Essay Quiz  

**Part VI: Nigeria**  
3,5 May  B. Nigeria  
*H, Chpt 15  

5 May  Debate 9  

**Part VII: Big questions of contemporary comparative politics**  
7 May  A. Gender and politics  
*CP, #24, 25  
Debate 10  

Debate 11
This syllabus is presented as a general guide to the course that is subject to amendment or deviation.

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