Course Objectives:
Comparative politics is both a subject and a method for understanding politics. As a subject, comparative politics is the study of different political systems and their major components. As a method, it is a way of trying to establish and test general suppositions about certain political phenomena. In this undergraduate course, students will be introduced to historical contexts, governance arrangements, political parties, and various types of political behavior across various democratic countries.

During the semester, we will introduce some fundamental political themes, such as political systems, political participation, and major variations among nations as well as explanations for the differences. We will attempt to answer questions such as, why are some nations democratic, while others are authoritarian? Why are some governmental agencies more powerful than others? Why do citizens in certain countries participate in politics more than in other countries? At the end of the course, students should be able to analyze political events, drawing on the theoretical explanations provided in the class.

Reading:

We will be reading portions of the following books. As a result, you may wish to purchase them. The recommended readings are mere suggestions for future reading. In addition to these texts, students are responsible for all the assigned readings listed on syllabus. All these readings and other course materials will be accessible via Moodle for students to download.


Recommended Readings:


Requirements (Grading):

You are required to attend all lectures and read the materials according to the schedule (see below). All absences require a written explanation in order to be considered to be an excused absence. Attendance is recorded and each unexcused absence will cost you a small fraction of your final grade. You may miss up to Three class sessions without penalty to your grade. I will examine your progress based on:

- Midterm in-class exam - 20%
- Final Take-home exam (cumulative) - 20%
- Analytic Papers (5 - 7 pages)
  #1 – 15%
  #2 – 15%
- Map quizzes & Memos - 20%
- Attendance and Participation - 10%

Exams (multiple-choice, definition, and short essay questions)

The tests will cover lectures, readings, and current events. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical emergency. Each of the two exams counts 20% in your grade. The exam questions (multiple choice, definitions, and short essay questions) will be drawn from the materials presented in the lectures, discussions, and readings. Lectures and readings overlap. Nonetheless, the lectures will often present at least some material from a different perspective than what you find in the required texts. You are responsible to know all the assigned readings AND the lecture material AND the topics discussed in class.

*Note: Makeups will not ordinarily be scheduled for any quiz or examination. If you must miss an exam due to illness, please notify me in advance and be prepared to provide corroborating medical documentation.

Analytic Papers

Write two analytic papers (5-7 pages, double spaced, typed, with one-inch margins) in response to the questions announced in class. The questions for the first paper will be announced on or before September 24th and the questions for the second paper will be given on or before November 5th. You should rely mainly on the course reading materials and lectures. Make sure you establish a clear argument and defend it with references to appropriate readings (see link on website “How to write a good social science paper”). Any argument that rests on a point of fact MUST be backed up by an appropriate citation. If you are uncertain as to where you might find something, please ask me. Your essay will be judged on the quality of its argument, not the
length. However, it would be difficult to thoroughly answer this question in less than 5-7 pages. Your essay will be graded on the quality and depth of your research; your ability to present a reasoned, analytically sound, and empirically valid argument; and the clarity and coherence of your writing. A poorly written essay with multiple mistakes cannot make an intelligent and persuasive argument. Spelling and grammar thus are relevant to your grade.

You will turn in the first paper no later than Friday, October 10th. The second paper due no later than Friday, November 21st. Late paper will be accepted, but I will reduce your points by 10% for each late day. Feel free to discuss the essay with me. However, while I can help you interpret the questions and suggest ways to organize your thoughts, I cannot comment on early drafts. Do not collaborate with anyone else in or outside this course on the assignment.

Map quizzes

Because it is hard to imagine comparing the political systems of nations without knowing where the countries in question are located, you will take two brief geography quizzes in this class. Each will involve locating a set of countries in a particular part of the world on a map. You are to learn this geography on your own. Atlases are widely available in libraries and online. You might begin at http://maps.google.com/. Another useful set of reference maps and country information can be found at http://snipurl.com/riz03.

Reflection Memos

There will be three reflection assignments given throughout this class. The memos will be a reflection to assigned readings, lectures, or each guest speech you attended. Your memo needs to answer the following three questions:

1. What was the main point of this reading, lecture, or speech?
2. What was surprising?
3. What was confusing?

This memo/reflection must be typed and a hard copy turned in at the beginning of each class on the announced due date. There is no minimum or maximum on the length of the document, however, a typical reflection is about 1 page, double-spaced.

Attendance/Class Participation

Attendance will be taken regularly. You may miss up to three class sessions without penalty to your grade. You are responsible for all of the materials discussed in class and all of the assigned readings. Your participation is an important part of what makes the class go well. We should all come to class with a common baseline, upon which our discussion can build. In practical terms, this means everyone should come to class able to explain concisely the argument(s) or main point(s) of the reading for that day. There will also be exercises, presentations, and debates, which also count as participation, of course.
Grade Scale:

The numerical equivalents of the letter grades are

\[
\begin{align*}
A+ &= 98.3 & C- &= 71.7 \\
A  &= 95.0 & D+ &= 68.3 \\
A- &= 91.7 & D  &= 65.0 \\
B+ &= 88.3 & D- &= 61.7 \\
B  &= 85.0 & E+ &= 58.3 \\
B- &= 81.7 & E  &= 55.0 \\
C+ &= 78.3 & E- &= 51.7 \\
C  &= 75.0 & F  &= 45.0
\end{align*}
\]

POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

I am committed to upholding the College Honor Code, including the Statement on Academic Responsibility. I have zero tolerance for plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty and will report students who engage in such activities to the Dean for Student Affairs. Students who are found to have violated the Honor Code can expect to fail the class.

Examples of plagiarism and dishonesty include (but are by no means limited to): neglecting to enclose direct quotes in quotation marks or use footnotes, verbatim or near-verbatim “paraphrasing”, getting someone else to write your paper under your name (this includes so-called “term paper mills”), using another student’s argument in your paper and attempting to pass it off as your own, switching exams with someone, looking at someone else’s exam or knowingly allowing someone to look at your exam or copy your paper, taking an exam for another student, illicitly obtaining paper topics or test materials before they have been distributed, etc. Know the standards for citation and use them. Carelessness and ignorance are NOT valid excuses for plagiarism! Ask me if you have any questions. For standards of citation, visit [http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing](http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing).

A bad grade lessens in importance over time. Even the best students do poorly on an exam or a paper every now and again. You can recover from a bad grade, but being marked as a cheater will haunt you for the rest of your career. If you are encountering difficulty in the class, do not despair! Come talk with me and I will be more than happy to help you out.

NOTE: In addition to the above, students are expected to:

(a) know that this syllabus, including the calendar, is subject to change at the discretion of the professor;
(b) access and read related policy material at [http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html)
Course Schedule

Part I: What is Comparative Politics?

Week 1 (Sep 01/03) – Introduction to Comparative Politics
Discussion Topics:
What is “comparative politics”? Why compare? Review the questions we will look at throughout the semester.

09/01 Monday: Review syllabus and getting to know each other
Reading:
No reading

09/03 Wednesday: The Comparative Method - How do we obtain evidence to build arguments in comparative politics?
Reading:
Recommended:
• Samuels, Comparative Politics, Chapters 1 and 2
• Almond et al., Chapter 1

Week 2 (Sep 08/10) – The Origins and Nature of States
Discussion Topics:
How is political order established? How is power distributed within states?

09/08 Monday: Democratic Political Regimes (What is Democracy?)
Reading:
• Schmitter & Karl, “What Democracy is… and is not” in Diamond & Plattner, Global Resurgence of Democracy
Recommended:
• Samuels, Comparative Politics, Chapter 3
• Almond et al., Chapter 2

09/10 Wednesday: Non-Democratic Political Regimes (What is Dictatorship?)
Reading:

Recommended:
• Samuels, *Comparative Politics*, Chapter 4
• Almond et al., Chapter 2

Week 3 (Sep 15/17) – Regime Change
Discussion Topics:
Why do transitions between democracy and non-democracy sometimes occur? Consider the non-democratic countries around the world today. What factors help explain why some of these countries are not democracies?

09/15 Monday:
Guest Speaker: Professor Wenfang Tang (University of Iowa)
Topic: “Chinese political culture and regime sustainability”, 4:30pm – 6:00pm.
Reading:
• Samuels, *Comparative Politics*, Chapters 5, 6 and 9

09/17 Wednesday: Regime Change
Reading:

Recommended Reading:
• Samuels, *Comparative Politics*, Chapters 5, 6 and 9
• Almond et al., Chapters 3, 4 and 5

Week 4 (Sep 22/24) – Empirical Method, Concepts, Frameworks and Variables
Discussion Topics:
What are the principle characteristics of comparative political analysis? How does a comparative approach differ from an area studies approach? What is political participation? Why is the political participation in a democracy an important thing to study and to understand?

09/22 Monday: Political Participation I – The United States in Comparative Perspective
Reading:
• Samuels, *Comparative Politics*, Chapters 5, 6 and 9

Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapters 3, 4 and 5
• TBD

09/24 Wednesday: Political Participation II – The United States in Comparative Perspective
Reading:
- Samuels, Comparative Politics, Chapters 5, 6 and 9

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapters 3, 4 and 5
- TBD

Part II: Case Studies - The Democracies

Week 5 (Sep 29/ Oct 1) – The United Kingdom
Discussion Topics:
Britain is the model for the parliamentary model of government. What are the key components of the British Model? What are the key factors that permit the UK to maintain a balance between limited and effective government?

09/29 Monday: Politics in Britain: Introduction
Reading:
- Peter Rutland, 2013, Politics in Britain (Edited)
- Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 2

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 8
- TBD

10/01 Wednesday: Politics in Britain
Reading:
- Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 2

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 8
- TBD

Week 6 (Oct 6/ Oct 8) – Germany
Discussion Topics:
What were the most important changes that had to be made in West Germany to allow for the addition of East Germany to the German constitutional system? What is special about the German chancellor? What special powers does she have?

10/06 Monday: Politics in Germany: Introduction
Reading:
- Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 3
Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 10
- TBD

10/08 Wednesday: Politics in Germany
Reading:
- Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 3

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 10
- TBD

**First Paper Due Friday, Oct 10**

Week 7 (Oct 13/ Oct 15) – France
Discussion Topics:
What are the special characteristics of unitary government in France? How is French unitary government different from unitary government in Britain, for example?

10/13 Monday: Politics in France: Introduction
Reading:
- Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 4

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapters 9
- TBD

10/15 Wednesday: Politics in France
Reading:
- Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 4

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 9
- TBD

Week 8 (Oct 20/ Oct 22) – Japan
Discussion Topics:
What is the historical background for democracy in Japan? How did Japan’s electoral rule help promote the LDP’s control of the government? To what extent was LDP dominance simply a result of Japan’s successful economy?

10/20 Monday: Fall Break

10/22 Wednesday: Politics in Japan
Reading:
- Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 5

Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapters 11
• TBD

Week 9 (Oct 27/ Oct 29) – Japan & Exam #1
Discussion Topics:
The Rise and Fall of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party.

10/27 Monday: Politics in Japan
Reading:
• Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 5

Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapter 11
• TBD

10/29 Wednesday: Exam # 1

*Part III: Case Studies - The Post Communist Systems*

Week 10 (Nov 3/ Nov 5) – Russia
Discussion Topics:
Why Russia has had more difficulty consolidating democracy than some of the other post-communist countries? How has Russia’s inheritance from the Soviet Union shaped its post-communist path? Does Russia’s strong president bad for its democracy?

11/03 Monday: Politics in Russia: Introduction
Reading:
• Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 8

Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapter 12
• TBD

11/05 Wednesday: Politics in Russia
Reading:
• Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 8
Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 12
- TBD

Week 11 (Nov 10/ Nov 12) – China
Discussion Topics:
What are some of the important similarities in terms of political processes and outcomes that we find in China and in democratic regimes? Do Western models work in China? Why or why not?

11/10 Monday: Politics in China: Introduction
Reading:
- Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 10

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 13
- TBD

11/12 Wednesday: Politics in China
Guest Speaker: Marcus Rodlauer (IMF)
Topic: "China at a Crossroads - Reform and Rebalance, or else…?”, 4:15pm – 6:00pm.
Reading:
- Samuels, Case Studies in Comparative Politics, Chapter 10

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 13
- TBD

Part IV: Case Studies – The Developing Democracies

Week 12 (Nov 17/ Nov 19) – Taiwan
Discussion Topics:
How did the KMT manage to stay in power for so long? Was the economy an important factor in the decline of the KMT? Comparing the two dominant political parties in Taiwan and Japan, what are the similarities that you find in these two countries?

11/17 Monday: Politics in Taiwan: Introduction
Reading:

Recommended Reading:
- Almond et al., Chapter 14
- TBD
11/19 Wednesday: Politics in Taiwan
Reading:
Recommended Reading:
• TBD

**Second Paper Due Friday, Nov 21**

Week 13 (Nov 24/ Nov 26) – India
Discussion Topics:
What advantages did India have at independence, compared to some other states with a long history of colonization? How has India been able to deal with significant religious, linguistic, and regional challenges to national integration?

11/24 Monday: Politics in India: Introduction
Reading:
• Samuels, *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*, Chapter 6
Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapter 17
• TBD

11/26 Wednesday: No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14 (Dec 1/ Dec 3) – Globalization
Discussion Topics:
What are the key elements of globalization? What are the likely consequences for democracy around the world if globalization’s pace increases?

12/01 Monday: Globalization and Democracy
Reading:
• Samuels, *Comparative Politics*, Chapter 13
Recommended Reading:
• Almond et al., Chapter 14
• TBD

12/03 Wednesday: Varieties of Democracy in the Contemporary World
Review for exam #2

Week 15 (Reading Period & Final Take-home Exam)

12/10 Wednesday: Exam #2

**Final Exam Due Friday, Dec 12 at 5 pm**