

Department: Political Science

Course No: 121/W

Credits: 3

Title: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Contact: Jennifer Sterling-Folker

Content Area: CA2 - Social Sciences

Diversity: CA4 International

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: "POLS121W. Introduction to Comparative Politics. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250"

"POLS121. Introduction to Comparative Politics. Either semester. Three credits. A survey of institutions, politics, and ideologies in democratic and non-democratic states."

Course Information: 1. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment: The course examines the relationships between ethnic, regional, religious, class based and associational groups and political behavior of individuals, coalitions and institutions. In turn, the impact of institutions such as electoral systems, legislative structures, parties, economic structures on individual and group behavior is examined in cross-national perspective. The interaction of these with policy and policy making address issues associated with the environment, the formation of Green parties and the mainstreaming of environmental issues in both social democratic and neo-liberal governments.

2. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political or economic groups and social issues at the societal, regional, national and international levels: Students will develop an understanding of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools that are common to the comparative method in political science, including both qualitative and quantitative techniques, ways to operationalize key concerns, examine tables, find and assess a wide variety of types of data. They will learn how to apply these methods to the comparative study of equality/inequality, political power, gender and ethnic related issues, class and the use of national identity for political purposes.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: 3. Acquire Critical Judgment: Through the use of essay questions, research papers, class discussions and small group discussions students will learn to develop, articulate and defend their own views on complex political issues. Students will be able to follow and place the events of the day in the world in an analytic framework that facilitates both understanding and organization of ideas.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: Comparative Politics by its very nature is concerned about politics and political phenomena across time and space. It teaches students to use that knowledge to gain fresh perspectives on themselves and the increasingly interdependent world in which they live. For example, they gain intimate knowledge of the variety of democratic practices employed by other countries and peoples.

CA2 Criteria: 1. Introduce students to theories and concepts of social science: Students will explore concepts such as state, nation, nation-state, political culture, nationalism, political system, political socialization, and many more concepts which enable them to successfully compare and understand political phenomena in diverse countries. Many of the concepts studied are based on broad social science concepts common to other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics.

2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including the ethical problems social scientists face: Students will learn about the comparative method as well as issues such as cross national analysis, the appropriate use of case studies, cross-sectional and time series analysis. They will learn how to interpret data from diverse sources including government sources, public opinion data, institutional analysis and the examination of groups and group behavior. The ethical problems faced by the social scientist in providing policy related advice to governments and institutions which might use them in undemocratic or abusive ways which do not respect human dignity are also discussed.

3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment: The course examines the relationships between ethnic, regional, religious, class based and associational groups and political behavior of individuals, coalitions and institutions. In turn, the impact of institutions such as electoral systems, legislative structures, parties, economic structures on individual and group behavior is examined in cross-national perspective. The interaction of these with policy and policy making address issues associated with the environment, the formation of Green parties and the mainstreaming of environmental issues in both social democratic and neo-liberal governments.

4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political or economic groups and social issues at the societal, regional, national and international levels: Students will develop an understanding of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools that are common to the comparative method in political science, including both qualitative and quantitative techniques, ways to operationalize key concerns, examine tables, find and assess a wide variety of types of data. They will learn how to apply these methods to the comparative study of equality/inequality, political power, gender and ethnic related issues, class and the use of national identity for political purposes.

CA4 Criteria: 1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values and/or modes of creativity: Introduction to comparative politics is inherently multi-cultural and multi-national. The course surveys the various ways that humans across the globe think about public events and act politically. Attention is paid to similarities as well as differences in political culture, and political institutions affecting social relationships in all major regions of the world. Political culture is understood both as mass attitudes and beliefs systems. Topics include the role of religion in politics in Western and Islamic countries, differences in the

political roles of men and women in African and Asian countries, and the impact of economic development on the political goals and priorities of citizens and government officials across rich and poor countries. Political institutions is understood as the systems of formal and informal rules regulating political behavior. The course examines the wide variety of approaches to governance in diverse countries of the world, including differences in the rules regulating democratic representation and participation. In all instances, the course focuses explicitly on contrasting politics in any country with politics in other countries.

4. Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration: This survey course looks not only at governmental actions, but at the moral language that public officials use when deciding and legitimating policies, and at the moral language that social groups adopt when trying to mobilize popular support and thus influence their government. In today's world, that moral language more often than not involves direct references to "human rights" or to democracy (which, arguably, is a form of human rights). Often (but not always) the course includes a discussion of public issues involving immigrants, such as the current political struggles in Europe over the rights of guest workers from Africa and the Middle East.

5. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political and/economic power in the context of any of the above four items: The exercise of collective power is, obviously, a central theme in any political-science course. While most readings and lectures in Introduction to Comparative Politics focus on the exercise of power by (and within) the nation state, the course also looks at how different social groups and organized interests—such as ethnic minorities, multiple indigenous populations, and women's organizations—use mixtures of resources (largely, but not exclusively, economic) and diverse cultural tools—religious symbols and popular myths, for example—to influence the state. Thus there is attention to the diverse processes of generating power outside government, as well as attention to the workings of state institutions.

International: 1. The course focuses on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States: Comparative politics examines, compares, and contrasts differing political, economic, social, religious, and cultural systems throughout the globe, and it acquaints students with the diverse ways in which human beings have organized these systems. Students develop a healthy appreciation of the diversity of political systems in the world today and of the key factors, such as globalization, which influence their functioning.

2. The course focuses on cultural continuities and transformations over time and place: The course explores the variety of ways in which politics, economics, and culture have been transformed and yet bear the stamp of history. In exploring political culture, students come to understand contemporary cultural phenomena in their historical context.

W Criteria: 1. W Components to Course: When the course is taught as a W, each student is assigned a member country in the United Nations. Every second week they are assigned a topic for a brief essay/update on their country. They are expected to use internet sources as well as journal articles, newspapers, and books, and they must provide full citations for all references (including internet sources). Each paper is expected to be approximately 3-5 pages in length, double spaced, (12 point) plus references. They must complete a minimum of 15 pages for W credit. Papers must be submitted to the instructor electronically. Papers are reviewed, corrected, suggestions made and comments attached to the electronic draft and returned to the student for

corrections. Individual meetings are scheduled with the instructor to clarify any of the suggestions for revisions. All papers must be revised and submitted in final form one week after the initial due date. Only the final draft will be graded. Reports and essays of 5 out of 6 are valued at 50 points each, and the total is a possible 250 (50%) out of 500 points (including essay exams) available for the course.

2. **Primary Modes of Writing Instructions:** The primary modes of writing instruction for the course is an initial class discussion, individual conferences with students, and feedback (electronically) on required but not graded first drafts of all five short papers.

3. **Structured Opportunities for Revision:** Every paper is expected to be submitted in draft form at least one week before the final draft is due. The instructor provides feedback, corrections, commentary, etc., electronically to insure a timely response. For every writing assignment, a draft that will be commented on and corrected by the instructor is required.

Role of Grad Students: Every semester this course is taught by several regular faculty members in the department at Storrs, including Professors Scruggs, Vengroff, and Zirakazdeh. Select graduate students who are concentrating in this field serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs), who either grade for a faculty member or, if advanced in their studies, teach their own sections. All political science TAs are required to attend the Teaching Institute's roundtables on pedagogy offered prior to the start of Fall semester. International students are additionally required to take teaching tests and to attend a three-day training session at the Institute. Every Fall the department sponsors a TA information session to offer advice and discuss potential problems they may encounter. The department offers roundtables on pedagogical issues throughout the academic year. Finally, the appropriate faculty member, Department head, and the Department's Teaching Mentor supervise the TAs work throughout the semester.