

POLS 2801 – COMPARATIVE POLITICS

SPRING SEMESTER 2007

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Thomas E. Rotnem

OFFICE HOURS: TTH, 9:45-12:00, W 12:30-1:00

OFFICE PHONE: (678) 915-7523 (If no answer, please leave detailed message.)

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REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:

- 1) McCormick, John. 2007. *Comparative Politics in Transition*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Thomson/Wadsworth: Belmont, CA.
- 2) Moreover, at least 30-35 brief newspaper/journal articles will be handed out in class (most marked with an asterisk [\*] below); these should be read and their contents are testable.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Comparative politics involves the systematic study and comparison of the world's political systems. It seeks to explain differences as well as similarities among countries. Further, it looks for trends, for changes in patterns, and it tries to develop general propositions or hypotheses to describe or explain these trends.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS: Students will be able to:

- 1.) Demonstrate the value of comparative study in the evaluation of cross- national political phenomena, institutions, and behavior.
- 2.) Evaluate the major strengths and weaknesses of presidential and parliamentary systems, focusing in particular upon the American and British cases.
- 3.) Understand the important distinctions between the opposing regime types of liberal democracies and totalitarian states, while discussing how the Marxist-Leninist ideology informed the development of the latter regime type.
- 4.) Differentiate between the newly industrializing countries (NICs) and the less developed countries (LDCs), while demonstrating an awareness of the different theories that help explain the developmental progress (or lack thereof) in the economic and political realms of such states.

Additional course objectives:

- 1) Describe the analytical tools and concepts that political scientists utilize in comparative analysis.
- 2) Describe and explain the key characteristics of “liberal democracies.”
- 3) Explain the role of political culture in affecting a given nation’s political system.
- 4) Describe the key characteristics of the communist political systems of the former Soviet Union and present-day China, while evaluating the significant problems that attend post-communist transformation.
- 5) Analyze contemporary political issues in the different countries and political systems examined during the course, i.e., the American, British, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian political systems.
- 6) Demonstrate the ability to present information orally in an effective manner.
- 7) Conduct research that is methodologically sound, logical, analytical, and reveals critical thinking skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES & ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Lectures will be used together with class discussion. In addition, audio-visual materials will also be used to reinforce lectures and class discussions. Students **WILL BE EXPECTED to read the required text and other course handouts** and **be prepared to participate** in class discussion. (As this is a small class, much will be expected from students in terms of classroom participation.)

The questions for the exams will be drawn from readings and classroom lectures. [NOTE: While the readings and lectures are designed to complement each other, they do not cover identical material. Thus, in order to do well in this course, the student is **strongly** encouraged to both attend lectures and do all the readings. Please recognize that a **strong** relationship exists between attendance and class performance.]

EVALUATION:

Requirements:

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Exams I, II, and III        | 60% |
| 2. Individual Research Project | 15% |

3. Presentation of Research Project	5%
4. Attendance & participation	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

EXAMS will include a variety of types of questions including both objective and essay (identifications & essay) questions. **Dates of tests will be set no less than one week in advance.**

INDIVIDUAL COMPARATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS/PRESENTATIONS require that students choose a particular issue of interest to examine. Comparative topics of interest are many and varied. The choice of topic is open, but should be germane to the course.

Please choose a topic of interest to yourselves, making sure that you discuss with me the topic of your research project before conducting preliminary research.

Research projects will relate to our analyses of political systems in a chosen country or countries. The project might examine a political phenomenon across different time periods in a single country or compare similar or different political phenomena across two or more countries, using the “most-similar” or “most-different” methods of analysis. Projects are due at the beginning of class on April 19, 2006.

In addition, information concerning individual research projects will be shared with the class in the form of a class presentation (to be completed during the last weeks of class, April 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>). Paper presentations that are cogently and concisely organized and delivered AND include ancillary materials (e.g., transparencies, outline hand-outs, graphs/charts, etc.) **WILL** be rewarded.

More information on presentation requirements and expectations will be provided to you during the semester.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: As stated previously, attendance is strongly encouraged and a strong relationship ordinarily exists between classroom attendance and performance. Students will be prepared to answer questions on the required readings, as well as participate actively in classroom discussions of them. Furthermore, *at least* once per semester, every student will lead the presentation of a selected reading/topic.

NOTE: In cases where a student’s final grade is on the borderline, the instructor will use discretion to assign the higher grade based upon the student’s exceptional classroom participation and attendance.

#### GENERAL POLICIES:

**Make-up policy:** No make-up exams or incompletes will be given and no late assignments, papers, or presentations will be accepted, except in cases of **documented** medical, family or job emergency.

**Academic Dishonesty**: Any student found to be cheating or submitting someone else’s

work as the student's own work (in accordance with Student Life Regulations I.A) will receive a minimal punishment of a grade of "F" in this course, with a letter to the registrar stating that the grade was awarded for academic dishonesty.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the counselor working with disabilities at (678) 915-7361 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

**Disruptive behavior** will not be tolerated in this early morning class. Students engaging in disruptive behavior, e.g., talking during class, receiving cell phone calls, *sleeping/snoozing*, entering class late, leaving class early, etc., **WILL** be penalized. Such behavior is not only distracting to the instructor, but also is annoying to your colleagues. Should you have a problem or a particular extenuating circumstance, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

**Finally:** If you have a question, **please ASK!**

Grading Scale:

A= 100-90  
B= 89-80  
C= 79-70  
D= 69-60  
F= 59- 0

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

January 8 -	Class begins
January 8-11	Drop/add period
January 11	Fee payment deadline
February 27 -	Last day of regular withdrawal period
March 4-10	Spring break
April 26 -	Last day of Class

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE AND READING REQUIREMENTS**

**Weeks One/Two:**

*"Comparative Politics" – Introduction to Course:*

- syllabus
- research presentation topics

- Lectures:
- Comparative Politics: What Is It?
  - Introductory concepts, definitions, and theories
  - Why compare? Theory-building in Comparative Politics
  - Most-similar vs. most-different country analyses
- Liberal Democracies
- A Basic Comparator: The U.S. System

*READ:*

“Introduction,” McCormick  
 “Liberal Democracies,” pp. 23-35, McCormick  
 Chapter 1, McCormick

- \* Stuck in the Middle
- \* In Deep Crisis, Germany Starts to Revamp Vast Welfare State

### **Weeks Three/Four:**

The Quintessential Parliamentary System: Great Britain

*READ:*

Chapter 2, McCormick

- \* Feel Like You’re Being Watched?
- \* British Opposition Leader Plants His Standard Firmly on Centre Ground
- \* Cameron Insists He Will Pursue ‘Compassionate Conservatism’ Style Seeking Gravitas
- \* Blair Outlines Plans for UK’s Nuclear Arsenal

### **EXAM I – Week Five**

#### **Weeks Five/Six/Seven:**

Political Culture and its Impact Upon Democratic Development: Japan

*READ:*

Chapter 3, McCormick

- \* Japan's Bureaucratic Old Boys Uncertain of a Soft Landing
- \* Japan 'Female Emperor' Spat Flares Up
- \* Support for Koizumi's Heir Hides Weak Spots in Armour
- \* 'To Benefit the Reality': How Abe Aims to Secure Japan its Desired World Status
- \* Shrine Visits Mar Talks Aimed at Smoothing Japan-China Ties
- \* Japan Vows to Stay out of Nuclear Club

**Weeks Seven/Eight:**

Communist Development and the Legacies of Communism: *Problems along the Way toward Post-Communist Transformation*

*READ:*

"Communist and Postcommunist Countries," pp. 169-180, McCormick

**WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK!!**

**Weeks Ten/Eleven:**

The Russian Federation: *Ready for Take-off?*

*READ:*

Chapter 4, McCormick

- \* Window on Eurasia: Russia's Return to Authoritarianism Reflects a Basic Cycle of Russian History
- \* Kremlin Seeks to Boost Power of Aerospace Industry
- \* A Russian Phoenix Struggles to Stay Free
- \* Gas Pressure: Why Putin is Squandering World Prestige in his Squabble with Kiev
- \* Russia's Foreign Ministry Warns Japan... As Sakhalin Bans Foreign Publications with 'Distortions'

**Weeks Eleven/Twelve:**

China: The 9,000 Pound "Asian Tiger"

*READ:*

Chapter 5, McCormick

- \* Chinese to Soar Up the Super-Rich Ranks
- \* A Bargain that Could End Japan-China Bickering
- \* China's Virtual Cops Pinpoint Web Dissent
- \* China Promotes Old-Fashioned Values
- \* Censors Maintain Control as Chinese Journalists Yearn for Press Freedom

## **EXAM II: Week 13**

### **Weeks Thirteen/Fourteen:**

Newly Industrializing Countries: *India on the Rise*

*READ:*

"Newly Industrializing Countries," pp. 267-281, McCormick

Chapter 7, McCormick

- \* Surging with Self-Confidence and Ambition
- \* The Rise of Sex Selection in India

### **Week Fifteen:**

LDC's and the World of Islam: *Poverty as Pre-requisite for Radicalism?*

*READ:*

"Less Developed Countries," pp. 369-383, McCormick

"Islamic Countries," pp. 429-441, McCormick

The Egyptian Political System: *Opportunity for Reform or Radicalism?*

*READ:*

Chapter 9, McCormick

- \* Egyptian Crackdown Keeps Muslim Brotherhood in Check
- \* Egypt's Economy Dazzles as Political Reform Stalls
- \* Mubarak Denies Succession Reports

**Week Fifteen/Sixteen:**

**Individual Research Project Presentations – April 19<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>**

**EXAM III – April 26th**

**\*\* NOTE: The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course.  
Deviations **MAY** become necessary. \*\***