

PLSC 102

## **Introduction to Comparative Politics**

Albion College - Fall 2018

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 11:45-12:50 (Rob 402)

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Office hours: Monday 10:00-11:00 and Friday 2:00-3:00, Robinson Rm. 303

### **Course catalog description**

Examines the political institutions and processes of countries around the world. Emphasizes how to make meaningful comparisons between systems in different countries. Covers conditions for and functions of democracy, with an emphasis on how different kinds of democracies work. Provides a framework for comparison and considers the United States in comparative perspective. Topics include the vibrancy of democracy, the centrality of political and electoral institutions, the possibility of regime change, and the power of religion.

### **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to understand and follow the College's guidelines regarding academic integrity: "As an academic community, Albion College is firmly committed to honor and integrity in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, as a member of this academic community, each student acknowledges responsibility for this or her actions and commits to the highest standards of integrity. In doing so, each student makes a covenant with the college not to engage in any form of academic dishonesty, fraud, cheating or theft" (Albion Catalog). Suspected violations will be reported to the student and the college officials immediately. Confirmed instances of academic dishonesty may result in failure of the course and other consequences as outlined by the College. If you are unsure about whether your actions may fall under these guidelines, please do not hesitate to speak with me about your concerns.

### **Course requirements**

The course is a combination of lecture and in-class activities. There is something due before or during each class period. If you do not attend class regularly, you cannot do well in this course. Your grade will be determined by:

- Midterm exam (30%),
- Final exam (30%),
- Monday exercises (**E**), Wednesday discussion questions (**Q**), Friday group discussion (**G**) (40%).
  - Monday exercises are distributed and completed in class – the preliminary topics are listed on the syllabus.
  - Wednesday discussion questions are a one-page answer to a question related to the readings – distributed the first day of class.
  - Friday group discussion questions are distributed and completed in class
- The grades for the discussion questions, exercises, and group discussion are credit/no-credit, and you must attend class to receive credit. You can get full credit if you complete 27 out of the 29 exercises and discussion questions so that you may miss up to two classes without penalty.

### **Grading Scale and Formulas**

This hypothetical example demonstrates how your final grade will be calculated:

1. Earning 25 points for in-class activities amounts to 89.3% (i.e., 25/28). Your percentage score will then be transformed to standard numeric grade using the following formula:  $\frac{X}{20} - 1$ , so in this example your grade for this part of the class would be 3.47.

2. You will be able to earn a maximum of 50 points for both midterm and final exams. Let's say you obtained 45 points on your midterm, which amounts to 90% (i.e., 45/50). Your percentage score will once again be transformed to standard numeric grade using the following formula:  $\frac{X}{20} - 1$ , so in this example your grade for this part of the class would be 3.50. The same procedure will be applied to your final.
3. Your three grades are then weighted to receive one numeric grade. If your scores were:
  - a. In class participation = 3.47 (worth 40%)
  - b. Midterm = 3.50 (worth 30%)
  - c. Final = 3.10 (worth 30%)
 Your overall numeric grade would be 3.37.
4. Finally your numeric grade is applied to Albion's scale:

Albion's Scale	Score Needed
4.0	3.8 and above
3.7	3.79-3.50
3.3	3.49-3.15
3.0	3.14-2.85
2.7	2.84-2.50
2.3	2.49-2.15
2.0	2.14-1.85
1.7	1.84-1.50
1.3	1.49-1.15
1.0	1.14-0.85
0.0	0.84 and below

5. 3.37 would translate to 3.3 on your official transcript.

### Textbook

Samuels, David. *Comparative Politics*. (Pearson, 2013).

Samuels, David. *Case Studies in Comparative Politics*. (Pearson, 2013).

### Other notes

- Be sure to regularly check your albion.edu email for course announcements.
- Please refrain from using technology – cellphones, laptops – during the class period.
- Audio recordings are not allowed.
- If the vocabulary of comparative politics is unfamiliar to you, it may be a good idea for you to read political coverage in a major daily newspaper (New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal), other online news source (CNN, FOX, Daily Beast, or Bloomberg) or watch the NewsHour on PBS.
- Please bring your textbooks to class
- You are responsible for contacting appropriate offices if you need special accommodations for exams. I need to be informed about such events at least two weeks in advance.
- Be respectful of others

## **Weekly Schedule**

### **Week 1**

27 August. Introduction

Read Samuels, Chapter 1

Monday. Introduction

Wednesday. What is comparative politics?

Friday. No class-Dr. Tatarczyk attending academic conference

### **Week 2**

3 September. The state

Read Samuels Chapters 1 and 2

Monday. No class-Labor Day

Wednesday. E1. Do moral issues divided Westerners from Muslims living in the West?

Friday. G1.

### **Week 3**

10 September. Democratic political regimes

Read Samuels, Chapter 3

Monday. E2. Why democracy?

Wednesday. Q1. Why does democracy require both participation and contestation?

Friday. G2.

### **Week 4**

17 September. United Kingdom

Read Samuels (Case Studies), Chapter 2

Monday. E3. The essence of democracy

Wednesday. Q2. Does the age of British institutions matter to the success of democracy in the UK?

Friday. G3.

### **Week 5**

24 September. The political economy of redistribution

Read Samuels, Chapter 12

Monday. E4. Relative distribution of wealth: Sweden versus United States

Wednesday. Q3. How unique is the welfare state of the United States?

Friday. G4.

### **Week 6**

1 October. Germany

Read Samuels (Case Studies), Chapter 3

Monday. In class movie

Wednesday. Q4. What were two important flaws of the Weimar Constitution?

Friday. G5.

### **Week 7**

8 October.

Monday. Mid-term review

Wednesday. Mid-term review cont.

**Friday. Mid-term exam**

**Week 8**

15 October. Regime Change

Read Samuels, Chapter 5

Monday. No class-Fall Break

Wednesday. E5. And Q5. Why do some rich dictatorships not become democracies?

Friday. G6.

**Week 9**

22 October. Collective Action

Read Samuels, Chapter 9

Monday. E6. Transitions from non-democracy to democracy

Wednesday. Q6. What are the main ways to resolve collective action problems?

Friday. G7.

**Week 10**

29 October. Japan

Read Samuels (Case Studies), Chapter 5

Monday. E7. What factors help overcome collective action problems?

Wednesday. Q7. How did Japan's electoral rules help promote the LDP's control of the government?

Friday. In class movie

**Week 11**

5 November. Religion and politics

Read Samuels, Chapter 7

Monday. E8. Separation of Church and State

Wednesday. No class-Dr. Tatarczyk attending academic conference

Friday. No class-Dr. Tatarczyk attending academic conference

**Week 12**

12 November. The Catholic Church and democratization in Poland

Read (readings distributed via email)

Monday. E9. Polish-American relations

Wednesday. Q8. What connects modernization, secularization, and democratization?

Friday. G8.

**Week 13**

19 November. Political economy of development

Read Samuels, Chapter 11

Monday. E10.

Wednesday. No class-Thanksgiving Break

Friday. No class-Thanksgiving Break

**Week 14**

26 November. Political economy of development

Read Samuels, Chapter 11

Monday. E11.

Wednesday. Q9. What is the significance of the Second Vatican Council?

Friday. G9.

## **Week 15**

3 December.

Monday. Comparative Politics Case Study

Wednesday. Final exam review

Friday. Final exam review cont.

## **Final Exam**

**Wednesday, 12 December from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.**

**\*I reserve the right to amend this syllabus**

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## **Wednesday Discussion Questions (Q)**

Throughout the semester, you will be writing one-page responses to questions that relate to the readings and the lectures. These questions serve several purposes. First, I want to encourage you to complete assigned reading and think about material *before* class: this will help you learn more in class. A second reason I assign questions is to give you frequent opportunities to write. People retain more when they discuss and write, as opposed to just reading and listening. Frequent writing also provides practice. A final purpose for questions is to motivate attendance. You must be present in class to receive credit for these assignments.

Please format questions with half inch margins at top and bottom, 1 inch margins at left and right, 12 point font, double line spacing. At the top, place your name and due date on one line. You may center a title below this, but a title is not required. Length is one page (about 250 words).

You are likely to see variations of these questions again on exams.

There are two possible scores on a question: 1 (good enough) and 0 (not good enough). **There are no late questions.** If you are not in the classroom to hand in a question, that will count as a zero.

**(see syllabus for due dates)**

- Q1 Why does democracy require both participation and contestation? (see pages 60-62 “Defining Democracy”).
- Q2 How important do you think the age of British institutions are to the success of democracy in the United Kingdom? (see pages 49-60, “Institutions of the United Kingdom” [case studies book])
- Q3 What are the main differences between the “welfare states” of the United States, Germany, and Sweden? (see pages 332-338, “Explaining Variation in welfare state spending”)
- Q4 What were two important flaws of the Weimar Constitution? (see pages 82-83, “The Weimar Republic” [case studies book])
- Q5 Why do some rich dictatorships not become democracies? (see pages 125-133, “Economic Change”)
- Q6 What are the main ways to resolve collective action problems? (see pages 230-234, “Resolving collective action problems”)
- Q7 How did Japan’s electoral rules help promote the LDP’s control of the government? (see pages 167-173, “Electoral systems” [case studies book])
- Q8 What is the connection between economic modernization, secularization, and democratization? (see pages 195-198, “Connecting modernization, secularization, and democratization”)
- Q9 What is the significance of the Second Vatican Council? (see pages. 179-182, “Catholicism and democracy”)