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# Introduction to Comparative Politics

## POLI 2053

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### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Jonathan Nickens  
Office: 320 Stubbs Halls  
Email: jnicke8@lsu.edu  
Office Hours: M 10:00a-11:00a  
or by appointment

### COURSE INFORMATION

Louisiana State University  
Spring 2019  
Section 002  
239 Lockett Hall  
MWF 11:30a-12:20pm

### **Course Overview**

#### *Course Description*

This course provides a university-level introduction to comparative politics by addressing broad themes related to domestic politics and types of governments in countries around the world, including modern state formation, variation in regime type, and electoral systems and their effects, as well as other core topics & concerns of the sub-field. Particular attention will be given toward theories relating to political violence and lesser developed countries. While comparative politics covers a wide-ranging area of research, this course is designed to provide the student with a firm grasp and understanding of the fundamental issues, while also highlighting some of the emerging areas of current research and modes of thinking. Course instruction involves discussion of broad themes and topics, while also highlighting detailed information pertaining to case studies of individual countries.

#### *LSU Learning Competency Statement for the Social Sciences*

LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

### **Required Reading**

1) The textbook listed below is required for this course. It can be found at university and area bookstores. The textbook is also available online for purchase at various online bookstores and websites.

Newton, Kenneth and Jan W. van Deth (2016). Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cambridge University Press

2) Several topics and class meetings for this course will require additional or alternate readings not found in the textbook. These materials are listed by date on the Topics and Readings Schedule, and will be uploaded to the course Moodle site in .pdf format for download. It is the student's responsibility to access and review the appropriate materials for the assigned class period. If the documents are unavailable or cannot be accessed for any reason, inform the instructor so that technical issues can be corrected/modified.

3) Students will also be required to keep up-to-date with the news and current events, as it pertains to topics in comparative politics. News articles will be selected by the instructor and posted to the course Moodle site throughout the semester for review by students. These news articles are assigned reading, as content from the articles will form the basis for quiz material.

## **Graded Items**

### *Composition of Course Grade*

Scores for each graded item will be based on a range of 0-100, and weighted according to the table below.

<b>Graded Item</b>	<b>Percentage of Grade (Weight)</b>
Attendance	15%
Participation (in-class)	5%
Quizzes (4 x 7.5%)	30%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

### *Attendance*

Attendance is mandatory in this course, and student roll will be taken for class meetings, at the discretion of the instructor. This policy is in conjunction with a University-wide effort to bolster student attendance, as research has shown that students who attend class regularly have improved performance scores. Attendance scores are based on 100 total points. Each student is allowed three unexcused absences before it affects their attendance score. After three unexcused absences, your attendance score drops 10 points for each unexcused absence. See table below:

<b>Unexcused Absences</b>	<b>Attendance Score</b>	<b>Unexcused Absences</b>	<b>Attendance Score</b>
3 or less	100	8	50
4	90	9	40
5	80	10	30
6	70	11	20
7	60	12	10
→continued →	→continued	13 or more	0

### *Participation (in-class)*

Student participation in class discussions help to facilitate learning and is a required component of this course. This includes comments related to lectures and assigned readings, as well as appropriate questions that contribute to the discussion. Students are expected to contribute to in-class discussion via general comments and questions on an occasional basis. I don't expect you to contribute to every class discussion, but I expect you to do so periodically.

### *Quizzes (4)*

Students will take four in-class quizzes on dates noted by the instructor. Content for quizzes will be taken from news articles posted on Moodle. Quizzes will consist of ten multiple-choice questions each. You will need a small scantron for quizzes.

## Exams (2)

Content for exams are taken from in-class lectures and assigned readings (textbook chapters & other readings). The format for exams will be multiple choice. The exams are non-cumulative (see more below).

### -Midterm Exam-

This exam will test for content covered from the beginning of the course to the date of the Midterm Exam. The format for this exam will be multiple choice. The Midterm Exam will be administered in-class on **February 25, 2019**. You will need a small scantron for this exam.

### -Final Exam-

This exam will test for content covered after the Midterm Exam. While this exam is not cumulative, you will still need a fundamental grasp of the concepts and ideas discussed in the first half of the semester to be effective on this exam. The format for this exam will be multiple choice. The Final Exam will be administered on **Tuesday, April 30, 2019 from 12:30pm-2:30pm**. The location for the Final Exam will be the normal classroom. You will need a small scantron for this exam.

\*Note: This exam date/time is set by the University and cannot be moved, modified, or made-up. You must attend this testing session, and you cannot take the Final Exam early or at any different time.

## Grade Calculation

A graded item is an exam, quiz, attendance, etc. Each graded item is based on a 100 point total (0-100). Your score for each graded item is the number of points received. Final grades for students will be calculated by multiplying their score for each graded item times (x) the weighted percentage for each graded item. The weighted graded items are then added together and a final grade given based on 100 point totals.

### ***SAMPLE FOR FINAL GRADE***

<b>Graded Item</b>	<b>% of Grade (Weight)</b>	<b>Score (Example)</b>	
Attendance	15%	90	13.5
Participation (in-class)	5%	100	5
Quizzes (4 x 7.5%)	30%	85	25.5
Midterm Exam	25%	95	23.75
Final Exam	25%	83	20.75
<b>FINAL GRADE</b>			<b>88.5 B</b>

## Extra Credit

To be determined.

## **Grading Policies**

### *Absences, Missed Exams and Make-ups*

Allowance for the excusing of missed class and make-ups of missed exams & quizzes will be in accordance with University policy, which outlines valid reasons for such occurrences. Valid reasons include, but are not limited to, serious illness, death in the immediate family, religious observances, and scheduled trips for academic & athletic purposes. Proper documentation is required for any excused absence or missed examination period. If possible, let the instructor know before missing class. Excused absences do not hurt participation grades. If you miss a class lecture, feel free to obtain notes from a classmate. You can then ask me specific questions concerning the material, but I cannot provide you with notes or presentation slides.

If you miss a quiz or exam, contact the instructor immediately so that the situation can be evaluated and arrangements made, if applicable. If you have documentation that notes your excused absence, email me a scanned version or photo of the document. In cases where make-ups are allowed, you will be given an alternate quiz/make-up exam different from the in-class version to preserve academic integrity. Note that the Final Exam schedule is set by the University and cannot be amended, meaning that make-ups are not allowed for this exam and you cannot take the exam at any other time/date (without official approval from the Dean's Office). For complete information on the University's attendance and exam make-up policy, see the Regulations section of the LSU General Catalog.

### *General Grading Policy*

Grades are based on the academic performance of the student, as it pertains to assigned coursework and examinations, and in accordance to the grading scale, weighting, and policies listed in this syllabus. Any questions or concerns about graded work are welcome, and should be directed toward the instructor in-person during office hours or by appointment.

### *Grading Scale*

Grading for this course will be consistent with the plus/minus grading scale adopted by the University, and as outlined in the LSU General Catalog.

Letter grade	Score				
A+	100-97.00	A	96.99-94.00	A-	93.99-90.00
B+	89.99-87.00	B	86.99-84.00	B-	83.99-80.00
C+	79.99-77.00	C	76.99-74.00	C-	73.99-70.00
D+	69.99-67.00	D	66.99-64.00	D-	63.99-60.00
F	<60				

## **Course Policies & Expectations**

### *Note on Participation and Preparation*

Students are expected to come to class on-time, prepared and ready to engage in material comprehension, as well as ready to participate in classroom discussions concerning the week's topics. This means that assigned readings should be completed before each class meeting. Students should frequently check the course Moodle page in order to access additional readings or supplemental materials posted by the instructor at an on-going basis.

### *Diversity*

Diversity is fundamental to LSU's mission and the University is committed to creating and maintaining a living and learning environment that embraces individual difference. Cultural inclusion is of highest priority.

### *Special Accommodations*

LSU is committed to providing adequate accommodations to all students with documented and approved disabilities. As per University policy, special accommodations approved by LSU Disability Services will be incorporated into individual student learning, and will remain confidential. Eligible students should contact Disability Services (115 Johnson Hall, 225-578-5919), so that official approval can be processed. Eligible students should notify the instructor as soon as possible and provide official documentation.

### *General Statement on Academic Integrity*

Louisiana State University adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth guidelines for student behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community.

Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Advocacy and Accountability. For undergraduate students, a first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. For a second academic violation, the result could be suspension from LSU. For graduate students, suspension is the appropriate outcome for the first offense.

Note that academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) viewing other students' answers during quizzes/exams, accessing & viewing testing materials from previous courses, sharing notes through group email chains, note swapping websites, et cetera. I have no problem with you obtaining notes from an individual classmate on an occasional basis when you miss class. But this must not be on a regularly recurring basis and may not be done through any type of collective group effort.

### *Plagiarism*

Students will refrain from plagiarizing the academic property of others and to utilize appropriate citation method for all coursework. For this course, it is recommended that you use the APSA citation style. Ignorance of the citation method is not an excuse for academic misconduct. Remember there is a difference between paraphrasing and quoting, and how to properly cite each respectively.

### *Technology Use*

Laptop use in class is for note-taking, research purposes and academic-centered use. This privilege is contingently permitted, but may be rescinded at any time. It is an obvious concern that laptop use is a distraction to students during lectures, and I encourage you to keep electronic use to a minimum. Sustained abuse of laptop privileges may result in punitive adjustments to a student's participation grade when it becomes apparent to the instructor that technology is being used for purposes other than academic learning. Cell phone use is not allowed and should be avoided. Likewise, use of other technological devices is prohibited, unless approved by the instructor. Students may not record lectures or class discussions using any type of electronic device. Concerns related to this or any policy listed above should be discussed with the

instructor, as amicable modifications will be based on genuine needs of the student, as it relates to learning in a university environment.

### *Communication and Conduct*

All communication with the instructor and all written work should be prepared using formal, standard language. In other words, do not use “texting” language or other abbreviated jargon to communicate your thoughts and ideas for this class.

Additionally, all students are required to conduct themselves appropriately at all times and in a professional, courteous manner. This means it is necessary for you to treat others with respect and courtesy. Talking while the instructor or another student is talking will not be tolerated. Conduct that is disruptive and/or not respectful of an academic environment will also not be tolerated. Severe violation of these guidelines will be reported to the LSU Office for the Dean of Students.

### *General Statements*

If in doubt about any policy, requirement, or content-related matter, please contact the instructor. Also, it would greatly benefit students to read and become familiar with the LSU General Catalog. This catalog contains the official policies and regulations of the University. I am more than willing to provide additional information or explanation to questions related to course content posed by students. Questions or concerns may be addressed in-class, through email, in-person during office hours, or by appointment. I will respond to emails within a timely manner, but allow up to 24 hours for responses. I am also available to meet before/after class to discuss questions or concerns.

LSU provides each student with a University-affiliated email (ex. jsmith4@lsu.edu) which you should have already activated and currently use. If you have not activated your University email account, you should do so immediately, as all course communication will be sent to this email address.

**Check your email, check the course Moodle page, and check the Course Calendar (see below) on a regular basis. Be proactive!**

The instructor reserves the right to amend any of the policies, requirements, or statements pertaining to this course/syllabus. Any modification of the syllabus or class schedule (for unexpected events such as emergencies, extenuating circumstances, etc.) will be conveyed to student either in-class or via email, with as much advance notice as reasonably possible.

There are two appendices to this syllabus:

- 1) **Lecture Topics**, which provides topical information that is to be discussed during the course, along with assigned reading chapters. It is your responsibility to keep with where we are in terms of topics and lecture material.
- 2) **Course Calendar**, which list the dates for: class meetings, exams & quizzes, university holidays, and other notations needed by the student.

Have a great semester and Geaux Tigers.

## **LECTURE TOPICS**

**(in order of class discussion)**

- Lecture 1      Comparative Politics: An Introduction**  
Required Reading: Lim 2010
- Lecture 2      The Modern State**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 1 (pp. 15-24)
- Lecture 3      Regime Types: Democracies & Autocracies**  
Required Reading: Siaroff 2005, Chapter 3
- Lecture 4      Constitutions**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 4 (pp. 75-85)
- Lecture 5      Presidential & Parliamentary Systems**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 5
- Lecture 6      Autocracies: Varieties of Autocratic Rule**  
Required Reading: Siaroff 2005, Chapter 8
- Lecture 7      Party Systems, Voters & Electoral Systems**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 13 (pp. 273-274; 280-285)  
Textbook, Chapter 12 (pp. 251-256, including Briefing 12.1)
- Lecture 8      Defense and Security**  
Required Reading: Newman & Van Deth 2006, Chapter 16 (Moodle only)
- Lecture 9      Political Violence and Civil War**  
Required Reading: Moro 2017
- Lecture 10     Political Violence and Civil War: Northern Ireland Case Study**  
Required Reading: Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009
- Lecture 11     Autocracies & Institutions: Power-Sharing**  
Required Reading: Svulik, Chapter 4
- Lecture 12     Autocracies: Current Trends**  
Required Reading: Walker 2015
- Lecture 13     Comparative Political Economy**  
Required Reading: *To Be Determined*

**Lecture 14    Less Industrialized States & Failed States**

Required Reading: Wood 2008

Rotberg 2013

**Lecture 15    Communism and Politics: Transitions from Autocracy to Democracy**

Required Reading: *To Be Determined*

**Lecture 16    Looking Toward The Future: Regime Types**

Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 17