

COMPARING FOREIGN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

PSC/GBS 2510, High Point University
Dr. Mark Setzler
Fall 2017 Syllabus

Seminars: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:40 - 1:20 in David Hayworth Hall 202

Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays: 10:30 – 11:30 | Tuesdays & Thursdays: 1:45 – 2

Contact Information:

Office: Roberts Hall 343

Phone: 336/841-9018 (office); 336/834-0185 (home, before 8:00 p.m. only)

Email: msetzler@highpoint.edu

Class Website: <http://www.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/ComPol/CPhome.htm>

BULLETIN DESCRIPTION:

Using country case studies selected from the advanced democracies, post-totalitarian settings, and the developing world, this course compares the structure of political power across many of the world's most influential nations. Students will investigate why different types of governments vary in their capacity to develop modern economies, limit political violence, protect excluded groups, and respond to their citizens' needs. While the primary focus is on governmental institutions and political behavior, the course covers multiple cultural perspectives on the role and optimal structure of government, and it surveys the basic geography, history and the circumstances of everyday life in numerous foreign settings.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

We will focus on the basic theories, concepts, and questions that social scientists use to compare political systems and policy outcomes across different types of countries and societies. Approximately half of the class is devoted to studying political development, institutional power, patterns of political participation, and political culture within a select set of globally-influential countries (mainly Britain, Germany, China, Russia, Iran, and India, but we will also investigate aspects of political life in the United States and several additional settings in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East).

Although this class typically enrolls more students than our department's upper-division seminars, my teaching style is designed to encourage student input, questions, and discussion. In most meetings, I will either engage the class with a two-way, interactive lecture on topics and issues not covered in your reading assignments or guide a dialogue based on your assigned readings. While a series of focus questions will keep our discussion on track and help you to identify major ideas and concepts, you should consider our classroom as a place of debate and conversation where your input and ideas are a critical component of student learning. Please aim to make the most of our seminars and class exercises by consistently coming to class well-read and fully prepared to ask questions, to comment insightfully on the day's reading assignments and to engage the ideas and perspectives of other students.

SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES (After completing this course, you should be able to do the following):

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic political institutions and important actors of a select number of highly-influential nation states. This outcome will be assessed with three examinations.

- Be able to analyze and systematically compare countries with varying regime types, formal and informal political institutions, and dominant political ideologies. This outcome will be assessed with three examinations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to apply the main concepts and theories that social scientists—especially political scientists, economists, and political sociologists—use to study the central policy preferences of different types of societies. This outcome will be assessed with three examinations.
- Required GBS course outcome #1: Analyze an important international issue from American and foreign perspectives while demonstrating self-awareness about how your personal political and national origins shape your views on the issue. This outcome will be assessed with a 1,200 word op-ed research essay.
- Required GBS course outcome #2: Be able to analyze processes that are intensifying global interconnectedness and assess the significance of those processes. This outcome will be assessed with a long-essay prompt at the end of the course that explores the causes and consequences of globalization or democratization. Students will receive the question in advance and spend approximately 70 minutes responding to it.
- Required GBS course outcome #3: Analyze multiple perspectives on an ethical issue that has global or international ramifications, evaluating those perspectives in light of your own views of responsibility. This outcome will be assessed with the 1,200 word op-ed research essay that is also used to assess GBS outcome #1.

READING SOURCES AND MATERIALS:

- **A textbook covering major issues in the field.** Patrick H. O’Neal. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- **A textbook of country case studies.** Patrick H. O’Neal, Karl Fields, and Don Share. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton. If purchased through the HPU bookstore, the two required books for the class typically are bundled, with the second book substantially discounted. You must have the latest edition of the case studies volume.
- **Numerous academic journal and news magazine articles.** High Point's library subscribes electronically to almost all of your non-text reading assignments. While you are free to locate these materials in the library on your own, most students will probably want to download the readings from the links and archives I have placed on the course's website (you can access readings by following the electronic links I have embedded in the on-line version of the assignments schedule). To open and read many of the assignments downloaded from the course website, you will need to use a PDF reader of some type. You will also need a class-specific password will be provided in class.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT:

- **Two in-class unit examinations: 25 percent of the course grade.** At the end of the first two course units, you will take in-class examinations that assess your understanding of each unit's assigned readings and any materials reviewed in our seminar meetings.
- **Two analytical papers: 25 percent.** You will write mid-length (approximately five pages) analytical essays at the end of the first two course units. Each paper will address a specific question, require full citation, and apply only materials that have assigned in the class.
- **A researched opinion essay: 10 percent.** In the last part of the semester, you will submit a typed essay that is no shorter than 1,200 words in length and that draws upon a limited amount of independent research. This assignment is used by the university’s Global Studies Committee to assess the program’s learning outcomes (all GBS classes ask students to complete a similar assignment that responds to a

comparable prompt). In addition to the regular procedures, you will be required to upload the assignment to a designated site in order to receive credit for this assignment.

- **A final examination: 25 percent.** Your final exam will have two components. The first part of the test—a battery of short identification items and questions--will focus exclusively on course materials from Unit 3. The second half will be a long essay question that incorporates one or more major themes covered in the course as a whole. The long essay will be worth one third of the exam grade, and it will be on a topic that I will select from a list of potential topics that I will give you on the last day of class.
- **Participation and professional conduct: 15 percent.** Your participation/professionalism grade will be assessed at four points during term using the rubric on the course website; your overall participation grade will be the average of these grades. Obviously, you must present, prepared ABD =====to contribute and get the most out of class discussion. The assessment of professionalism is meant to assist you in building the skills to remain intellectually engaged for significant periods of time and to help you learn how you to take notes effectively by hand in learning settings where the discussion infrequently follows a rigid, predetermined path. While the inappropriate use of electronic devices or similarly distracting behavior is obviously unprofessional, even when laptops and phones are used exclusively to take class notes, they virtually eliminate eye contact and the other types of non-verbal communication that allow for meaningful conversations to take place. As such, multiple violations of course policies listed below concerning the use of electronic devices will result in an F being assigned for your course participation grade.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION:

The university mandates that instructors course grades that accurately reflect performance. By university policy, the A grade must be reserved for students whose work is “of a markedly superior quality.” Bs are reserved for student work that is “excellent” and thus “clearly above average.” The C-range grades are appropriate only for students doing “satisfactory work” that is consistent with the performance of an “average student.” Ds are assigned where a student's work is “unsatisfactory,” such that it is evident that the student does not understand or cannot communicate many of the course’s basic elements and materials. An F indicates that a significant portion of the work has not been completed or is so deficient that it does not merit college credit. I will calculate your course grades using a numerical system:

A: 92.5-100; A-: 90.0-92.49
B+: 87.5-89.99; B: 82.5-87.49; B-:80.0-82.49
C+: 77.5-79.99 ; C: 72.5-77.49; C-:70.0-72.49
D+: 77.5-79.99; D: 62.5-67.49; D-: 60.0-62.49
F: 0-59.99

POLICIES:

- **Academic dishonesty.** I fully support and enforce the university's Honor Code. As a condition of membership in the university community, every High Point Student is honor-bound to refrain from cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. You are also honor-bound to report violations of the honor code should you ever observe them. Without exception, students taking or facilitating an inappropriate academic advantage will be have an honor code violation noted in their permanent University file and be sanctioned according to the applicable college policy. Acts of academic dishonesty include the presentation of another student's or author's ideas as one's own work, misconstruing the circumstances under which classes or assignment deadlines have been missed, purposefully misreporting paper word counts, and inaccurately representing that assignments have been completed.

- **Class attendance policy.** Your punctual attendance at every class meeting is expected. Any student who misses more than five classes during the term normally will be withdrawn from the course. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, you are responsible for obtaining all missed materials. Please be aware that punctual, regular attendance makes up an integral part of your class participation grade.
- **Instructor availability outside of the classroom.** Please know that I want students to learn as much as they can from this class and to receive good grades. You are strongly encouraged to come see me in person should you have undue difficulty successfully completing assignments. If you need to leave a message for me outside of class or scheduled office hours, the best way to contact me is via electronic mail. I usually check to see if I have new messages a few times each day. Meeting with students during office hours is one of the most important and enjoyable aspects of my job. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, my door is almost always open for several hours each day and special appointments can be made as necessary.
- **Electronic devices.** Please do not use phones, laptops, or other distracting electronic devices during our seminar meetings. See the participation expectations for the reasoning of this policy.
- **All papers and assignments must be submitted in both hard copy and electronically.** For the electronic version, the name of your document must include your last name and the assignment (e.g., Setzler paper 1). You will send the electronic copy of the paper to this e-mail address where it will automatically be archived:
psc251ofall2017@sendtodropbox.com
- **All submitted assignments must be in a format that can be opened by MS Word or a PDF document reader.** Do not provide me with a link to your assignment in a Google Drive or similar storage system. If you need help meeting these requirements, please see me for assistance during the first weeks of the semester.
- **Make-up tests and quizzes.** You are required to take all exams and quizzes on the days they are given, and make-up work for unscheduled absences will not be allowed except in the case of serious extenuating circumstances that can be verified (e.g., a serious illness). As likely will be the case with your future employers, I am much more flexible about rescheduling work and giving extensions when you provide advance notice and a reasonable justification for needing to move an assignment's due date. If you know you will not be able to make a paper deadline or take a test on the scheduled day for a compelling reason (e.g. participation in university-sponsored event), you need to make arrangements with me, in person, well before the day the test is given. Please note that when a make-up test is granted, I reserve the right to alter the structure of that exam from what was given to the rest of the class. ***For reasons of exam security and out of fairness to all students, I will not give early examinations (including the final), so you must make your travel plans accordingly.***
- **E-Mail accounts.** All students are required to have an active HPU email account that they check daily. Like most faculty and staff at the university, I assume that any message sent to your university mailbox will be accessed by you within a couple of days; be advised that I may use your HPU account to distribute important course materials or announcements. If you have any questions about appropriate etiquette when professionally communicating with me through e-mail, please consult my on-line handout addressing e-mail usage.
- **Disability accommodations.** Students who require classroom accommodations due to a diagnosed disability must submit appropriate documentation and receive instructions from the Office of Disability Support (336-841-9652). Only that office can approve accommodations, and by university policy they may not be applied retroactively.

MAJOR TOPICS OUTLINE & ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:

Please consult the on-line version of this document for more detail and links to all of your readings and assignments.

Please note that all dates are tentative. You will need the class-specific password to access or open some PDF files; the password for all places you are asked to provide one is: icecream.

Course Introduction

Topic 1—What can you expect to learn in this class?

Topic 2—Why and how do we compare different countries and regions?

Unit 1: How Can the Advanced Industrial Democracies Better Adapt to the Opportunities and Challenges of Globalization?

Topic 1—How do the advanced democracies vary from one another and nondemocratic regimes?

Topic 2—What is globalization, and why is this process making so many people unhappy in the advanced industrial democracies?

Topic 3—Why and how is power so centralized in Britain's democracy? How does Britain stay democratic?

Topic 4—Will devolution, “independence from Europe,” or constitutional change make Britain more democratic, or will it just make it less able to adapt to the challenges of globalization?

Topic 5—Why did democracy come so late to Germany? What advantages does Germany have because of the timing and nature of its path to democratic governance?

Topic 6—Is the German political and economic system something that other democracies should try to model?

Deadlines for Unit 1:

Tuesday, September 26: In-class examination 1

Tuesday, October 3: Analytical essay #1 is due. It must be submitted by e-mail and in hard copy by the start of class.

Unit 2: The Rise, Evolution, and Perhaps Decline of Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes

Topic 1—How do nondemocratic regimes vary, and why is it getting harder over time for tyrants to cling to power?

Topic 2—Why do revolutions aiming to improve life for everyday people almost always go brutally wrong?

Topic 3—How and why did Marx's call for communist equality turn into totalitarianism in most settings that adopted central command economies and political systems?

Topic 4—What role did Soviet communism play in leading Russia to become one of the world's strongest states, and why has its fall been so difficult for everyday Russians?

Topic 5—Why isn't democracy emerging in Russia, and how do the autocrats like Vladimir Putin stay in power despite holding elections?

No class on October 17 or 19: Fall Break

Topic 6—How successful have Iranian leaders been in institutionalizing their revolutionary ideals? How does government work in a modern “theocracy”?

Topic 7—Over the long run, will Iran prove to be a major obstacle to democracy in the Middle-East or a model case of Islamic democracy?

Deadlines for Unit 2:

Tuesday, November 5: In-class examination 2

Tuesday, November 12: Analytical essay #2 is due.

Unit 3: Development and Democracy: The Rapid Rise of the Global South

Topic 1—Why do some countries stay poor when others do not? What unique problems do the states that are home to the world’s “bottom billion” face? What unique opportunities do larger developing nations possess?

Topic 2—Why do most people still live in societies that don’t have fair elections and protect basic freedoms? Why do some countries become and stay democratic? Why don't more do so?

Topic 3—What is the relationship between economic development and democracy? Is it necessary to liberalize political or economic life first if you want a free and prosperous society?

Topic 4—How and why has Chinese socialism, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism differed from the Russian experience? To what extent can these differences explain the economic success of China in comparison to many non-democracies?

Topic 5—Will continued economic growth and more international power end up making China democratic? Will China’s success serve as a model of other states in justifying undemocratic rule as economically necessary?

Topic 6— Why and how has democracy thrived in India? What are the challenges to pursuing political equality and equality of opportunity in highly unequal societies?

Topic 7—Why might the world's largest democracy also emerge as one of its most powerful economies in the 21st century? Why is India struggling so far behind China now, and how can democracy sometimes slow down economic progress?

Topic 9—Course wrap-up and assessment: What did you learn this semester? Did we achieve the seminar’s learning outcome objectives?

Deadlines for Unit 3:

Friday, December 1: The research essay is due. This assignment may be completed and submitted at any point during the second half of the semester. Please e-mail by the due date and submit a hard copy of it by the start of last scheduled regular seminar.

Saturday, December 9, noon-3pm: Final examination. Your three-hour final test will be taken during the university-scheduled exam period. **Graduating (and only graduating) senior final grades are due before our exam period, so graduating seniors must see Dr. Setzler to make arrangements to take this test during an earlier testing period.** By college policy, all other students must take the exam during the regularly scheduled period.