

COMPARING FOREIGN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

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

Fall 2016 Syllabus

Seminars:

Tuesday, Thursday 1:35 - 3:15, Phillips School of Business, Room 215

Office Hours:

Mon. Wed. & Fri.: 2 – 3
Tues. & Thurs.: 10 – 11
and by appointment

Contact Information:

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Using country case studies selected from several different global regions, 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:

This seminar 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 course 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, India and Mexico, 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).

The seminar uses teaching methods 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 AND THEIR ASSESSMENT (After completing this course, you should be able to do the following):

- Be able to empathize with, critically analyze, and compare a variety of non-US cultural views vis-à-vis mainstream American perspectives regarding the leading issues and problems shaping international politics in the world today (Assessed with papers and exams).
 - Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the basic political institutions and important actors of a select number of highly-influential nation states (Assessed with papers and exams).
 - Be able to analyze and systematically compare countries with varying regime types, formal and informal political institutions, and political ideologies (Assessed with papers and exams).
 - Demonstrate a comprehensive 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 (Assessed with papers and exams).
 - Demonstrate a critical understanding of the ethical implications of global citizenship. Specifically, students identify a serious social problem in a foreign country, and offer a set of policy recommendations to address it by drawing on lessons learned in other societies or the global community (Assessed with papers and exams).
 - Be able to appropriately use thesis statements, effective topic sentences, professional prose, citation and adequate proofreading techniques when writing analytical essays (Assessed with papers).
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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. Make sure that you get the correct book in O'Neal's collection of three volumes. For this text only, and edition newer than the third edition will suffice.
 - **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 are bundled, with the second book substantially discounted. You need the latest editions, especially for the case studies volume. Because of major recent political events in Europe and Russia, it is important that you have the latest edition.
 - **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.
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STUDENT ASSESSMENT:

- **Two in-class unit examinations: 20 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. The tests will include a battery of true false questions and a section of short-answer questions/identification items.

- **Two analytical papers: 25 percent.** You will write mid-length (1750 words) analytical essays at the end of the first two course units. Each paper will address a specific question and should incorporate only materials that have assigned in the class.
- **A researched opinion essay: 15 percent.** In the last part of the semester, you will submit a typed essay that is no shorter than 1,800 words in length and that draws upon a limited amount of independent research. You will receive more detailed instructions on this assignment later in the term.
- **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 50 percent 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 thoughtful, informed participation is a required element of this class. Obviously, you must present and prepared to contribute and get the most out of class discussion. Your questions, insights, and opinions—especially those directed at the assigned readings and the course materials—are encouraged and valued. If it is apparent that many students are not ready to discuss assigned materials, I will be forced to resort to using graded pop quizzes as a primary measure of preparation and participation. To calculate your base participation grade, I will use a rubric that I have placed on the course’s website to assign separate participation grades after each course unit. Your final grade for this component of the course will be the average of these three grades.

The assessment of classroom participation and professionalism is meant to assist you in building the skills to remain intellectually engaged for significant periods of time and to take notes effectively by hand in learning settings where the discussion infrequently follows a rigid, predetermined path. Both of these abilities are broadly required in professional work settings, and your mastery of them will likely to prove critical to your advancement with future employers. 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 and deadlines have been missed, purposefully misreporting paper counts, and inaccurately representing that assignments have been completed.
- **Please do not use phones, laptops, or other electronic devices other than a voice recorder during our seminar meetings.**
- **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 make an individual appointment with me should you have undue difficulty successfully completing your work. Please feel free to call me at home (834-0185) if an issue is urgent, and I am not available at the office. I am willing to schedule meetings outside of my posted office hours for reasons of privacy or when your schedule requires it. I have young children, so please do not call me at home after 8:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m. If you need to leave a message for me outside of class or scheduled office hours, you may also contact me 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 will be made as necessary.
- **Papers and assignments must be submitted in both hard copy and by e-mail attachment.** For purposes of record keeping, you are required to submit a copy of all typed assignments by e-mail. Copies of work should be sent to me by the time they are due by e-mail attachment from your HPU e-mail account and in a format that can be opened by MS Word or a PDF document reader. 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.***
- **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.
- **E-Mail accounts.** All students are required to have an active HPU email account that they regularly check. 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 the appropriate documentation to Disability Support in the Office of Academic Development, 4th Floor Smith Library. Requests for accommodations should be made at the beginning of a course. Accommodations cannot be retroactive. Contact Rita Sullivant, Coordinator of Disability Support, rsulliva@highpoint.edu, 336-841-9061 for additional information.
 - **End-of-term course evaluations.** During the last week of classes, you will be asked by the university's office of assessment to fill out an *anonymous*, on-line survey on the quality of this class and its instruction. Please take the time to complete the survey for this course and all of your classes. Your participation in the assessment of our course not only is a critical component of the university's evaluation of instructors, but also it provides information that helps instructors to improve their classes and teaching.
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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.

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—Can we better understand or even improve America's democracy if we are willing to critically compare it to other advanced industrial democracies?

Topic 4—Why and how is power so centralized in Britain's democracy? How does Britain stay democratic?

Topic 5—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 6—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 7—Is the German political and economic system something that other democracies should try to model?

Deadlines for Unit 1:

Thursday, September 22: In-class examination 1

Wednesday, September 28, by 5:00 pm: Analytical essay #1 is due by e-mail. It must be also be submitted hard copy at the start of Thursday's 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 18 and 21: 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 1: In-class examination 2

Wednesday, November 9: Analytical essay #2 is due. It must be submitted by e-mail by 5pm.

A hard copy must be submitted by the start of class on Thursday.

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:

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

Thursday, December 8, Noon—3: Final examination. Your three-hour final test will be taken during the university-scheduled exam period. By college policy, students must take the exam during the regularly scheduled period. **Early exams will not be administered.**