

## Political Science 103: Politics Abroad (Introduction to Comparative Politics)

Dr. Gregg B. Johnson

421 Park Hall

Office Hours: MW 10-11am, T 11am-1pm, or by appointment

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### *Course Description:*

One of the primary goals of an introductory course in comparative politics is to familiarize students with the major schools of thought utilized in studies of *domestic politics*<sup>1</sup> across the globe. In this course we will pursue this goal by studying politics across a range of political systems. These systems represent developed capitalist democracies, post-communist/communist states, and developing countries (both democratic and non-democratic). Thus, many of the lessons we draw from them should be applicable to places we do not study directly.

Our readings and discussions about these systems may highlight characteristics that are particular to a certain place/time, but our goal is to develop conceptual tools that allow us to compare diverse countries and to generalize across types of political systems. We will focus on four main questions: 1) What is political science and what do comparative political scientists study? , 2) What are the causes and consequences of political institutions? , 3) What are the causes and consequences of political culture? , 4) How do institutions and culture (and possibly their combination) affect policy-making and political outcomes of interest (e.g. civil war)?

Comparative political science is **not** simply the description of other countries (which is boring). It requires a systematic form of critical thinking that capitalizes on the scientific method. The goal of this course is that you not only leave with some knowledge of how *domestic politics* function in other parts of the world, but also skills for analyzing and interpreting them in the future. Therefore, we will not only discuss specific historical events, but also ways to generalize from them, to create conceptual constructs, and to draw theoretical lessons.

Finally, this is not a course about personal political beliefs or normative evaluations of the political world. Instead, we care about drawing causal inferences based upon empirical observation of correlations between variables in the political world. Political science is not about what you believe, but what you can demonstrate empirically!

### *Assignments and Evaluations:*

You must keep up with the reading assignments, and they are detailed below. Readings not from the Caramani text (*Comparative Politics*) are available through UB learns and are denoted by a \* on the reading list. If you are having trouble accessing them please contact Mr. Dettrey ([bdettrey@buffalo.edu](mailto:bdettrey@buffalo.edu)). While there is no formal class participation requirement, participation is essential, and remaining current on the readings is a necessary first step toward in-class participation. Readings and class discussions will often be quite distinct — so one cannot be substituted for the other. More specifically, the text emphasizes concepts and generalizations, while classroom discussions will apply these concepts to specific cases and events.

Your grade will be based upon four equally weighted exams (25 percent each). Exams may include multiple choice, short answer identification, and (possibly) short essays. Student-suggested questions are strongly encouraged. Make-up exams will not be given. In the event that an exam is missed each remaining exam will increase in value to 33.3 percent each. If more than one exam is missed students will receive a 0 for the second missed exam and the highest grade possible for the course is a “D+”.

### Grade Range:

|        |    |
|--------|----|
| 93-100 | A  |
| 90-92  | A- |
| 87-89  | B+ |
| 83-86  | B  |
| 80-82  | B- |

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1 Political science distinguishes between comparative politics (the study of domestic politics) and international relations (the study of political relationships between two or more governments (mostly war and trade)). This distinction is less pronounced than in the past.

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| 77-79    | C+ |
| 73-76    | C  |
| 70-72    | C- |
| 67-69    | D+ |
| 60-66    | D  |
| below 59 | F  |

*Tips:* This class is designed to encourage you to work steadily during the course of the semester. To do well on the tests you should: 1) keep up with the readings, 2) come to class 3) take good notes, and 4) participate in the discussions. If you shirk the regular reading assignments and class attendance or try to cram your work into short time periods, you will probably have a difficult time. Students that follow these tips tend to earn A's and B's, students that sort of follow these tips tend to earn B's, C's, and D's, students that ignore these tips tend to earn D's and F's.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and cheating will be punished according to the university's policy on academic integrity. Besides, nobody likes a cheater.

A note on professional courtesy: It may help you to think of this class (or school in general) as your job. As such, you should behave in a (relatively) professional fashion. Consequently, cell phones should not ring in class. Please turn them off before the start of class. Text messaging in class is also unacceptable. Texting while holding your phone under the table/desk is not actually likely to fool me. Please also refrain from reading the newspaper/doing the crossword. Additionally, emails should begin "Dear Professor Johnson" or simply "Professor Johnson" and should include your name at the end (my title and name are not "Hey" or "Dude" and I do not know who [randomlettersandnumbers@buffalo.edu](mailto:randomlettersandnumbers@buffalo.edu) is). Emails without this information will be immediately deleted. Finally, I enjoy writing letters of recommendation for *outstanding* students. Students desiring a letter of recommendation should be prepared to supply a transcript, a resume, and a brief biography. This helps me write a complete letter which will hopefully further your academic/professional goals.

#### Readings:

- Caramani, Daniele. 2008. *Comparative Politics*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK
- All readings not listed by the author's last name of *Comparative Politics* (Caramani) can be found through UB learns and are indicated by an \* in the course schedule.
- I strongly suggest you read a reputable newspaper or news magazine as a small percentage of exam questions will be taken from current world events (e.g. Afghanistan just had presidential elections, Iran just had elections, Burma/Myanmar convicted democracy leader and sentenced her to house arrest (again)).

### Course Schedule

#### *What is Comparative Politics and how to study it?*

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 8/31: Course Structure and Expectations           | No Readings            |
| 9/2: Issues in Comparative Politics, part 1       | Caramani Ch. 1         |
| 9/4: American Political Science Conference        | NO CLASS               |
| 9/7: Issues in Comparative Politics, part 2       | Mair*                  |
| 9/9: Political and Economic Development (Part 1)  | Caramani Ch. 2 &3      |
| 9/11: The Research Process                        | Manheim and Rich*      |
| 9/14: The Comparative Method                      | Lijphart*, Berman*     |
| 9/16: Who is rich and who is democratic? Why?     | Epstein et al.*        |
| 9/18: Political and Economic Development (Part 2) | Wallerstein*, Sommers* |
| 9/21: Political and Economic Development (Part 3) | Mayhew*, KKV*          |
| 9/23: EXAM I                                      | No Readings            |
| 9/25: Evaluating Social Science Research          | Samuels*               |

9/28: Yom Kippur

UB closed until 6 pm

*What are Political Institutions and how do they vary?*

9/30: Old Institutionalism  
10/2: Democratic Institutions  
9/29: Authoritarian Institutions  
10/1: Democracy and Justice  
10/5: Democracy and Performance  
10/7: Legislatures—the sausage factory  
10/9: Unitary, Federal, and Supra-National Governments  
10/12: One Person, One Vote  
10/14: Party Systems  
10/16: Party Systems and the Third Wave  
10/19: Executive-Legislative Relations  
10/21: Exam II

Caramani Ch. 4  
Caramani Ch. 5  
Caramani Ch. 6, Hadenius and Teorell\*  
Cardoso\*  
Quinn and Woolley\*  
Caramani Ch. 7  
Caramani Ch. 11  
Caramani Ch. 18, Snyder and Samuels\*  
Caramani Ch. 12, 13  
Mainwaring\*  
Caramani Ch. 8  
No Readings

*What is Political Culture and how does it vary?*

10/23: Political Behavior (Part 1)  
10/26: Political Behavior (Part 2)  
10/28: Public Opinion in Africa  
10/30: Public Opinion in Eastern Europe  
10/29: Public Opinion in Latin America  
11/2: Public Opinion in the Near East  
11/4: Public Opinion in the Far East  
11/6: Civil Society  
11/9: Culture and Elections  
11/11: Culture Wars?  
11/13: EXAM III

Caramani Ch. 17, Lipset\*  
Caramani Ch. 18, Jackman and Miller\*  
Bratton\*  
Rose\*  
Seligson\*  
Rose\*  
Chang et al.\*  
Caramani Ch. 14, 16  
Caramani Ch. 10  
Saideman et al. \*  
No Readings

*Do political institutions and culture affect policy-making?*

11/16: Ideology  
11/18: The New Left(s)  
11/20: Decision Making  
11/23: Veto Players  
11/30: Guns or Butter  
12/2: Explaining the Welfare State  
12/4: The Pace of Change  
12/7: Challenges to the State  
12/9: Contradictory Trends and Confusing Signals  
12/11: Exam IV

Caramani Ch. 20  
Schamis\*  
Caramani Ch. 21  
Tsebelis\*  
Caramani Ch. 22  
Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote\*  
Aslund\*  
Caramani Ch. 23-24  
Pei\*  
No Readings

There may be some minor changes to the reading list and some topics may take more/less than a day to cover. The dates of the exams will not change.