

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

101 | Fall Semester 2023 | 3 credits | In-Person Delivery
MWF 8:00am – 9:00am in Sage 4232

“Democracy is the only form of government that, at least theoretically, contemplates its own demise. Democratic elections do not guarantee that the victors will be democratically inclined, and it is always possible that those who gain control of the legislative process will pass laws that erode or even repeal the rights that distinguish democracies from theocracies and monarchies.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes captured the fragility of a form of government that can alter itself beyond the point of recognition when he said that if his fellow citizens want to go to hell in a handbasket, it was ‘his job to help them.’ Democracy, then, can be said to be its own biggest threat.”
Stanley Fish - University of Illinois

BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Jason T. Neumeyer

Bachelor of Science: University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (2016)

Master of Arts: University of Wisconsin Milwaukee (2020)

Office Hours (in-person): MWF: 9:00am – 10:00am or by appointment

Office Hours (virtual): MS Teams by appointment

Office Location: Sage 4636

Email: neumeyerj@uwosh.edu

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK/APP

O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share, 2nd edition. 2021. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: WW Norton.

Please install the free **BBC NEWS** app on your phone or tablet and learn to use it!



Course Prerequisites: None – this course is open to students at any level and in all majors and is the first in a series of introductory courses in Political Science. In Introduction to Comparative Politics (84:101) we introduce students to the democratic and non-democratic political systems of several different states (e.g., Germany, China, Iran), taking a look inside each one to determine how they function. In Introduction to American Politics (84:105), we give students an in-depth look at the working of the American system of government. And in Introduction to International Relations (84:115), we show you how states work with and against each other in the global system. Political Science majors are required to take all three, but they stand independently so that non-majors can benefit from them as well.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- *Define* and *apply* key concepts in comparative politics;
- *Compare* and *contrast* the political systems of the countries explored in the course, paying particular attention to historical, political, economic, geographical, and moral aspects of governance in each country;
- *Investigate* how differences in worldviews, beliefs, practices, and values affect political choices in diverse contexts.
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COURSE CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to key concepts and issues in comparative politics in the context of case studies from Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East. It explores political participation and institutions, political ideology and culture, the role of government, political parties, democratization, economic development and inequality, nationalism, and ethnic and religious conflict in variety of national and regional contexts around the globe.

FALL 2023 COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is democracy really worth the effort?

We live in a time when ideas about democracy are shifting, and when global democracy is declining. More than that, countries like China—which aren't democratic at all—seem to be doing really well. In this course, we'll take a long, hard look at established democracies in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France to see how they function and whether or not they're up to the challenge our current political climate presents. At midterm, we'll switch our focus and examine countries that aren't democratic or are only weakly so: Russia, China, Iran, and Nigeria. Throughout the semester we will explore how different political systems respond to social, cultural, economic, religious, and other major national cleavages. The main emphases of this course will be institutions of government, electoral systems, parties, and political participation and how these aspects of government contribute to or detract from the quality of life for those living in each country.

You'll find that, as you study the way other countries function, you'll gain a better understanding of your own country. If you pay attention, participate, and do the work, you'll walk away from this class a much more informed global citizen than when you entered—and that will serve you well no matter what path you decide to take in life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have adapted the ideas and language from the work of several educators for this syllabus and course material. For example, I have borrowed liberally from other courses in Comparative Politics and related topics, as taught by Tracy Slagter, Druscilla Scribner, Patrick Kraft, and others. I appreciate their contributions to the discipline and thank all educators who make their teaching material available to others to push for better pedagogical practices for all. To pay it forward, I will share my own material with anyone who is interested.

STANDARD COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours via Microsoft Teams:

The Political Science Department uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus. We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic.

When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor's icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy. Generally, you are able to join office hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, I may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours and will mark my availability as "busy" (a red dot). In addition to these virtual office hours, I will also be available from 9:00am – 10:00am in my office (Sage 4636).

Please use my office hours freely and often – I am here to help! Feel free to email me if you need to set up a time outside of these options.

Email Etiquette:

Just as you will have to do in a workplace setting, it is important to present yourself professionally in academic emails. In your emails to me, other faculty and staff, and your classmates, heed the following advice: (1) include a meaningful subject line; (2) begin your email with "Dear..."; (3) use proper titles, if necessary; (4) be specific about the action you would like the recipient to take; (5) sign your full name to the email or create a signature.

If you decide to email me, please be sure that you have checked the syllabus first – instructors take a long time preparing these documents in hopes of answering many of the most common questions up front! For complicated matters, please visit me during my office hours or set up a time to meet virtually.

Cell Phones, Laptops, Electronics:

Please bring your cell phone to class (we will use them!). However, be respectful and set your phone to vibrate or silent mode and leave it in your bag, unless otherwise instructed. Laptops can be used in class for note taking or for digital access to readings; however, if you are on a laptop or tablet and checking non-course related sites during class, I will ask you to stop bringing those devices to class.

A Note to Political Science Majors:

Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. If you have questions about this requirement, your course schedule, possible internships, or career preparation please reach out to your faculty adviser. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisers at least once per year. If you are unsure who your adviser is, you can check TitanWeb or email Ms. Angelee Hammond at hammond@uwosh.edu.

Grievance Statement:

The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. Tracy Slagter. She can be reached at slagtert@uwosh.edu.

Disclosure Statement:

“Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990:
<https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>.”

Syllabus Change Policy:

If substantive changes are made in the course syllabus, such as changes in schedule or assignments, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.

If you notice any errors within this syllabus (dates, links not working, etc.), please bring it to my attention ASAP.

GRADING SCALE

I use a **93/90/87** grading scale in this course, meaning 93 is the cut point for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+ and so on. Grades will be continually updated on Canvas.

Your grade will be determined by several assignments, quizzes, projects, and exams, detailed below. Please do not fall behind on the readings or assignments! All assignments have a distinct due date (found either in the course schedule below or in the appropriate Canvas module) – if an assignment is turned in after the due date, points will be deducted as follows:

- Within 24 hours: 10% deduction
- Within 48 hours: 25% reduction
- Greater than 48 hours: 0

If you are struggling to keep up with the workload or need an extension on a specific assignment, please visit me in office hours or send me an email so we can discuss the situation further.

ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES, EXAMS

Attendance and participation (15%)

I expect you to be in class as much as possible – you can't participate if you are not around! You participate in several different ways: answering questions I pose to the class, contributing as a country expert, or popping into my office hours. Participation cannot be made up, no matter the reason for your absence from class. Attendance grades will be updated twice throughout the semester (once after the mid-term and once after the final project).

Students who attend every class but never say a word, or do not attend office hours, can expect a C for this portion of their grade.

Quizzes (20%)

There will be a short (10-15 question) multiple-choice quiz on Canvas after we complete some of the chapters in this course, including a quiz covering each country case we investigate. These quizzes are meant to assess your basic understanding of the concepts and to ensure that you are keeping up with the course reading. I fully expect you to have your textbook and notes with you while taking these quizzes, so please work through the quizzes carefully in order to earn all of the points possible in this section of the course.

Quizzes are due the Sunday after the weekly readings are complete at 11:59pm, but can be completed anytime during the week after you have finished the readings.

Exams (30%)

There will be two exams in this course, a midterm exam (15%) and a final exam (15%). Exams will consist of multiple-choice/fill-in-the-blank questions and several short answer and essays questions. Exams must be taken at the time and on the date they are scheduled unless you have a documented medical excuse (e.g., note from your doctor from the date you were sick) or must be absent for a University-sponsored activity (in which case I will need a letter from your coach or other University official).

Please check the course schedule right away to ensure that you are NOT going to miss an exam.

Country Expert (35%)

This semester we will cover 8 country cases (4 democracies and 4 weak/non-democracies). You will become a country expert on 2 of these cases. As the expert on this selected case, you will:

- Answer the two *Concepts in Action* prompts found in the case study reading in one fully developed paragraph each (two paragraphs total) – 70%
- Provide a current event article (use your BBC app!) to discuss during lecture – 10%
- Provide the class with key information on the politics, economy, society, and culture of your selected case (more information on this process will be provided) – 20%

*These assignments are due the Sunday before we discuss each case in class –
Please pay close attention to the weekly modules and course schedule!*

Comparative Politics Pre-/Post-Test

On the first day of the semester (September 6) and on one of the last days of the semester (December 10), you will take an ungraded assessment which covers some of the material you will learn throughout the course of the semester. This assessment does not count toward your grade whatsoever; the department uses these assessments to gauge what material students knew coming into the course and what knowledge they left with upon completion.

*Please take this pre-test prior to starting any of the assigned readings on September 6;
use the post-test on December 10 as an additional preparation tool for Exam II*

Extra Credit!

I. Ukrainian Ambassador Visit

Former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, will be giving a talk on her life and time working in international politics. This is a great opportunity to hear from someone who recently worked in one of the most important regions of the globe today!

To complete this extra credit assignment, attend the talk on Thursday, October 19th in Reeve Ballroom (6pm) or watch the live stream on UWO's Center for Civic and Community Engagement's website. Afterward, reflect on her talk, describe new things that you learned, and think about how this relates to concepts and themes from class.

Event Date: Thursday, October 19th – Reeve Ballroom
Journal Due: Sunday, October 22nd at 11:59pm

Completion of this assignment can earn you up to **5 extra credit points** which will be added to your lowest quiz grade.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity drives innovation, creativity, and progress. At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, the culture, identities, life experiences, unique abilities, and talents of every individual contribute to the foundation of our success. Creating and maintaining an inclusive and equitable environment is of paramount importance to us. This pursuit prepares all of us to be global citizens who will contribute to the betterment of the world. We are committed to a university culture that provides everyone with the opportunity to thrive.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have or think you may have a learning difference or a disability – a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would limit your access to learning or demonstrating your knowledge in this course, please contact the Dean of Students Office. If you already have an accommodation, please let me know in the first week of class.

<https://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/Accessibility-Center/faculty-and-staff-resources/syllabus-statement>

Academic Dishonesty:

A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found here:

<https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

Early Alert

A few weeks into the semester your instructors will send you an early alert message if they think that you are struggling with class. This message will let you know whether your instructors have noticed any academic problems, attendance problems, or both. When you get such a message it is a chance to address a problem and improve on your work. We suggest meeting with your instructor.

Center for Academic Resources:

The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List page on CAR's website (www.uwosh.edu/car) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by SSC 102 or call 424-2290.

To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let her/him know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available.

For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

Reading Study Center:

The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking.

For more information, email readingstudy@uwosh.edu, view the website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter>), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

Polk Library/Information Literacy:

You have been introduced to Information Literacy in your Quest Speaking and Writing courses. As a reminder, Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes.

Phone: 920-424-7329; email: mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: rap@uwosh.edu.

Food Assistance:

If you are in need of food assistance, you have campus resources available to you. Your Oshkosh Student Association (OSA) runs the campus food pantry, The Cabinet. It is open to all UWO students who express a need for food assistance. It is located in the lower level of the Reeve Memorial Union. Operational hours and additional information can be found on the OSA's Services Web-page. For questions and concerns, please contact the Food Pantry Director: foodpantry@uwosh.edu, or the OSA Office: osa@uwosh.edu; (920)-424-3202.

Student Right to Know Act (1990):

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CLASS SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change – some topics and readings will require a bit more time than I have allotted, and some less. I will let you know what to expect the next session after each lecture so that you can be prepared. In general, **you should have the readings completed for the day they are assigned** (if a reading is listed for 09/08, you should have it read before you come to class on that date).

Notes with asterisks (*) below indicate some things to think about when you are engaging with the materials found outside of the required textbook.

INTRO WEEK

September 6

Introduction to the Course and Assignments

READ: this syllabus and bring any questions you have

TAKE: Pre-test Assessment

September 8

Thinking about Comparative Politics

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 1

September 10

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – Intro Week

WEEK ONE

September 11

What is the State?

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 2 (through Comparing State Power, p. 38)

September 13

What is the State (Continued)?

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 2 (through the end of the chapter)

READ: 1 of the “Our Analysis” spotlights from the Fragile State Index
<https://fragilestatesindex.org/>

** Come ready to discuss your thoughts on your chosen topic in class! **

September 15

States vs Nations: What’s the Difference?

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 3

September 17

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – States and Nations

WEEK TWO

September 18

Democracy

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 6 (through Models of Democracy, p. 165)

September 20

Democracy

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 6 (through the end of the chapter)

WATCH: 60 Minutes video on Brexit Parliament debate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-6ml3yFw0w>

** How does debate in Parliament look different than that in the U.S.? **

** If interested in more British shouting matches, check BBC or C-SPAN **

September 22

The United States

READ: Cases and Concepts, U.S. Case Study

WEEK THREE

September 25

No Class

September 27

Developed Democracies

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 7 (through Contemporary Challenges, p. 198)

September 29

Developed Democracies

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 7 (through the end of the chapter)

October 1

SUBMIT: *Concepts in Action* responses (UK Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your UK current event article (UK Country Experts Only)

WEEK FOUR

October 2

The United Kingdom

READ: Cases and Concepts, U.K. Case Study

October 4

The United Kingdom

READ: Cases and Concepts, U.K. Case Study

October 6

The United Kingdom

READ: Cases and Concepts, U.K. Case Study

READ: Brexit: Latest updates from Politico

<https://www.politico.eu/section/brexit/>

** The U.K. and E.U. relationship status: complicated **

** Now that Brexit has occurred, what is next? **

October 8

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – U.K.

SUBMIT: Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (Germany Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your German current event article (Germany Country Experts Only)

WEEK FIVE

October 9

Germany

READ: Cases and Concepts, Germany Case Study

October 11

Germany

READ: Cases and Concepts, Germany Case Study

October 13

Germany

READ: Cases and Concepts, Germany Case Study

READ: Germany's Recent Military Move

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-business-europe-olaf-scholz-nato-1f1a27b1b0e4aab79bdb4e5a7de07eb4>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/24/magazine/germany-military-army.html> (read/listen)

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-politics-germany-government-olaf-scholz-44dca48439255f9bc0722c6cd7d157bf>

** Will Germany continue to build its military in support of Ukraine? **

** How does Germany's complicated history impact this move? **

October 15

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – Germany

SUBMIT: Country Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (France Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your French current event article (France Country Experts Only)

WEEK SIX

October 16

France

READ: Cases and Concepts, France Case Study

October 18

France

READ: Cases and Concepts, France Case Study

October 19

ATTEND: Marie Yovanovitch's talk – Reeve Ballroom, 6pm (optional)

October 20

France

READ: Cases and Concepts, France Case Study

WATCH: France's Far Right Documentary & Forgotten France

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6cGA8-TH5o>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-ooZ96nA8g>

* How has the far right party gained a foothold in French politics? *

* How do generational/geographic differences lead people to support/oppose the National Front? *

October 22

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – France

SUBMIT: Ukrainian Ambassador Extra Credit Journal (optional)

WEEK SEVEN

October 23

Political Economy

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 4 (through Political-Economic Systems... p.100)

October 25

Political Economy

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 4 (through the end of the chapter)

READ: Hunter and Sugiyama: Transforming Subjects into Citizens (2014)

** How do the requirements and framing of state-run social programs influence its effectiveness? **

** NOTE: This is a recent political science publication, therefore, it may be a more difficult read; however, this is a great (low stakes) opportunity to see how solid political science research looks **

October 27

Exam Review Day

READ: No new readings – make sure you are caught up with the readings to this point

BRING: Any questions you have

WEEK EIGHT

October 30

TAKE: Exam I

November 1

Non-Democracies

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 8 (through Nondemocratic Regimes... p. 372)

November 3

Non-Democracies

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 8 (through the end of the chapter)

READ: Freedom House: Nations in Transit 2020 – Dropping the Democratic Façade

** How former Soviet states have been sliding back toward authoritarianism **

November 5

SUBMIT: Country Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (Russia Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your Russian current event article (Russia Country Experts Only)

WEEK NINE

November 6

Communism

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 9 (through Societal Institutions p. 406)

READ: Marx: The Principles of Communism (p. 41 – 54)

** Communism often has a negative connotation and is not fully understood in the U.S. **

** Read Marx's original theoretical arguments behind this political-economic system **

November 8

Russia

READ: Cases and Concepts, Russia Case Study (through Political Regime, p. 434)

READ: BBC: The Nuclear Mistakes that Nearly Caused WWII

READ: TIME: Putin Suspended the Last Remaining Nuclear Pact with the U.S.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200807-the-nuclear-mistakes-that-could-have-ended-civilisation>

<https://time.com/6257209/putin-new-start-nuclear-arms-treaty/>

** A remnant often forgotten from the Soviet Union: a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons **
** Could a new nuclear arms race be upon us? **

November 10

Russia

READ: Cases and Concepts, Russia Case Study (through the end of the chapter)

November 12

SUBMIT: Country Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (China Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your Chinese current event article (China Country Experts Only)

WEEK TEN

November 13

Post-Communism

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 9 (p. 406 through the end of the chapter)

November 15

China

READ: Cases and Concepts, China Case Study

November 17

China

READ: Cases and Concepts, China Case Study

November 19

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – Russia & China

WEEK ELEVEN

November 20

Political Violence

READ: Cases and Concepts, Chapter 5

READ: Gallop: Tunisia: Analyzing the Dawn of the Arab Spring

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/157049/tunisia-analyzing-dawn-arab-spring.aspx>

** How Tunisians felt before the beginnings of the Arab Spring **

** How do citizens maintain and nurture democracy after a ‘successful’ revolution? **

November 22

No Class – Thanksgiving Recess

November 24

No Class – Thanksgiving Recess

November 26

SUBMIT: Country Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (Iran Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your Iranian current event article (Iran Country Experts Only)

WEEK TWELVE

November 27

Iran

READ: Cases and Concepts, Iran Case Study

November 29

Iran

READ: Cases and Concepts, Iran Case Study

LISTEN: BBC: What's Next for Iran?

December 1

Iran

READ: Cases and Concepts, Iran Case Study

December 3

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – Iran

SUBMIT: Country Expert *Concepts in Action* responses (Nigeria Country Experts Only)

SUBMIT: Link to your Nigerian current event article (Nigeria Country Experts Only)

WEEK THIRTEEN

December 4

Nigeria

READ: Cases and Concepts, Nigeria Case Study

December 6

Nigeria

READ: Cases and Concepts, Nigeria Case Study

December 8

Nigeria

READ: Cases and Concepts, Nigeria Case Study

December 10

TAKE: Canvas Quiz – Nigeria

WEEK FOURTEEN

December 11

Exam Review Day

READ: No new readings – make sure you are caught up with the readings to this point

BRING: Any questions you have

TAKE: Post-test Assessment

December 13/15

TAKE: Exam II

** Exam II may be taken either December 13 or December 15 **