

## Sample Course Syllabi

### Introduction to Comparative Politics

PS 210—007 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:00 PM – 11:50 PM

Gregory W. Saxton

Spring 2017

#### **Course Information:**

Course Number PS 210—007  
Thomas Poe Cooper Bldg. 113  
Lecture: MWF 11-11:50 PM

#### **Instructor Information:**

Instructor: Gregory W. Saxton, MA  
Email: gregory.saxton@uky.edu  
Office: Patterson Office Tower 1606  
Office Hours: MW 9-10:30 AM, OBA

#### **Overview:**

This course begins from the observation that people around the world experience different circumstances and overall quality of daily life. The goal of comparative politics is to understand the political diversity that exists in the world, and the ways that politics and policy shape people's opportunities to lead fulfilling lives. This course is designed to help students master one of the fundamental methods of scientific inquiry and inference: *comparison*. If you have ever wondered why the United States is rich and other countries are poor, or why European countries tend to have universal healthcare and we do not, you have already begun to think like a comparative political scientist. This class will help you harness some of your natural curiosity and to begin to think more systematically about political questions around the world. And if you've never been curious about politics beyond the borders of the United States, this class will push you to think like a *global citizen*, to realize how you can employ the comparative method to address some of the major social and economic issues confronting people in the world today.

#### **Course Description and Learning Outcomes:**

This course is an introduction to comparative politics. It is designed to expose you to many of the central questions in the study of comparative politics and the key theories that scholars have developed to best answer these questions. More specifically, the class will address questions regarding varieties of dictatorships, democracy, political institutions, political parties and elections, political identity and diversity, and political economy. This course will prepare you for more advanced courses in comparative politics, and it will make you a more informed citizen of the world. It has three fundamental goals:

1. To introduce students to the major questions in comparative politics
2. To acquaint them with the field's best answers to those questions, and
3. To give them the tools to think critically about the answers.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

This course is intended to introduce students to the study of political processes outside of the United States and to help them achieve the following *learning outcomes*:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of concepts, theories, and methods of political science in the comparative context
2. Compare different political, social, and economic features of countries and regions around the world
3. Apply the theories and comparative methods of inquiry to real-life issues in the world today

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4. Critically evaluate the relative merits of particular policy decisions, given ethical implications, and indications of efficacy.

### Course Materials

#### Required Text

Drogus, Carol & Stephen Orvis, *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Sage CQ Press. (D&O in course schedule)

In addition to the required text, you will be responsible for a variety of additional short readings. These will be announced in class ahead of time and will be made available on Canvas.

#### Electronic Resources

Canvas will be used to post course announcements, course materials, quizzes/exams, and grades. Students should access this course on Canvas as soon as possible, so that problems do not compromise course performance. Students should also make sure they have a current UK email address on file so that they will receive any emails sent through Canvas. Students who have problems accessing Canvas are encouraged to consult: [elearning.uky.edu](http://elearning.uky.edu)

*Students are also reminded that all email communication with the instructor must come from a UKY email address.*

### Earning Your Grade

The grading and assignments for this course have been designed to offer you *a variety of ways to succeed*. Below is a breakdown of how your grade for this course will be assessed.

**Preparation and Participation** (25%): In lieu of an official grade for attendance, we will have a variety of preparatory and in-class assignments throughout the course of the semester. *Sometimes these activities will be announced in advance, and at other times they will not.* Examples of preparation/participation assignments include, but are not limited to: pop reading quizzes, short reading/writing assignments, discussion activities, etc. There is no official attendance policy for this class, but students are strongly encouraged to attend lecture. There is no formal penalty for missing lecture, but students will not be able to participate in lectures they miss, or make up any in-class assignments, unless documentation of an excused absence is provided.

**Constitutional Design Project** (15%): Students will be assigned to different groups and together will work on designing a constitution for a made-up country. Details on the content of the assignment will be available on Canvas under “*Constitutional Design Project*” Module. Students will submit their papers in class on Friday March 31 and will present their constitutions to the class.

**Country Case Studies** (10%): We will only cover a small number of the nearly 200 countries around the world. Students will be assigned different countries and will be responsible for creating their own country case study reports. Details on the content of the assignment will be available on Canvas under the “*Country Case Study Report*” module. Students will submit their case studies on Canvas before the due date.

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**Midterm Exams** (30%, 15% each): Students will take **two midterms** throughout the semester—listed as Exam I and Exam II in the syllabus. These exams are each worth 15% of the student's final grade. Exams cover all relevant course material, including content from book chapters, lectures, and activities. **The midterm exams will be on Friday February 24, 2017, and Friday April 7, 2017.**

**Final Exam** (20%): The final exam is comprehensive, meaning it will cover content from lectures and activities throughout the semester, as well as all 12 of the book chapters. The final exam will contain two portions: a multiple-choice portion similar to Exams I & II (15%), and a take-home essay portion (5%), which students will submit on Canvas. **The final exam will take place on Monday, May 1, 2017.**

Here is a link to the spring exam schedule: <http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/final-exam-schedule-spring>

### Calculating Your Grade

Each assignment will receive a percentage grade and both midterm and final grade formulas will result in a percentage, which will translate into a letter grade using the following scale:

Points	Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% or below	E

### Policies

#### Attendance and Excused Absences

This course does not have a formal attendance policy. Recall that in lieu of a grade for attendance, students will earn 25% of their grade through preparation and participation activities throughout the course of the semester. Given that most of the concepts introduced in this class are foreign to many students, even students of American politics, there is usually a high correlation between good attendance and high final grades.

#### *Make Up Opportunities*

Students who anticipate missing class or an exam can make arrangements in advance for an alternate time/date. Students who miss an exam on the day it is given will only be granted a make-up opportunity if they miss because of a documented medical emergency involving themselves or an immediate family member. More specifically:

- A student must notify the Instructor of an absence prior to the absence or within **one week** after the absence. SR 5.2.4.2.E.
- A student must submit any written documentation supporting an excused absence within **one week** after the absence, except when the absence is for the observation of a major religious holiday.

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- An absence for a major religious holiday requires **advance written** notification. (The amount of time required is left to each instructor's discretion and should be stated in the syllabus.) Also, "[f]aculty shall use their judgment as to whether the [religious] observance in question is important enough to warrant" an excused absence. SR 5.2.4.2.D. That same section also provides that "the presumption should be in favor of a student's request." Id.

A link to the Academic Ombud's page on excused absences can be found here:

[https://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty\\_ExcusedAbsences.php](https://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty_ExcusedAbsences.php)

### **Academic Accommodations**

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Suite 407, Multidisciplinary Science Building, 725 Rose Street, 859-257-2754, [dtbeac1@uky.edu](mailto:dtbeac1@uky.edu)) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities. We can then collaborate for the best solution.

A link to the Academic Ombud's page on accommodations can be found here:

[https://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty\\_AccomodationDisabilities.php](https://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty_AccomodationDisabilities.php)

### **Academic Integrity, Cheating and Plagiarism**

*Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated.* Students who are caught engaging in plagiarism or cheating will receive, at minimum, an *automatic E on the assignment*. Major written assignments (e.g. the take-home portion of the final exam) will be submitted on Canvas through Turnitin, a plagiarism detection program.

See the webpage at the Office of Academic Ombud Services for a definition of plagiarism, how to avoid it, and UK's academic offense policy (<http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf>).

See Students Rights and Responsibilities, Part II, Section 6.3

(<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>) for UK's policy on academic integrity.

### **Classroom Behavior, Decorum, and Civility**

Please be respectful to others in this class and engage in civil discourse when we discuss topics with a diversity of perspectives. This means coming to class ON TIME and minimizing distractions by not reading newspapers or carrying on conversations. Turn mobile phones off during class. Please help maintain the most courteous environment by using a little peer pressure if necessary. Student who violates the rules for civil behavior in class will be told to leave the class and will receive an unexcused absence for that class. If this is during an in-class activity the student will not receive any credit for the activity.

**Laptop Policy:** I prefer that students NOT USE LAPTOPS during lectures (naturally, if an in-class activity requires internet access, then laptops are fine during this time). Research consistently shows that laptop usage in the classroom distracts *other* students. If you want to affect your own learning, that's your prerogative. However, you don't have the right to affect your peers' learning. So, if you absolutely have to use a computer to take notes – come talk to me. I will ask that you sit on the

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periphery of the classroom (in the back row or near the door), and if I find that you're using your laptop for non-class purposes, your computer privileges will be taken away.

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class or via email, as well as posted on Canvas.

\*A Current version of the course schedule will always be available on Canvas.

## Course Schedule

Week	Assignments
<b>Unit 1: Politics, The State, Collective Action, and Democratic Regimes</b> <b>Core Case Studies: Brazil &amp; India</b>	
<b>Week 1: What is comparative politics?</b> January 16- 20	Monday: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Wednesday: Read D&O Intro – pp. 2 – 35, syllabus quiz due by 11:59PM on Canvas Friday: <b>Prep assignment due on Canvas BEFORE class</b> (questions in comparative politics)
<b>Week 2: The Modern State (Ch. 2)</b> January 23 – Jan 27	Monday: Brazil overview, Read D&O pp. 36-70 Wednesday: Read D&O 71-95 Friday: Read “Is Ranking Failed or Fragile States a Futile Business?” (Canvas). Bring computers for in-class activity.
<b>Week 3: States, Regimes, and Citizens (Ch. 3)</b> January 30 – Feb 3	Monday: Read D&O pp. 98-122 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 128-143 Friday: Brazil Documentary ( <i>Lula's Brazil</i> )
<b>Week 4: Democratic Regimes</b> February 6 – Feb10	Monday: Finish Brazil Documentary Wednesday: Read “How Do You Measure Democracy?” Democracy measurement in-class activity Friday: India Overview Brazil movie quiz (Due on Canvas – Sunday by 11:59PM)
<b>Week 5: Governing Institutions in Democracies (Ch. 6)</b> February 13 – Feb 17	Monday: Read D&O pp. 258 - 292 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 273 - 322 Friday: Read “The Perils of Presidentialism” by Juan Linz (Canvas)
<b>Week 6: Exam Week</b> February 20 – Feb 24	Monday: Continue “Democracies” Wednesday: Exam Review  <b>Friday: Exam 1</b>
<b>Week 7: Participation and Representation in Democracies (Ch. 7)</b> February 27 – March 3	Monday: Read D&O pp. 324-350, 380-392 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 351-379 Friday: Electoral Systems Assignment

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<b>Unit 2: Non-democracies, regime change, and diversity Core Case Study: Nigeria</b>	
<b>Week 8: Non-democracies (Ch. 8)</b> March 6 – March 10	Monday: Nigeria Overview, Read D&O pp. 401-429 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 429-453 Friday: Read “When Ailing Dictators Die in Office What Happens Next?” AND “How Democratic Institutions Are Making Dictatorships More Durable” (Canvas)
<b>Spring Break March 12 – March 17</b>	
<b>Week 9: Regime Change (Ch. 9)</b> March 20 – March 24	Monday: Read D&O pp. 454 – 477 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 477 - 510 Friday: Group work time – Constitutional Design Project
<b>Week 10: Identity &amp; Conflict (Ch. 4)</b> March 27 – March 31	Monday 144-162 Wednesday 162-194 Friday: Present Constitutional Design Projects ALL constitutional design papers must be submitted in class
<b>Week 11 Exam Week</b> April 3 – April 7	Monday: Finish Presenting Constitutional Designs Wednesday: Catch up day / Exam review  <b>Friday: Exam 2</b>
<b>Unit 3: Public Policy, Political Economy, and Identity Politics</b>	
<b>Week 12: States and Markets (Ch. 5)</b> April 10 – April 14	Monday: Read D&O pp. 196-223 Wednesday: Read D&O pp. 223-257 Friday: France overview
<b>Week 13 Public Policy and the Welfare State (Ch. 10-11)</b> April 17 – April 21	Monday: Read D&O pp. 512 – 521; 532 – 544 Wednesday: Read “Why Don’t Voters Demand More Redistribution?” (Canvas) AND “Do Economic Inequality and Political Inequality go Together?” (Canvas) Friday: Read D&O pp. 570 -584; 595 – 602; 614 - 623 Case studies due by Friday at 11:59 PM on Canvas
<b>Week 14 Identity Politics (Ch. 12)</b> April 24 – April 28	Monday: Read D&O pp. 640 – 702 (Skip case studies) Wednesday: Identity in France Friday: Finish Identity / Final exam review
<b>May 1, 2015</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>