This course provides an introduction to the study of domestic politics and governments around the world. We will discuss the core concepts and themes of comparative politics and pose a number of questions: What are the similarities and differences among non-democratic regimes? What conditions are necessary for the successful transition to democracy and the subsequent consolidation of democracy? How do democratizing countries deal with human rights violations committed during periods of dictatorship? How and why do political institutions vary across democracies, and what are the consequences of these differences? We will shed light on these and other questions by examining diverse country cases, including Chile, China, Iran, Russia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, among others. You will also have the opportunity to do independent research on a country of particular interest to you.

Upon completion of this course, you should have a deeper understanding of politics, especially the ways in which political decisions and policies affect people’s lives as well as how people mobilize to influence those decisions and policies. In addition, participation in this class should improve your ability to think critically, analytically, and comparatively about politics, to consider current events from a more historical and theoretical perspective, and to formulate arguments and support them with evidence.

Requirements

You are responsible for material covered in class and in the readings. Please note that much of the material covered in class is not included in the readings (and vice versa).

Your final grade is based on the following components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two exams</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10/7, 12/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country monitoring reports</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due 9/18, 11/9, 12/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two film response papers</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due dates vary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class exercises</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Dates vary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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- **Exams:** These consist of short-answer questions, to be completed during class, and a take-home essay question, to be completed outside of class. Exam 2 will emphasize material covered since Exam 1. There is no comprehensive exam during finals week.

- **Country monitoring:** You will select a country that interests you and become an expert on current and recent political events there by consulting outside sources. You will turn in three reports analyzing different aspects of your chosen country. More detailed instructions for this assignment will be provided in class.
• **Film response papers:** Three feature-length films are available on Moodle and on reserve at Barret Library’s Media Center. You will select two of the three films and write short analytic papers relating their content to issues discussed in class. Specific instructions for each paper are available in my public folder (saved under the title of the film).

• **In-class exercises:** These unannounced exercises usually consist of brief questions on readings. They are designed to encourage active, engaged reading before each class. At the end of the semester, your lowest score is dropped. No make-ups will be scheduled for missed exercises.

• **Participation:** The format of this course is a combination of short lectures and discussions. You are expected to attend class regularly, complete the assigned readings for that session, and participate vigorously in discussions and activities. This grade is determined by 1) your attendance record (see policy below), and 2) your in-class contributions.

The grading scale for the course is as follows:  A (100-93); A- (92-90); B+ (89-88); B (87-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-78); C (77-73); C- (72-70); D (69-60); F (59 and below).

**Class policies**

• **Honor Code:** It is expected that the College’s Honor Code will govern the work that you do in this course, as well as your conduct in class. Pertinent information is available at: http://www.rhodes.edu/campuslife/1478.asp.

• **Absences:** Students with four or more unexcused absences automatically receive a failing participation grade. *Excused* absences entail providing documentation of a personal or family emergency (e.g., illness) or prior commitment (e.g., jury duty) and are subject to the instructor’s approval. Personal travel is not a valid reason for missing class; make your plans accordingly.

• **Tardiness:** Arriving late to class more than 1-2 times signals to me that this is a low-priority course for you. As a result, your participation grade will be lowered by one whole letter grade.

• **Late work:** I will not accept assignments submitted via email. I mark late work down one-third of a letter grade per day (for instance, an A becomes an A-, then a B+, etc.) until I receive a hard copy.

• **Disability accommodations:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3994 as soon as possible.

**Tips for succeeding in this course**

• Attending class, keeping up with the readings, and critically engaging the course materials (both during and outside of class) are all crucial to your success. The more effort you devote to this course, the more valuable the experience will be!

• I encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss issues raised in class, assignments, study skills, etc.

**Readings**

Two *required* texts are available at the Rhodes Bookstore:


Additional required readings, marked with an asterisk (*) below, are on reserve in Barret Library and available in my public folder, where they are saved under the author’s last name (unless noted otherwise).

I also urge you to read the *New York Times*, *Economist*, and/or other sources of international news on a regular basis so that we can incorporate current events into our class discussions.

**Course schedule**

W, 8/26: Greetings & introduction to the course

F, 8/28: Introduction to the field of comparative politics
*What sorts of topics do comparativists research? How (and why) do they compare political systems?*

- *Cases in Comparative Politics*, Ch. 1.

M, 8/31: Important concepts in comparative politics


**Part One: Political Regimes and Regime Change**

*During this section of the course, we compare different types of regimes and discuss their evolution over time. Emphasis is placed on non-democratic regimes.*

W, 9/2: Defining democracy and other regime types


F, 9/4: Democracy continued


M, 9/7: *No Class* (Labor Day)

W, 9/9: When did the United States become a “democracy”?

- Leaflet circulated by the KKK. Available online at: http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/Klan.html
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream.” Available online at: http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm
F, 9/11: Communism
Case: Soviet Union


Reminder: Don’t forget to watch the film The Lives of Others (the paper assignment is in my public folder). The paper is due in my office on Monday, 9/28 by 4 PM.

M, 9/14: Back in the USSR

- Skim Cases in Comparative Politics, Ch. 6.

W, 9/16: Wrap up Soviet case; comparative perspectives on mass killings

- *Valentino. Final Solutions (2004), Ch. 5 (focus on cases of Germany and Rwanda).

F, 9/18: Discussion of country monitoring reports

- No reading assignment.

*Country reports (first installment) due at beginning of class*

M, 9/21: Communism, Take Two
Case: China

- Cases in Comparative Politics, Ch. 7.

W, 9/23: China: Economic reform without political reform?


F, 9/25: China continued

M, 9/28: Authoritarianism
Case: Chile


W, 9/30: Authoritarianism continued


F, 10/2: Organizing under military rule

- Recommended: *News articles saved in public folder under “Pinochet.”

M, 10/5: Wrap up non-democracies
Review for Exam 1

- *News articles saved in public folder as “NYTimes 1” & “NYTimes 2.”

*W, 10/7: Exam 1*

Take-home essay is due in my office on Fri., 10/9 at 1 PM (Class will not meet).

**Part Two: Democracy and Democratization**

*In Part Two, we discuss the “Third Wave” of democratization that has occurred in various regions of the world. After analyzing the processes of democratic transition and consolidation, we explore the inner workings of democracies, noting the sheer diversity of their institutions and examining the consequences of this variation.*

M, 10/12: Democratic transitions from ‘above’ and ‘below’


  Note: We’ll watch part of the documentary A Force More Powerful in class.

**Reminder:** Don’t forget to watch the film Machuca (the paper assignment is in my public folder). The paper is due in my office on Friday, 10/23 by 4 PM.
W, 10/14: Phases of democratization


F, 10/16: *No Class* (academic conference)

M, 10/19: *No Class* (Fall Recess)

W, 10/21: Democratic transitions
Case: South Africa

- Cases in Comparative Politics, Ch. 12.

F, 10/23: The transitional justice debate

- *See also the short handout saved as “policy options” in my public folder.

M, 10/26: Transitional justice continued


W, 10/28: Democratization: Comparing Eastern Europe and South America


F, 10/30: Challenges of democratic consolidation and deepening: Civil society


M, 11/2: Further challenges of democratic consolidation and deepening: Rule of law
Case: Brazil

W, 11/4: The relationship between economic development and democracy
*Case: India*

- Skim *Cases in Comparative Politics*, Ch. 8.

F, 11/6: The debate over democracy in the Muslim World: A Democratic “Deficit”?


M, 11/9: Discussion of country monitoring reports

- No reading assignment.

**Country reports (second installment) due at beginning of class**

Reminder: Don’t forget to watch the film *A Dry White Season* (the paper assignment is in my public folder). The paper is due in my office on Monday, 11/23 by 4 PM.

W, 11/11: Spotlight on Iran: Theocracy or democracy?

- *Cases in Comparative Politics*, Ch. 9.

F, 11/13: Forcing people to be free?: Regime change in Iraq


M, 11/16: Democratic institutions: Parliamentary and presidential systems
*Cases: United Kingdom and United States*

- *Cases in Comparative Politics*, Ch. 2.

W, 11/18: Parliamentary and presidential systems, Part Deux

F, 11/20: Presidentialism in action

- *Articles and briefings saved in public folder under “US.”

M, 11/23: Representation in democracies
*Case: Namibia*


W, 11/25 & F, 11/27: * No Class (Happy Thanksgiving)*

M, 11/30: Review for Exam 2


*W, 12/2: Exam 2*

Take-home essay is due in my office on Fri., 12/4 at 1 PM (Class will not meet).

M, 12/7: Course wrap-up

- *Essential Readings*, p. 266-287: Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out….”

W, 12/9: Last class meeting

*Monday, 12/14: *Country reports (third installment) due in my office by 4 PM.*

*Note: The above schedule is subject to modification if the instructor deems it necessary.*