Course Description

Welcome to the Introduction to Comparative Politics in the Department of Political Science! In this era of globalization, we, as global citizens, need to understand not only our own system of American Politics and the International Relations among states but also Comparative Politics.

What is Comparative Politics (CP)? CP looks inside the workings of states around the world and examines the use of power to explain economic, political, and social outcomes. International Relations (IR), by contrast, studies interactions between and among states. For example, IR examines rising powers—like China—and makes predictions about the use of military force beyond a state’s borders, while Comparative Politics explains how a state can become a rising power in the first place. CP examines what kinds of institutions and policies support transformative economic growth, what kinds of political regime command the citizens and resources of a country, and how citizens identify themselves vis-à-vis others in the world. China, of course, is only one example, but it highlights the important questions we can answer by looking inside the workings of states.

Comparative Politics derives insights not only by studying a specific case in detail (as in American Politics) but also by comparing the experiences of many states to identify patterns and test hypotheses. Through comparison, we gain a better understanding of the key factors that explain economic, political, and social outcomes—not just in one case, but in many countries more generally.

This course introduces students to Comparative Politics by focusing on three of the most important issues in the field: economic growth, democratization, and ethnic & nationalist conflict. The course is organized into three main parts, in which we will address each of these issues in turn.

First, why do some countries achieve wealth, while others remain mired in poverty? Social scientists and policy makers continually struggle with this question, which determines the life chances of billions of people around the world. Today, policy makers debate two distinct explanations of economic growth around the world since World War II, and different explanations are tied to two different policy prescriptions: the so-called “Washington Consensus” and the so-called “Beijing Consensus.” These competing ideas actually reflect different emphases on the role of the state versus the role of market forces in promoting economic growth. We will examine the debates as well as the evidence and reasoning behind them.

Second, why do some countries become democratic, while others remain stubbornly authoritarian? Near the end of the twentieth century, Francis Fukuyama foresaw the “End of History,” suggesting that most countries around the world would naturally become liberal democracies. In the decades since his prediction, vibrant new democracies have indeed replaced authoritarian regimes in some countries; yet, elsewhere in the world one authoritarian regime replaced another, and in still other countries existing authoritarian regimes have survived and even thrived. We will examine the factors shaping democratization as well as resilience of authoritarian regimes.

Third, why do ethnic or nationalist conflicts emerge in some countries at certain periods of time but not in others? Ethnic and national conflict is frequently in the news—Chinese youth smashing Japanese storefronts in China is only one recent example. Traditionally, scholars have regarded ethnic or national identity as something immutable and ethnic or nationalist conflict as inevitable, but social scientists increasingly regard these identities as constructed or mobilized—often for the political purposes of elites. We will examine the political causes of ethnic or nationalist conflict as well as some policy prescriptions for ending conflict.
Learning Goals
Through this course, you will gain both substantive knowledge and academic skills. You will encounter real-world puzzles or problems and learn some of the Comparative Politics theories that explain them. Along the way, you will master key concepts that are the building blocks of these theories.

You will hone your skills reading scholarly articles for both the author’s theoretical argument and the empirical evidence he/she relies upon. You will also practice writing your own argument supported by evidence. You will learn how quickly to access scholarly resources, and by the end of the quarter you will construct a scholarly bibliography. These skills prepare you for more advanced courses in the social sciences; they also translate readily into other disciplines and the professional world.

You will be introduced to important content through lecture and section as well as readings and assignments. You will receive guidance on readings in the lecture before you tackle the readings. You should complete the readings by the day on which they appear on the syllabus and be prepared to work through them in the discussion sections following the lecture. Note that lecture will include some material not covered in the reading and that you are responsible for all content covered in lecture, section, readings, and assignments.

Course Requirements
Class participation requires that you read the assigned material on schedule, that you complete all exercises and assignments in lecture and discussion section, and that you are prepared to respond to questions. The teaching staff will provide additional information on exercises and assignments in class. 20%

Three in-class tests will require you to demonstrate your understanding of course readings, lectures, discussions, and exercises. Each test counts for 20 percent of your total grade. 60%

A final paper of 5-6 pages in length will give you the opportunity to explore one of the themes of the course in greater depth. We will discuss the final paper assignment in class during the quarter. A preliminary, 2-page draft of the paper will be due in section on Wednesday, March 4th. The final paper will be due via Catalyst Dropbox on Wednesday, March 20th by 12:30pm. 20%

Sections
John O’Neill (joneill@uw.washington.edu), Lecturer in the Department of English, teaches the Writing Link. The teaching assistants for the course are Will Gochberg (gochberg@uw.edu) and Calvin Garner (ch garner@uw.edu).

Office Hours
Office hours for Professor Whiting are scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00-2:00pm in 147 Gowen Hall. Office hours for TAs will be announced in section meetings.

Course Materials
Course readings can be accessed full-text online through the UW Library Catalogue and through E-Reserves.
A student subscription to the New York Times is required. The New York Times Digital subscription is $.99 cents for the first 4 weeks, then, $1.88 per week thereafter. Visit NYTimes.com/UWashington to set up your subscription.

The course website is: http://faculty.washington.edu/swhiting/pols204/

Additional Course Information
If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disability Resources for Students, 011 Mary Gates Hall (http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs). If you have a letter from Disability Resources for Students indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so that we can discuss the accommodations you may need for class.

Course Schedule
The following course schedule indicates the required readings for each week and the topic for each lecture.
WEEK ONE
January 5-9, 2015
Sessions 1-2

INTRODUCTION
1. January 6, 2015
Introduction to the Course

PART I: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
2. January 8, 2015
Origins of States and Defining Development as a Political Goal
Introduce exercise: Using media sources, explore the Northwest coal terminal debate in terms of development criteria.

WEEK TWO
January 12-16, 2015
Sessions 3-4

Early, Middle, and Late Industrializers

How do Very Late Developers Catch Up?

WEEK THREE
January 19-23, 2015
Sessions 5-6

5. January 20, 2015
Catch-up Strategies: Import-Substituting and Export-Oriented Industrialization

“Washington Consensus” vs. “Beijing Consensus”

WEEK FOUR
January 26-January 30, 2015
Sessions 7-8

Economic Development in an Era of Globalization: Global Production Chains
Introduce exercise 2: Using media sources, research UW’s social responsibility policy for UW-licensed apparel.
Corporate Social Responsibility or a “Race to the Bottom”?

WEEK FIVE
February 2-6 2015
Sessions 9-10

Test #1

PART II: DEMOCRATIZATION
10. February 5, 2015
Democratization as a Uniform Process

WEEK SIX
February 9-13, 2015
Sessions 11-12

11. February 10, 2015
Democratization in Late vs. Early Industrializers

12. February 12, 2015
Authoritarian Resilience
*Introduce exercise 3: Using the New York Times, identify one country identified by Freedom House as “not free” or “partly free” and consider the regime’s resilience/vulnerability to regime change.*

WEEK SEVEN
February 16-20, 2015
Sessions 13-14

13. February 17, 2014
Authoritarian Resilience Cont’ed

14. February 19, 2015
Hybrid Authoritarian Regimes
WEEK EIGHT
February 23–February 27, 2015
Sessions 15-16

15. February 24, 2015
Test #2

PART III: ETHNIC AND NATIONALIST CONFLICT
16. February 26, 2015
The Construction of Identity

*Introduce exercise 4: Using the New York Times, explore the characteristics of a current ethnic or nationalist conflict.*

WEEK NINE
March 2-6, 2015
Sessions 17-18

17. March 3, 2015
Political Causes of Ethnic-Nationalist Conflict


18. March 5, 2015
State Influences on Nationalist Politics

WEEK TEN
March 9-13, 2015
Sessions 19-20

19. March 10, 2015
Ending Ethnic and Nationalist Violence

20. March 12, 2015
Test #3

FINAL PAPER
DUE Friday, March 20th by 12:30pm (Catalyst Dropbox).