
Introduction to Comparative Politics

Political Science 2053

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240 Stubbs Hall
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Office Hours by Appointment

Spring 2016
220 Stubbs
Tu Th 9:00-10:20

Course Description

This course is a lower-level undergraduate course that seeks to provide an introduction to that sub-field of political science referred to as comparative politics. This sub-field focuses much of its attention on the organization of domestic politics in comparative perspective, with special emphasis on comparative institutional arrangements. Whereas the closely related sub-field of international relations concerns itself with the interaction of states (“politics among states,” as it were), comparative politics focuses on the internal organization of politics and structure of political institutions (“politics within states”).

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to stay current on the assigned readings, to participate in class discussions, and to sit for four short quizzes and two longer examinations. Students are responsible for any and all material delivered in class sessions and in the assigned readings. The first examination will be held during the class session on Thursday, March 3. The second examination will be held during the final examination period, on Tuesday, May 3 from 10:00-12:00. The second examination will test material covered after the first examination. Each examination is equally weighted at 40 percent of the class grade, and will be based on a combination of the assigned readings and in-class lecture material. Quiz dates will be announced at least 1 class period prior. There will be two quizzes before the midterm examination and two quizzes after the midterm examination. The quizzes are each weighted at 5 percent of the course grade, combining for 20 percent total. No extra-credit assignments will be available.

Grading System

Letter grades for the course will be based on the following thresholds, reflective of both LSU's new +/- grading scale and the LSU *General Catalog*, which stipulates that the various letter grades reflect the following levels of mastery of the course material. Each student will be assigned a grade in the highest category that matches their final course average.

“A” indicates “distinguished mastery”

A+ = final averages of 97 and above

A = final averages of 93 and above

A- = final averages of 90 and above

“B” indicates “good mastery”

B+ = final averages of 87 and above

B = final averages of 83 and above

B- = final averages of 80 and above

“C” indicates “acceptable mastery”

C+ = final averages of 77 and above

C = final averages of 73 and above

C- = final averages of 70 and above

“D” indicates “minimally acceptable achievement for credit”

D+ = final averages of 67 and above

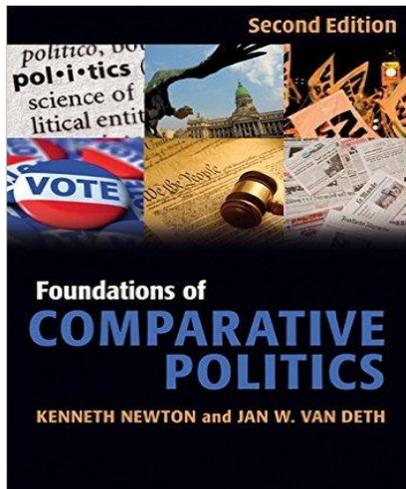
D = final averages of 63 and above

D- = final averages of 60 and above

“F” indicates “failing”

F = final averages below 60

Text



Kenneth Newton and Jan W. van Deth (2010). Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, 2nd Edition (Cambridge University Press).

Additional materials (including notes, handouts and additional readings) will be posted on the course Moodle site. Students are responsible for these materials as well as for the assigned reading from the text.

Syllabus of Topics & Readings

Class	Topic	Readings from Text
Th Jan 14	Introduction to the Class	Colomer (2008)
Tu Jan 19	The State	11-32
Th Jan 21	The State	34-50
Tu Jan 26	Constitutions	71-83
Th Jan 28	Presidential Systems	91-94
Tu Feb 2	Presidential Systems	97-103; Verney (1959)
Th Feb 4	Parliamentary Systems	94-96
Tu Feb 9	Mardi Gras Holiday (no class)	
Th Feb 11	Parliamentary Systems	97-103
Tu Feb 16	Parliamentary Systems	Verney (1959)
Th Feb 18	Semi-Presidential Systems	96-97
Tu Feb 23	Semi-Presidential Systems	97-103
Th Feb 25	Unitary & Federal States	109-114
Tu Mar 1	Federal & Confederal States	114-122; 125-127; 107-109
Th Mar 3	Examination #1	
Tu Mar 8	Executives & Cabinets	134-140
Th Mar 10	Executives & Cabinets	
Tu Mar 15	Legislatures	45-49; 141-145
Th Mar 17	Legislatures	Taylor et al (2014)
Tu Mar 22	Spring Break (no class)	
Th Mar 24	Spring Break (no class)	
Tu Mar 29	Voters & Elections	245-266
Th Mar 31	Voters & Elections	
Tu Apr 5	Voters & Elections	
Th Apr 7	Political Parties	268-288
Tu Apr 12	Political Parties	
Th Apr 14	Political Parties	

Tu Apr 19	Political Ideologies	291-312
Th Apr 21	Political Ideologies	
Tu Apr 26	Majoritarian Democracy	146-150; 177-179
Th Apr 28	Consensus Democracy	
Tu May 3	Examination #2 (10:00-12:00)	