POLS 260: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Department of Political Science
Northern Illinois University
Tuesday & Thursday 11-12:15 pm
DU 461

Instructor: Dr. Kheang Un
Office: Zulauf 105
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 9:00-10:30am
Email: kun1@niu.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course aims to introduce students to the comparative study of government and politics. It will examine the theoretical, methodological and empirical underpinnings of comparative politics—a subfield of political science. Lectures and readings will address theories, methods, and cases that illuminate the following topics: the state and its institutions, democracy, economic development, globalization, and social mobilization.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES
1. The Learning Environment. Your instructor is committed to the principle of active learning. This principle requires students’ active involvement in, commitment to, and responsibility for their own education. Hence, it is important that students conduct themselves in ways that indicate respect for the learning community and the learning process. Respect for the learning community should preclude such behavior as persistent tardiness, leaving the room during class time (unless prior advice was given to the instructor or in case of emergency), falling asleep, reading the newspaper, studying for another class, and chatting with others.

2. Readings and Lecture. Please purchase a copy of textbook for this course J. Tyler Dickovick, and Jonathan Eastwood, Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.), at the Student Center or at the Village Commons Bookstore. Assigned readings outside the textbook are available on course blackboard. Some short readings may also be distributed in class. Lectures will parallel and compliment the readings. As such, students cannot just rely solely on lectures or readings.

3. Class attendance and Participation. Attendance at all class sessions is expected, and the instructor will check the attendance regularly. Students are allowed to have one unexcused absence during the semester. An additional absence without instructor approval will result in 5 point penalty. The total points for attendance is 50. Informed participation in class discussion will significantly help students in borderline grade situations.
4. Exams, and Written Assignments, Presentations.
A. Exams: This course will have two exams taken in class. The midterm exam will be on March 1st. The final exam will be on May 9, 10:11:50 am. Each exam will be worth 100 points. The format of each exam will be a combination of essay and short answer. No make-up exam will be offered, except in cases of emergency, as defined by the instructor, and with advance notification.

B. Term paper: A paper of 7-9 pages in length and double-space is required. The paper should be properly referenced, and typed. It will be worth 100 points. Due date: April 26th.

C. Presentations: There will be two group presentations. These presentations will be based on the topics listed in the syllabus. Each presentation will be worth 40 points.

D. Movie Reviews: A good review should include: 1) a brief description of the movie/documentary film; 2) analysis and interpretation of the movie/documentary film (how accurate is the movie/documentary film in depicting the subject according to the readings or your prior knowledge? Is the story told complete? Is the story convincing?); 3) evaluation of the movie/documentary film (what messages did the movie/documentary film convey? How well are major parts connected to each other? and; 4) relating the movie/documentary film to the course. These papers should be 800-1,000 words in length. Each film review is worth 20 points.

5. Course Grade:
Course grade will be distributed as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Scores</th>
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<tr>
<td>First exam</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
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<td>Movie reviews</td>
<td>40 pts</td>
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<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>80 points</td>
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<td>Total Raw Score</td>
<td>470 points</td>
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COURSE OUTLINE: (May subject to change as needed)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 16/January 18: Introduction to the class &amp; Introduction to Comparative Politics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What and how comparative politics compares.</td>
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<td>• What is the objective of theory in comparative politics?</td>
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**Required readings**


### January 23/January 25: Modern State

- What is a nation?
- What is a state?
- Does a nation precedes a state or vice versa?

**Required readings**


### January 30/February 01: Democracy and Democratization

What is democracy? What is democratization?

- What factors contribute to democratization?
- What makes democracy endure?

**Required readings**


### January 06/February 08: Authoritarian Regimes and Democratic Breakdown

What is authoritarianism?

- Why are some authoritarian regimes resilient and others not?

**Required readings**


### February 13/February 15: Legislature, Legislative Elections, and Executives

**Required readings**


### February 20/February 22: Group Discussion

- **Group 1**: Mexico: What factors contributed to authoritarian breakdown in the country? What is the state of democracy in Mexico?
- **Group 2**: Is China destined for democracy?
- **Group 3**: Discuss Russia’s procedural democracy and obstacles to further consolidation of democracy in Russia.
• **Group 4**: Compare the executive power of the head of government in a presidential system to that of a parliamentary system focusing on their domestic legislative agenda and foreign policy initiatives (suggested cases: the United States and the United Kingdom).

February 27: Catch-up and review
Discussion on research statement and research paper

March 01: Mid-term Exam

March 06/March 08: Social Movement
Viewing “The Square”
**Required readings**

March 13/March 15: SPRING BREAK!

March 20/March 22: Revolution and Contestation
**Required readings**

March 20: Discussion of Paper Topic

March 27/March 29: Revolution and Contestation

April 03/April 05: Political Economy and Development
• What is political economy?
• What is economic development?
• Why some countries are rich and some are poor?
**Required readings**

*April 03: Paper Topic Due*

April 10/April 12: *Economic Growth, Regime Types, and Geography*
• What role does geography play in economic development?
• Do regime types matter in promoting economic development?
• How important are institutions in economic development?

**Required readings**


**Suggested Readings**


**April 17/April 19: Globalization and Its Discontents**


**April 24: Globalization (continued)**

• Discuss readings assigned for April 17/19

**April 26/May 01: Group Discussion and Presentation**

• **Group 1:** Juxtapose the positions of the proponents and opponents of sweatshops. Take a position by providing evidence pertaining to at least two cases.
• **Group 2:** Discuss ways in which geography and institutions promote or hinder economic development. In your view, which of the two factors is more salient in promoting economic development. Please make reference to at least two countries in your presentation.
• **Group 3:** Group 3: Do you agree with the statement that authoritarian regimes are better at promoting economic development than democratic regimes. Please make reference to at least two countries.

• **Group 4:** Is globalization good or bad for developing countries. Please make reference to at least two countries.

**April 26: Term Paper Due**

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<th>May 03: Catch-up and Review</th>
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<td>May 9: Final Exam 10-11:50 a.m.</td>
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