POLS 260-H1: Introduction to Comparative Politics  
Spring Semester 2018  

Instructor: Associate Professor Michael Clark  
Class Time: Mon/Weds 11.00-12.15  
Class Location: DuSable  
Office Location: Zulauf 401  
Office Hours: Mon & Weds 1.00pm - 3.00pm and by appointment  
E-Mail: mclark12@niu.edu (mclark followed by the number 12)  

“Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.”  
Alexis de Tocqueville, 1830.  

“A man who has tasted only his mother’s soup has no basis to claim that hers is the  
best.”  
African proverb.  

Course Description:  
This course is designed to introduce students to the comparative study of government and politics. Comparativists focus on trying to account for the similarities and differences between whatever it is they are comparing, and whether those similarities and differences result in similar or differing outcomes. In this class we will focus on comparing a number of different countries around the world by identifying and analysing the common problems the governments of these countries have faced, comparing the governing institutions that these countries have adopted, and evaluating the impact of various institutions and differing economic approaches on the lives and well-being of the citizens of those countries. By taking such an approach students will become familiar with the similarities and differences between the countries covered during the course, and moreover, be able to offer explanations for why these similarities and differences exist. Throughout the course, we will touch on a number of concepts comparativists focus upon in order to examine the similarities and differences between countries including electoral systems, political culture, public opinion, and the role of the state. The countries examined will represent a variety of political systems at different stages of development. The main theme of the course will be to examine factors, which help account for varying levels of democratic development in the countries under study.  

Course Format:  
It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you follow the instructions on the course Blackboard site and read the materials designed to assist students in their learning goals. Every three to four class meeting we will cover one country, nine in total. Meeting with the professor is encouraged, as is e-mailing with any content-related questions and participating in any discussions – whether in-class or online.
Course Reading:

2. Articles from *The Economist* and other sources, which will be posted to the class’s Blackboard website, or the links provided on Power Point slides or on the syllabus.
3. The *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Economist*, or some other quality news source. Following along with current events will help you understand those events we discuss in class and also provide a link between the concepts we cover and current affairs. It will also help you prepare you for the paper assignment.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are expected to regularly check Blackboard and their e-mail.
2. Students are required to read the assigned readings prior to class. Lack of reading will result in pop quizzes.
3. Students will be required to submit a 12-page paper relating current events in a chosen country to concepts from class. More details are provided at the end of the syllabus. The professor will provide feedback and assistance if it is requested.
4. There will be **four exams – three midterms, and a final exam.** Exams will consist of some combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay-style questions (the final exam in particular). The final exam will contain a cumulative component, but this will be limited to an essay-style answer. Help notes will be posted online prior to each test.
5. Students should complete the syllabus quiz during the first week of the new semester. It can be found on Blackboard.

Course Grading:

The breakdown of grading for each piece of work will be as follows:

- Syllabus Quiz – 20 points
- Midterm 1 (Britain and France) – 70 points
- Midterm 2 (India and Japan) – 70 points
- Midterm 3 (Russia and China) – 70 points
- Final Exam (Mexico, Nigeria, and Brasil plus a cumulative component) - 110
- Finished Paper – 100 points (due no later than Wednesday, May 2nd – earlier submissions are welcomed and encouraged!)
- Participation in class – 100 points
- Total number of points – 540 points

Extra credit is not an option in this course.
Course Grades will be distributed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Overall Percentage</th>
<th>Final Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100 %</td>
<td>A- to A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89 %</td>
<td>B- to B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>C to C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 60%</td>
<td>F</td>
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Final overall percentage will be calculated by dividing student’s overall points score by 540 e.g. \( \frac{435}{540} = 80.5\% \) or a B- grade.

Course Policies:

1. Classroom Etiquette: Attendance at all class sessions is expected, and the instructor will check attendance. Active and informed participation in class discussion will make for a better class, and can notably boost a student’s final grade since 100 points are devoted to participation. Participation can also significantly help students in borderline grade situations. Students are expected to arrive at class on time. Late arrivals disrupt the class and will be treated as class absences. Too many class absences may result in being dropped from the class. Students are to remain for the entire session unless excused by the professor beforehand or confronted with a serious personal emergency. It is not acceptable for students to walk in and out of class to answer cell phones, take casual bathroom and smoking breaks, or attend to other personal matters. Please silence your cell phone prior to the start of each lecture. It is absolutely unacceptable to sleep, use an iPod, read a newspaper, use a laptop for anything other than taking class notes, or engage in other behavior that distracts the instructor or other students from class once it has begun. No one should talk while someone else is talking; this includes comments meant for a classmate rather than the entire group. Overall, classroom dialogue and behavior should always be courteous, respectful of others, and consistent with the expectations set forth by the university.

2. Makeup Exams: Makeup exams will only be given in very special circumstances. If such circumstances arise, please contact the instructor as soon as possible and before the scheduled exam. To keep the process fair for everyone in the course, students will be asked to support requests for makeup exams with appropriate documentation. A missed examination without prior notification and an approved reason will result in a zero. It is not straightforward to reorganise an exam and plausibly gives the student in question an advantage in the form of additional studying time.

3. Late papers: Late papers will not be accepted so students should make themselves aware of the due dates for these assignments. Final papers must also be submitted via SafeAssign on Blackboard as well as in hard copy form. Failing to turn in the paper on or before the appropriate deadline will result in no score for the paper. E-mailed papers will not be accepted, not withstanding absolutely exceptional circumstances.
4. Note taking: Although PowerPoint will be used for the purposes of presenting course material it will be **extremely beneficial for students to make their own detailed notes based on readings and PowerPoint slides, as well as class meetings.** The PowerPoint slides provide a broad outline of discussion topics but do not cover everything, so students need to stay on top of the reading.

5. Incomplete Requests: Such petitions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances. The instructor reserves the right to ask for documentation to verify the problem preventing completion of the course by the normal deadlines. If the student does not present documentation from a university office or official, the matter will be left to the instructor’s discretion.

6. Academic Dishonesty: Any written work for this class will be checked electronically through on-line databases to assess the originality of the work. Regarding plagiarism, the NIU Undergraduate Catalog states: "**Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.**" The above statement encompasses a paper written in whole or in part by another; a paper copied word-for-word or with only minor changes from another source; a paper copied in part from one or more sources without proper identification and acknowledgment of the sources; a paper that is merely a paraphrase of one or more sources, using ideas and/or logic without credit even though the actual words may be changed; and a paper that quotes, summarizes or paraphrases, or cuts and pastes words, phrases, or images from an Internet source without identification and the address of the website.

7. A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center, (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Center to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the Disabilities Resource Center will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Center in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook. A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303.
8. Undergraduates are encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science website on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to http://polisci.niu.edu. For the most up-to-date information on scholarships, internships, and other department news, I encourage you to “like” the department on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/NIU.PoliticalScience) or follow us on Twitter (@niupols).

9. Undergraduate Writing Awards: The Department of Political Science recognizes, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies, such as independent studies or honors theses. Winners are expected to attend the Department’s spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and a check for $100.00. No more than two papers may be submitted by a student. There is no requirement as to the length of papers submitted for the award. Often the Department awards prizes for both an outstanding short paper and an outstanding long paper. The number and types of award is dependent upon the papers submitted for consideration in any given year. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Only papers written in the previous calendar year are considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year’s competition even if the student has graduated. Papers can be submitted by students or faculty and must be supplied in triplicate to the undergraduate secretary. All copies must have two cover pages – one with the student’s name and one without the student’s name. Papers are not to be stapled or bound. Instead, please use paper clips. Papers are generally due in March and notice of call for papers and submission deadlines will be published in the department e-announcements. You may also contact the department for information at 753-1015.

10. Grading symbols that may be used from Fall 2013 onwards for undergraduates are these: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, and F. No other grade options were endorsed by the University Council. Frequently Asked Questions information from the NIU Registration and Records website is available at: http://www.niu.edu/regrec/grading/gradingfaqs.shtml
**Reading Schedule (additional readings may be added or assigned readings altered)**

Week 1 (January 15th)

**Monday: No class in observance of MLK Day**
Readings: None assigned

**Wednesday: Introduction to the course**
Readings: None assigned

**Advanced Industrialized Democracies**

Week 2 (January 22nd)

**Monday: Introducing Comparative Politics – Laying Down Some Basics**

**Wednesday: Great Britain**

Week 3 (January 29th)

**Monday: Great Britain**

**Wednesday: Great Britain - Thatcher and Beyond**
Week 4 (February 5th)

**Monday: France**  

**Wednesday: France**  

Week 5 (February 12th)

**Monday: Finishing up France, and Summing Up**  

**Wednesday: Midterm 1 – all material so far**  
Reading: None assigned

Week 6 (February 19th)

**Monday: Japan**  

**Wednesday: Japan**  
Week 7 (February 27\textsuperscript{th})

**Monday: India**
Reading: ICP Chapter 7 pgs. 264-286; “The Economist Explains: Why Caste Still Matters in India” from The Economist, February 24\textsuperscript{th} 2014; “The Mosque at Ayodhya: A Destructive Legacy” from The Economist, November 26\textsuperscript{th} 2009; “Narendra Modi: Promising the Good Times”, The Economist, May 24\textsuperscript{th} 2014; “The Economy Under Modi: India’s Prime Minister is not as Much of a Reformer as He Seems” from The Economist, June 24\textsuperscript{th} 2017.

**Wednesday: India**
Reading: ICP Chapter 7 pgs. 286-311; “Wasting Indian Minds: India Has Made Primary Education Universal, But Not Good” from The Economist, June 8\textsuperscript{th} 2017; “Fighting Corruption in India: A Bad Boom” from The Economist, March 15\textsuperscript{th} 2014.

Week 8 (March 6\textsuperscript{th})

**Monday: Finishing Up India, and Summing Up**
Reading: To Be Announced

**Wednesday: Midterm 2 – Everything since Midterm 1**
Reading: None assigned.

Week 9 \hspace{1cm} **NO CLASS ALL WEEK – SPRING BREAK!!!!**

Week 10 (March 20\textsuperscript{th})

**Communist and Post-Communist States**

**Monday: Russia**
Reading: ICP Chapter 13 pgs. 544-564; “Special Report: Richer, Bolder, And Sliding Back – Russia” from The Economist, July 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2006; “The Long Life of Homo Sovieticus” from The Economist, December 10\textsuperscript{th} 2011; “The Cracks Appear” from The Economist, December 10\textsuperscript{th} 2011; “The Birth of Russian Citizenry” from The Economist, December 17\textsuperscript{th} 2011; “First We Take Sakharov Avenue” from The Economist, December 31\textsuperscript{st} 2011; “A Strange Kremlin Wedding”, The Economist, May 8\textsuperscript{th} 2008; “A Parade of Power in Russia”, The Economist, May 9\textsuperscript{th} 2008.
**Wednesday: Russia**

Week 11 (March 26th)

**Monday: China**

**Wednesday: China**
Reading: ICP Chapter 15 pgs. 661-685;

Week 12 (April 2nd)

**Monday: Summing Up – Russia and China**

**Wednesday: Midterm 3 – Everything since Midterm 2**
Reading: None assigned.

**Emerging/Developing States**

Week 13 (April 9th)

**Monday: Mexico**
Wednesday: Mexico
Reading: ICP Chapter 10 pgs. 423-446; “The Lawless Roads” from The Economist, October 8th 2011; “Survey: Mexico – Policing The Police” from The Economist, November 18th, 2006; “Spot The Drug Trafficker” from The Economist, October 30th 2008; “Mexican- American Relations – The Dirty Dozen”, The Economist, December 16th 2010; “Shifting Sands” from The Economist, November 26th 2011

Week 14 (April 16th)

Monday: Nigeria

Wednesday: Nigeria

Week 15 (April 23rd)

Monday: Brasil

Wednesday: Brasil
Week 16 (April 30th)

**Monday: Finishing Brasil**
Reading: To be announced

**Wednesday: Finishing Everything Off – The Big Picture. Last Day of Class**
Reading: None assigned

The last day of class for POLS 260 is May 2nd. If you haven’t already done so, you must turn in your paper and also post your paper to Blackboard via Safe Assign. The final exam will be held on Wednesday, May 9th from 10.00am to 11.50am. It will cover Mexico, Nigeria, and Brasil, and there will be an additional section on the final that will be cumulative to the extent that it will allow you to draw on material from the entire semester.
The Paper Assignment

You are required to write a 12-page paper for this class. The paper should be stapled, double-spaced with standard Microsoft Word margins, and in 12-point font. You’re advised to give this paper some serious thought given that it will be worth 100 points of your grade. Your first task is to pick a country of your choosing – DO NOT use a country that is covered in class, and do not choose the United States either. Your second task is to follow that country in the news. The Washington Post or New York Times are good places for finding articles, as is The Economist, but well-known news websites (MSNBC, BBC etc) also work. Your third task is to write the paper, which summarizes several articles of your choosing, and then moves on to a discussion of how you think the events covered in your chosen articles relate to, and are examples of, concepts, themes, or terms from the semester’s lectures/readings. Suitable concepts, themes, or terms you might want to examine include (but are not limited to): the government’s role in the economy, the role of the state, political culture, representation, participation, governing institutions, parties and the party system, electoral laws, immigration, citizenship, national identity, democratization, consolidation of democracy, globalization, corruption, state failure, inequality, civil liberties, political and economic development, civil society.

The professor will gladly give feedback throughout the semester and look over rough drafts if students wish to discuss their paper further. Discussions of the paper should take place in the professor’s office hours.

The finished paper is due any time before the end of class (last day to submit the paper is in-class May 2nd). It must be submitted via Safe Assign, while a hard copy must be given to the professor. Late papers, or e-mailed papers will not be accepted. Do not test this policy. Plan ahead!!!! Early submissions are absolutely welcomed.

Your paper should include the following:

1. A brief introduction (no more than a page or two), which outlines your thesis i.e. what concepts, themes, or ideas from class you feel your articles demonstrate (3-4 articles is a decent number as the paper should be more than a summary of a bunch of articles).
2. A summary of the articles (be brief – keep to the point).
3. A discussion of the connection between the events covered by your articles and concepts, themes, or terms you think the articles illustrates (the most important and most challenging part of the paper). Here, you need to not only make a convincing connection but also show an understanding of the concepts, themes, or terms you’re applying. Defining your chosen concepts, themes, or terms should form part of this discussion, and stating how they were discussed in class/reading, before stating how they relate to your article is a “must” here.
4. A bibliography on the second to last page (page 11 in other words).
5. A final page (or pages since the text of your articles is unlikely to all fit onto one page), which should be the texts of the article you chose to discuss. Without this, your paper will not be graded.

Be sure to cite (using whatever format you’re comfortable with) all quotes and/or discussions drawn from your article and readings/lecture. If you’re unsure how to do this properly, go online or make use of NIU’s Writing Centre.

Your draft paper, and finished paper will be graded based on the following criteria:
1. How well you complete points 1-5 above, and in particular points 2 and 3. How well you argue that the events in the article are evidence of the two concepts, themes, or terms you discuss is paramount, along with how well you show understanding of those concepts, themes, or terms.
2. Presentation - in terms of grammar and spelling (please take pride in your work). Please also staple your paper!!
3. How well written and organised the paper is.