

POLS 104
Introduction to Comparative Politics
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Spring 2014
CBA 104; M. W. and F. 10:30 - 11:20

Instructor

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Course overview

Welcome to POLS 104!

Whether you are curious about the similarities and differences between the political systems around the world or you are thinking to commit yourself to comparative politics, I am looking forward to working with you and having a challenging and valuable experience.

Comparative politics study internal political institutions, processes, and actors across political systems. With a long history of rich debate, this field has covered a wide range of topics and approaches. Given that this course is an introduction to the discipline, we only will concentrate on some of the core subjects in comparative politics. Additionally, we will illustrate those subjects by looking at selected cases /countries from different regions of the world. In doing so, it is expected that the course will give you an initial, but strong understanding of the logic of comparative analysis and its controversies, and help you to continue exploring the field, as well as to make sense of the world around you.

Course Goal

Recognize and asses the core concepts, topics, approaches, and debates of comparative politics.

Learning Objectives

POLS 104 is divided into four units. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

Unit 1. Approaches in comparative politics

- Explain the basic political theories and controversies within comparative politics
- Differentiate between the approaches used in comparative politics
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches to comparative politics

Unit 2. The nation-state

- Recognize the core constitutive features of the state
- Explain the major steps in the development of the state
- Identify the diversity and similarity between states

Unit 3. Democracies and authoritarian regimes

- Identify the typologies of democratic systems, and explain the variation among democracies
- Recognize the diversity of authoritarian regimes, in terms of by whom, why, and how those regimes are ruled
- Differentiate and contrast between democratic and authoritarian regimes
- Explain the evolution of constitutional forms around the world

Unit 4. Political participation: structures and actors

- Distinguish the actors and the wide range of modes of political participation
- Explain the limitations and strengths of the theoretical approaches to social movements
- Differentiate between the competing theoretical traditions of interest politics
- Recognize the actors and controversies around the international promotion of democracy

Readings

The following textbook is *required*:

Caramani, Daniele (Ed.), *Comparative Politics*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011. In addition, the instructor may announce other *compulsory readings* through Blackboard (Bb).

Students are expected to read thoroughly and critically *all* class materials.

Course strategies

POLS 104 is based on the students' interactive participation. Thus, we will use a variety of formats that will allow you to continually participate, including lecture-discussion sessions and small group discussions. We will also have *comparative labs*, in which, with the aid of guest speakers and/or videos, we will apply our comparative knowledge to a selected case/country from different regions of the world. The quality of your contribution depends on thoroughly reading and watching all class materials *before* class.

Grading and course requirements

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	35%
Class Participation	15%

Exams

Students will take three exams during the semester. All the exams will combine true/false and multiple choice questions, and may also include short-answer and essay questions. The questions will be based on the textbook and other readings, lectures, guest speakers' presentations and videos. *There are no* late or make-up exams.

Exam 1 and exam 2 are non-cumulative. Each of them will be 50 minutes long and will take place on one of the days of the week announced in this syllabus during the regular scheduled lecture time.

The final exam will last 2 hours, will be cumulative and will take place during the time scheduled by the University. If you will be leaving Lincoln at the end of the semester, please plan your travel accordingly.

Class Participation

Your grade will take into account your contribution to class discussions and it should *demonstrate familiarity* with the course materials (readings and films). It is expected that you critically read/watch all materials *before* class. So, your attendance alone is not sufficient for you to obtain a good grade. Students have to arrive on time and stay for the entire class. Arriving late and leaving the class before it ends will also count as an absence. The instructor will take attendance every class.

Grading Scale (Minimum grade)

A+(97), A (93), A- (90)
B+ (87), B (83), B- (80)
C+ (77), C (73), C- (70)
D+ (67), D (63), D- (60)
F (<59.9)

Professional Behavior Pledge and other Course Policies

POLS 104 students have to read and comply with UNL's Student Code of Conduct that can be found in the following link: <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml>. Students should pay particular attention to the definition of academic dishonesty which includes cheating, fabrication and falsification, and plagiarism.

Course policies include you to:

- First and above of all, have fun!
- Read carefully and bring this syllabus to *every* class.
- Be aware that you are responsible for asking for any class updates and obtaining any lecture notes from a classmate when you miss class.
- Be in touch with the instructor as soon as possible if an emergency arises, and document it (i.e. bring the medical excuse note or program of the funeral).
- Be respectful of others. If you choose to use your laptop during class, be sure to use it only for note-taking and take care not to create any distractions for others.
- Acknowledge that incompletes will not be granted.
- Be aware that the instructor will write letters of recommendation only *after the course is over* and to those students who obtained very good grades.
- Be aware that, if the need arises, the instructor may modify this syllabus.

Communication

The best way to get in touch with the instructor is during his office hours. If you use email, please always type **POLS 104** in the subject line and limit yourself to topics related to the class. In any case, expect an answer to your message in at least 24 hours.

Learning Assistance

UNL policies state that: "Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY."

Course schedule

Unit 1

Approaches in comparative politics

Week 1: Introduction to comparative politics

* Monday Jan. 13 Welcome, instructor introduction, student non-graded self-assessment, in-depth syllabus review, Q & A.

* Wednesday Jan. 15 Comparative lab: USA

Week 2: Approaches in comparative politics

Caramani, Ch 2

* Monday Jan. 20 Martin Luther King Day (Student and Staff Holiday)

Unit 2

The nation-state

Week 3: The nation-state

Caramani, Ch. 4

Week 4: Globalization and the nation-state

Caramani, Ch. 24

* Friday Jan. 31 Comparative Lab: Rwanda

Week 5: Exam 1 week

Unit 3
Democracies and authoritarian regimes

Week 6: Democracies

Caramani, Ch. 5

Week 7: Constitutions

Caramani, Ch. 9

Week 8: Judicialization of politics

Caramani, Ch. 9

Week 9: Authoritarian regimes

Caramani, Ch. 6

* Friday March 7 Comparative Lab: Syria

* POLS 104 mid-term evaluation

Week 10: Exam 2 week

Week 11: Good news: Spring break!

Unit 4
Political participation: structures and actors

Week 12: Political participation

Caramani, Ch. 18

* Friday March 4 Comparative Lab: Italy

Week 13: Social movements

Caramani, Ch. 16

* Friday April 18 Comparative Lab: South Korea

Week 14: Interest associations

Caramani, Ch. 14

Week 15: International actors

Caramani, Ch. 25

Week 16: Conclusion

Caramani, Introduction

* Comparative Lab: Bolivia

Week 17: Final Exam