CPO 3103
Comparative Politics
Spring 2021

Instructor: Jonathan Knuckey

Course Overview

"Although I very rarely spoke of France in my book, I did not write one page of it without having her, so to speak, before my eyes…Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed"

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Welcome to Comparative Politics!

This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics and is intended to help students compare and contrast the wide variety of political systems, institutions and behavior around the world. Comparative politics is a subfield of political science that can help us make arguments about cause and effect by drawing evidence from across nations and over time that enable us to then make generalizations about political phenomena.

This course will provide you with an overview of the major theoretical approaches and debates to the study of comparative politics. While the comparative approach seeks to make generalization across nations, we will also utilize a case study approach to focus on the history, political system, political institutions, political cultures and political behavior of the following nine nations:

- China
- France
- India
- Iran
- Japan
- Mexico
- Nigeria
- Russia
- South Africa
- United Kingdom

These nations will help illustrate many of the broader concepts and ideas we will encounter this semester. They will also provide a solid background and introduction for any future courses you may take on one or more of these nation's political system, or for doing independent research such as an Honors in the Major thesis.

I look forward to the class and hope you find it enjoyable and informative. I look forward to learning a lot from you!

Office Hours & Contact Information.

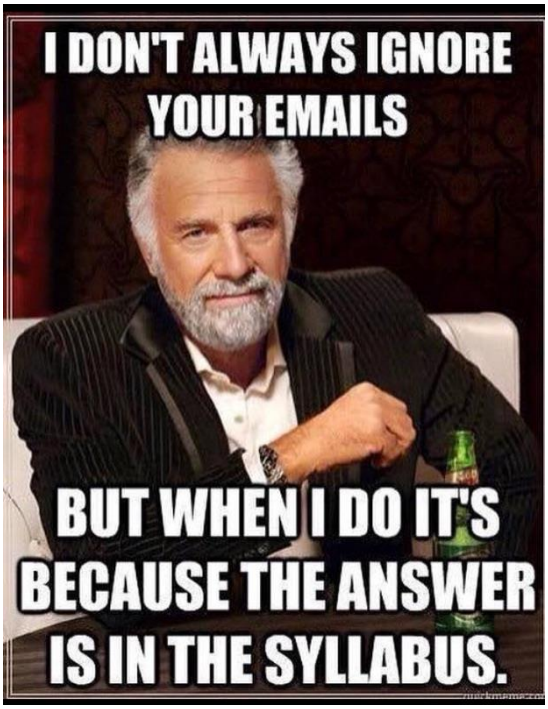
Office hours: Via Zoom, Monday, 9.00-11.30am; Wednesday, 9-11am

Email: Use email in Webcourses. If you write me M-F, I should get back to you within 24 hours. If I don't, please feel free to send me a reminder!

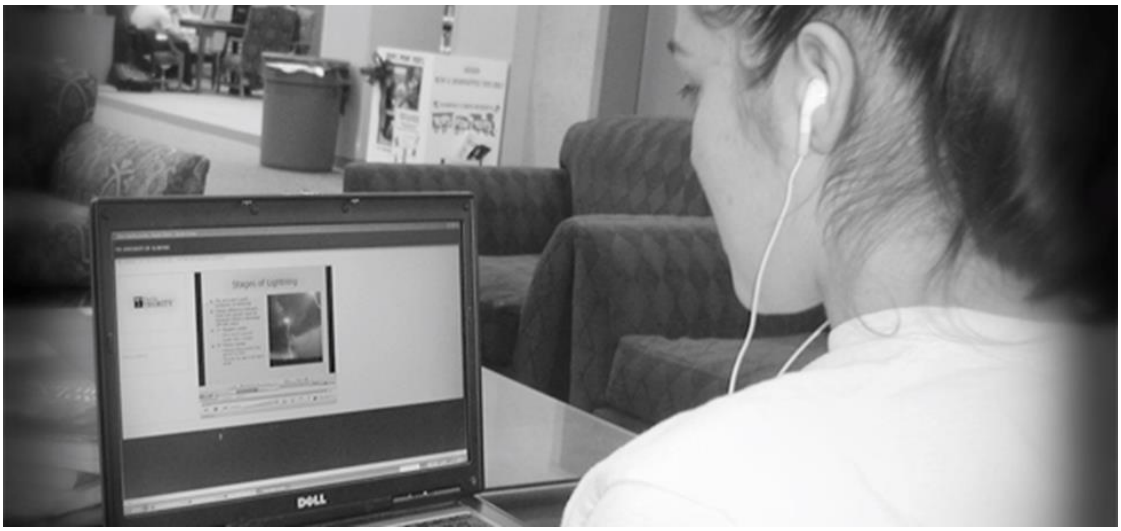
Please don't use the comments box on assignments to message me. I receive no notification of messages sent here (why it is set up that way, I have no idea!). So always use the email in Webcourses if you wish to follow up on any assignment.

I will answer any message within 24 hours. Remember to allow adequate time for a reply to a question about an assignment. If you send a question a few hours before an assignment is due, I may not see it in time to provide help you out.

A note on etiquette: You are what you email, which means your instructors will often shape their opinion of you according to the quality of the email messages you are sending. To that end, be sure to please keep the tone of your emails professional, sign your emails with your name and include an appropriate salutation (Hint: you can't go wrong with "Dear Dr. Knuckey").



Requirements for a Web-Based Class



This is a completely web-based class, and, consequently, requires a different approach in terms of requirements than a regular class. Most obviously, we will not be meeting as a class where you are listening to lectures two or three times a week. However, you should realize that a web-based class does not mean that you will be doing less work. Indeed, as those of you who have taken web-based classes before will attest, a completely on-line class will require that you take a much more active role in your education as compared to a regular face-to-face class.

Generally I have found that students who do well in a web-based class are self-motivated and have usually earned good grades (B or higher) in regular face-to-face classes.

My general rule of thumb for any undergraduate college-level course is that you should devote **2 to 3 hours of study per course credit hour per week**. As this is a three credit hour class you should plan on devoting **6 to 9 hours** per week to this class. This involves reading, taking notes and taking quizzes and other writing assignments.

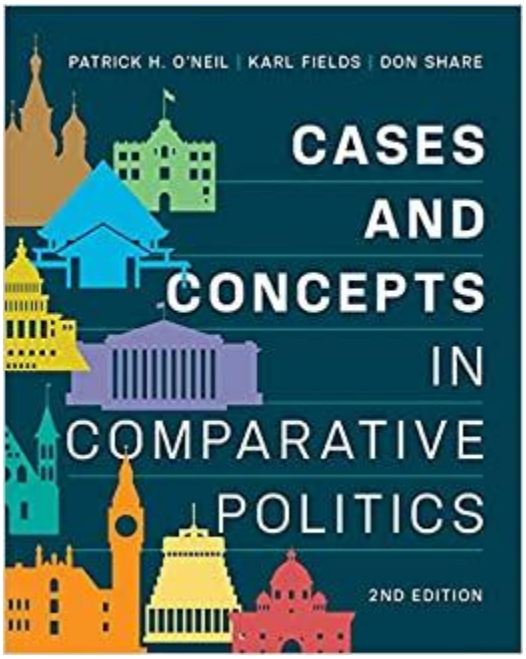
I know you have other commitments—other classes, jobs and life in general—and that you will not *always* be able to devote this time every week. But managing your time is essential to doing well in any class, especially a web-based class. You will also find that much of the material in this class is about applying the material learned, rather than memorizing or looking things up.

Thus, to do well in the class you need to make an investment in it throughout the semester—not just the night an assignment is due.

Textbook

We will use the following textbook, and you will need to buy it (and of course read it) to do well in this class:

- Patrick H. O'Neil, Karl Fields, and Don Share, *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics* 2nd edition



Please make sure this is purchased no later than the end of the first week of the semester. Take this into account if ordering from a third party vendor (like Amazon). And make sure you buy the 2nd Edition of the book, shown above.

Used copies of the textbook are fine -- and less likely to blow a hole in your budget.

Used copies of the textbook is fine -- and less likely to blow a hole in your budget. Ebooks are also fine, and probably a lot more convenient.

Weekly Modules

Requirements for each week of class will be detailed in modules that are accessed in Webcourses. I strongly recommend printing out the requirements for each module and making sure you note due dates for assignments.

I do not release all the modules at once in order to provide as much feedback as possible on quizzes and assignments. If every module was released at once some students would invariably rush through several in a week, giving little time to provide feedback and hence facilitate understanding of the material. I believe this approach best captures the pace of a regular course.

Each module will provide an overview to each specific topic, direct you to the required reading, and outline specific quizzes and assignments. These activities are designed to make sure that you have thought about the material covered in the module, and to provide practical applications of material you will have read in the textbook As well as including assignment instructions, the module overview will often contain some suggestions and tips for the assignments.

There will be two general types assignments for this course:

- Quizzes on the chapters and country cases studies from the textbook
- Written assignments that are designed to provide more depth on a topic and to develop your critical thinking and writing skills

Full assignment details will be given in each Module.

Assignment due dates: Due dates can be found in the Course Schedule below and in each module. Modules will usually have multiple due dates, so it's a good idea to note these at the beginning of each week.

The deadline submission of work will always be midnight (actually 11.59pm) on a particular day. However, you are permitted a grace period where you can still submit work up to 5pm on the following day.

All deadlines are, of course, for Eastern time, so keep that in mind if you are in a different time-zone for part, or all, of the semester!

Please remember that you will know what assignment is due, and what that assignment entails, well in advance of a due date. **The single biggest source of missed points on assignments is starting an assignment too late and not making enough time to complete the assignment.** So pace yourself on all assignments. If you plan ahead you can complete an assignment over

multiple days, which is far more conducive to learning than opening an assignment up just a couple of hours before it is due and rushing through it.

Student Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the UCF Golden Rule, which includes conducting oneself in a professional manner both in the classroom and in written and verbal communication with me and to other students. Violations of the Golden Rule -- both academic and non-academic -- can result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Unauthorized Use of Class Materials

There are many fraudulent websites claiming to offer study aids to students but are actually cheat sites. They encourage students to upload course materials, such as test questions, individual assignments, and examples of graded material. Such materials are the intellectual property of instructors, the university, or publishers and may not be distributed without prior authorization. **Students who engage in such activity are in violation of academic conduct standards and may face penalties.**

Grades

My philosophy of grading is decidedly against what is generally known as "competitive grading" or "grading on the curve." You are not competing against fellow students for grades in this class. You are competing against yourself at all times, hopefully pushing yourself to excel against my objective standards of what students should reasonably get out of this class.

Average mastery of those standards is the baseline for earning an "average" grade of C. Do above-average work, you earn a B. Do excellent work, you earn an A…. and so on. In any case, please understand that the points you earn toward a final grade will not be jerked around up or down to fit some predetermined grade curve. If everyone deserves an A, they'll get it. If everyone flunks, they'll all get an F and then, in all likelihood, I will leave the jurisdiction quickly under cover of night in heavy disguise and an assumed name!

Your final grade will be weighted as follows:

- Written assignments: 34%
- Quizzes on conceptual chapters of textbook (i.e, chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10): 33%
- Quizzes on country cases study chapters: 33%

As there are ample grading opportunities in this course **there will be no extra credit given.** If you know you need a certain grade at the end of the semester, you know you need it at the beginning. Under no circumstances can or will a course grade be awarded on any basis other than those stated in the syllabus.

Grade boundaries are as follows:

A, 93%+

A-, 90-92.9%

B+, 86-89.9%

B, 82-85.9%

B-, 80-81.9%

C+, 76-79.9%

C, 72-75.9%

C-, 70-71.9%

D, 62-69.9%

D- 60-61.9%

F, 59% and below.

Students typically obsess about grades too late, often at the end of the semester. There is little that can be done at that point. So, if you think you are struggling in this class please come and talk to me as often as you like - never think you are being a pest! I cannot recall ever failing a student who early sought this kind of help. However, students who are struggling and delay assistance do fail.

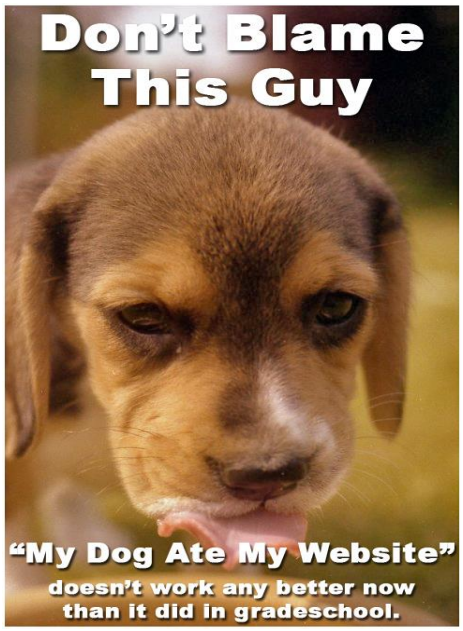
You will be able to access your grades in Webcourses. Please make sure that grades entered here are correct. While every effort is made to ensure grades are correct, from time-to-time errors can occur (incorrectly add/subtract, miss points, and even fail to understand what a student wrote).

A time limit of **1 week** is imposed on all change of grade requests after the grade has posted for a completed piece or work. This is sufficient time to identify any errors. After that prior grades will not be reviewed. This is to bring the course grade to completion and to minimize "end of semester" opportunism.

When grades fall exactly on the borderline of letter grades (91.9%, 89.9%, 85.9%, 81.9, 79.9, etc, etc), I'll take the overall performance of a student throughout the semester into account when deciding whether to round up.

Grade grievance policies are outlined under the UCF Golden Rule.

Make-up Policy and Incompletes



The time and dates for all assignments and the exams are fixed in krypton-coated granite encased in a hydrogen bomb-proof vault! These dates are also known at least one week ahead of time. In other words, an extension on an assignment, or make-up exam will only be given in the most exceptional circumstances that are beyond the control of a student.

Note that requests for an assignment extension after an assignment deadline will not be granted, unless a student was unable to make such a request prior to the deadline. However, this will have to involve something truly exceptional.

The time and dates for all assignments are fixed in krypton-coated granite encased in a hydrogen bomb-proof vault! These dates are also known at least one week ahead of time. As noted above you always get a grace period on any assignment. An extension on any assignment will only be given in the most exceptional circumstances that are beyond the control of a student, and will require documentation.

Note that requests for an assignment extension after an assignment deadline will not be granted, unless a student was unable to make such a request prior to the deadline.

Here are some unacceptable excuses for late-work, and it is by no means an exhaustive list:

- *"My computer is broken...."*
- *"My computer was stolen...."*
- *"I accidentally deleted the file....".*
- *"My computer magically deleted my homework from the hard drive. I do not understand it myself...."*
- *"The internet is broken...."*
- *"I forgot to attach the assignment...."*
- *"I could not find the assignment...."*
- *"I did the quiz but forgot to submit it..."*
- *"I was on holiday..."*
- *"It was my birthday so I never got around to the assignment..."*

The above are all **actual excuses** I have received. Many, as you can see, are computer-related, which are the "dog ate my homework" excuses of the technology age and will not fly! It is your responsibility to secure ample time at a computer, make backups of your work, check you did not submit a blank assignment, check you correctly submitted the right assignment and generally plan ahead—do whatever it takes! Completing an assignment the day before it is due is always a wise move as that provides a cushion for anything that might come up that is unexpected.

From time to time the servers hosting Webcourses at UCF have been known to go down. If this happens UCF will normally post an announcement and if this coincides with the time when an assignment or exam is due, I will make alternative arrangements.

I do not consider vacations or other trips out of town (other than when the student is away from campus representing an official university function) to be exceptional circumstances. Of course, this is an on-line class, so as long as you have reliable internet access being out of town does not really present a problem. Having internet access for a web-based course is assumed. If you are going to be out of town for more than a week with no internet access during the semester, then you may want to reconsider taking this web-based course.

Religious Holidays

Any student missing an assignment, exam or any other work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the **responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first week of class of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays** which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an unavoidable hardship on the instructor or the university.

Incompletes

An incomplete standing will only be granted if requested in writing to me (a phone call is not acceptable). You must explain why you are requesting an incomplete standing and include, where appropriate, documentation that must be original and verifiable. Such documentation must be on a letterhead, and contain a contact name and telephone number. An incomplete will only be granted if you have a passing grade in the class.

Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Accessibility Services before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Deployed Active Duty Military Students

If you are a deployed active duty military student and feel that you may need a special accommodation due to that unique status, please contact me at the start of the semester to discuss your circumstances.

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to change, add or modify any part of the syllabus. Of course, advance notice will be given of any such changes.

Course Schedule

All due dates are midnight (actually 11.59pm) on the date noted. However, a grace period is allowed so that work submitted by 5pm the following day will still receive full credit.

Module 1: Studying Comparative Politics

- **Quiz:** Syllabus Quiz (1/13) *(This quiz will be used to demonstrate student academic engagement during the first week of the semester)*
- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts of Comparative Politics*, ch.1 (1/17)

Module 2: Comparing States, Identities & Ideology

- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*, *"States",* ch.2 (1/20)
- **Written assignment:** Measuring the Power of the State (1/24)
- **Quiz**: *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*, *"Nations & Society",* ch.3 (1/27)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in India* (1/31)
- **Written assignment:** *Comparing Ethnic Conflict and Political Institutions in India and Nepal* (2/3)

Module 3: Comparing Democratic Political Systems

- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics, "Democratic Regimes,"* ch.6 (2/7)
- **Written assignment:** *What is Undermining Democracy?* (2/10)
- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics,* "Developed Democracies," ch.7 (2/14)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in the United Kingdom* (2/17)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in France*, (2/21)
- **Written assignment:** *Multiculturalism versus Assimilation and Anti-Immigrant sentiment in French Politics* (2/24)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in Japan* (2/28)
- **Written Assignment:** *Explaining the Rise of Authoritarian Values in Developed Democracies* (3/3)

Module 4: Comparing Non-Democratic Political Systems

- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics, "Non-Democratic Regimes," ch.8* (3/7)
- **Written assignment:** *The Resource Curse - Do Resources Hinder Democracy?* (3/10)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in Iran* (3/14)

Module 5: Comparing Communist and Post-Communist Countries

- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*, "Communism and Post-Communism," ch. 9 (3/17)
- **Written assignment:** *Explaining Variations in the Success of Post-Communist Countries* (3/21)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in Russia* (3/24)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in China (3/28)*

Module 6: Comparing Developing Countries; Comparing Transitions to Democracy

- **Quiz:** *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*, "Developing Countries," ch.10 (3/31)
- **Written assignment:** *Overcoming the Middle Income Trap* (4/4)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in Mexico* (4/7)
- **Quiz:** Case Study of Politics in South Africa (4/11)
- **Written assignment:** Comparing the Transition to Democracy in South Africa and Zimbabwe (4/21)
- **Quiz:** *Case Study of Politics in Nigeria* (4/25)