

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 210, Spring 2014

Professor: Colin J. Bennett
Class Session: Tues, Wed and Fri: 9.30am-10.20Am
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About the Course

Political Science 210 introduces students to the area of political science known as comparative politics: how and why we compare, and how we might develop generalizations about why political systems are or are not democratic, stable or unstable, violent or peaceful, stagnant or productive, and so on. Comparative politics is much more than the mere description of domestic politics in other countries; it is the systematic study of the variations in political processes, behavior and outcomes throughout the world. The course is organized thematically, and draws upon illustrations from many different jurisdictions. The material addressed in this class is foundational and will allow you to better understand the subject matter examined in upper-level courses, including those focused on specific geographic areas of the world. By the end of the course, you should have gained a solid appreciation of the methods of comparison, and some analytical tools that will allow you to understand how different peoples organize their political affairs under very different sets of historical, cultural and socio-economic conditions.

The course also aims to strengthen your reading, writing, research and analytical skills. The term paper will give you the opportunity to develop some independent research skills and to prepare a well-structured and written academic paper.

About the Instructor

My research interests have concentrated on the range of issues that are captured by the broad term “personal privacy protection.” I have written about theories of privacy and surveillance, the various policy instruments at domestic and international levels, the political economy of personal information and the complicated and diverse attitudes of citizens toward the introduction of new technologies and the implications for their personal privacy. These issues are, of course, inherently comparative. By comparing how different jurisdictions have tried to respond to the similar challenges posed by new information and communications technologies, I can learn a great deal about the abilities of those states to manage technological change, and also about their institutions, policies and cultures. More about my research interests and publications can be found at:

www.colinbennett.ca

Requirements and Evaluation

- 1) A one-hour in-class midterm short answer exam, which will give you an opportunity to review the key concepts from the first half of the course (tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 21st) (25%)
- 2) An analytical paper on a contemporary controversy within comparative politics – to be presented in the tutorial and due around two weeks after the presentation (See below). You will need to make a choice about your paper topic through Moodle by the second week of class in consultation with your TA (30%)
- 3) Tutorial presentation on your proposed paper (5%). You are expected to make a brief (10 minute) presentation on the issue in question in relation to your country of choice. We will need at least 2 students from each tutorial writing on each one of these topics, so I have limited the numbers for each topic. Please sign up for a topic through Moodle. The final schedule for presentations will be decided during the first tutorial.
- 4) Tutorial attendance and participation (10%). Participation in tutorials provides you an opportunity to practice and improve your verbal communications skills. Your TA will also evaluate your attendance and participation during tutorials. You are also expected to do the additional reading of the article that corresponds to each tutorial topic. **NB: Participation in tutorials is mandatory.** Tutorials begin the third week of classes. There are 9 tutorials in total, including an introductory review and planning session and a review session for the midterm. If you fail to register and to attend tutorials, you will receive an N grade (failure because of incomplete) for the course.
- 5) A final examination in the April exam period, which will comprise short answer questions on the key concepts covered in the second part of the course, and essay questions covering the entire course (30%).

Please note: you must complete all assignments for this course. According to university policy, failure to complete one or more of the assignments will result in a grade of ‘N’ (incomplete) for the course. An ‘N’ is equivalent to a fail for your GPA.

Teaching Assistants

TAs will lead the tutorials, and be responsible for the grading of your papers and midterms. They will also hold office hours, help facilitate your understanding of the course material, and work with you on the preparation and writing of your term papers.

Readings

There is one required textbook:

Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Political Science: A Comparative Introduction* (Palgrave, 7th edition, 2013)

Your text also offers a set of valuable study tools. See:

www.palgrave.com/politics/hague

All other readings are linked from Moodle, the open source online e-learning software platform where you will also find the course schedule, information on assignments, and copies of the powerpoint slides used in lectures.. Each week, I will also be posting news stories of relevance to the topic under consideration, and we will devote a portion of the Friday class to the discussion of those issues. **You will be responsible for these extra readings on both the Midterm and final examinations.**

To log on to Moodle go to: <https://moodle.uvic.ca/login/index.php> and sign in with your netlink identification and password. For the Moodle basics, see: <http://elearning.uvic.ca/moodle/students>

In preparing for the exams, please bear in mind that attention should be paid to both reading assignments and class notes. The lectures and discussions will go beyond the information found in the readings, so you should attend every class. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET A PASSING GRADE IN THIS CLASS UNLESS YOU ATTEND LECTURES AND TUTORIALS REGULARLY.** It goes without saying that you will find the class discussion more rewarding if you read the assignments before the scheduled class period.

Keeping in Touch

I receive a large number of e-mails every day, and am not able to respond to every inquiry in detail. Please take a moment before e-mailing me to ask yourself three questions: 1) Is the answer to the question on the syllabus or on Moodle? 2) Can the question wait until next class so others in the class can benefit from the answer? 3) Can the question wait until my office hours? I will keep my office hours diligently, and will be available at other times if you would like to make an appointment. I will let you know if I have to reschedule my hours for one reason or another. **Office hours are a great opportunity for me to get to know you one-on-one and to have an extended conversation about your work.**

Student Etiquette

In the spirit of collegiality, please come to class on time and do not disrupt the class with late arrivals or early departures. Please turn off your cell phones during class. Laptops are permitted in the classroom, but limited to appropriate usage - taking of notes or accessing the materials on the Moodle course site. It is inappropriate to surf the web, use Facebook or play games during class. Extracurricular computing and texting is a disturbance to the people sitting around you.

Resources to Assist You:

I encourage you to visit *The Writing Centre* for assistance with your term paper. Assistance from the writing centre can make a huge difference in your confidence and writing skills. For an appointment, visit their website at:

<http://lwc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc/students.php>

Time Management. At one time or another, most of us have problems managing our time. Learning how to manage your time and workload is an important skill. Counseling services offer excellent courses on time management and provide one-on-one assistance.

Visit them or their website at: <http://coun.buvic.ca/learning>

Personal Challenges. You may also want to contact a counselor if delays in your coursework completion are due to personal challenges you face over the semester:

<http://coun.uvic.ca> You can also find a separate link here for resources for students who have a disability.

TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT

There are seven possible essay topics that correspond with the debates scheduled for tutorial discussion. Each of you is expected to sign up for one topic on Moodle. The first tutorial will clarify the paper presentation schedule and the expectations. Your TA will consult with you about your topic, administer the sign-up process, moderate the discussion, grade your presentations (5%), and then mark your final paper (30%). Each of you is to prepare a 10-minute presentation on your paper in the assigned tutorial.

Each topic is framed in quite general terms, and you may answer the question with respect to any country in which you have an interest (except Canada, or your home country if you are not Canadian). But each question is complex and is not amenable to an unqualified answer. The better papers will be those that recognize the complexities and contingencies. You should all have had some experience of writing such papers. You should all know that the paper should include a clear introductory thesis statement in which you demonstrate how your analysis will proceed and be organized. Each paper should also advance a clear conclusion. These rules will be reviewed during the first tutorial. Please also see my “Tips for Term Papers” posted on Moodle.

I would expect each of you to reference at least 6 academic sources (books or scholarly articles) beyond the Hague and Harrop text. Each topic is also supported by a helpful one-page summary, as well as by a further article which you should all read before the tutorial. Possible sources are listed as recommended readings and online resources under each topic in the text. Each of you **MUST** make an appointment to talk with your TA about your paper topic, and have it approved.

Your essay is due around two weeks after the presentation in the tutorial. This sequence of deadlines throughout the class permits you to choose how you wish to distribute your work throughout the term, and to avoid the rush of exams and assignments at the end. Essays should be posted on Moodle in WORD format, saved and labeled in the following format – LASTNAME210.doc. The papers will not be accepted for posting beyond the due time and date (see below), unless you have submitted an Academic Concession form supported by written medical documentation. Papers will be graded by your teaching assistants and returned through Moodle with comments and track changes. No paper copies will be accepted or returned.

And now here's a concession! Provided your paper is submitted by the stipulated deadline, you will have the opportunity to rewrite the paper in response to comments from your TA. If you choose this option, the paper must be resubmitted within one week of the date when your TA returns it to you. No exceptions. It can then be regraded.

The papers should be no less than 2500 words, and no more than 3000 words (not including references). Pages should be numbered, and double-spaced. They should use in-text citations (e.g. Bennett 2013: 100), with an alphabetized list of references at the end. Please avoid footnotes; if the point you are making is worthy of inclusion it can be made within the text of the paper itself. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. We reserve the right to plagiarism detection software such as turnitin.com if plagiarism is suspected. If you are unsure about the appropriate rules for citations, then consult your TA or myself. Please see the materials on citations and plagiarism on the UVIC library website: <http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/index.php>

TUTORIAL SESSIONS

**TUTORIAL ONE (Jan 20-24): ALLOCATION OF ASSIGNMENTS AND
ADVICE ON TERM PAPER PREPARATION**

**TUTORIAL TWO (Jan 27-31): Are States Dinosaurs waiting to die?
Paper Due: February 14th**

**TUTORIAL THREE (Feb 3-7): Is Liberal Democracy Ceasing to be Democratic?
Paper Due: February 21st**

(READING BREAK FEBRUARY 10-14)

TUTORIAL FOUR (Feb 17-21): REVIEW FOR MIDTERM ON FEB 21st

**TUTORIAL FIVE (Feb 24-28): Is the Internet Remaking Politics?
Paper Due: March 14th**

**TUTORIAL SIX (March 3-7): Are Political Parties in Crisis?
Paper Due: March 21st**

**TUTORIAL SEVEN (March 10-14): Should Voting be Compulsory
Paper Due: March 28th**

**TUTORIAL EIGHT (March 17-21): Are Federal systems better able to protect
minorities than non-federal systems?
Paper Due: April 4th**

**TUTORIAL NINE (March 24-28): Should a New Democracy Adopt a Presidential
form of Government?
Paper Due: April 11th**