

# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

## Department of Political Science

84-101-002 – Introduction to Comparative Politics (3 cr.) – QUEST II

Spring 2017: T/TR | 9:40 to 11:10 in Sage 3232

*My office hours are on  
Tuesdays 11:30 – 1:00pm and  
Wednesdays from 8:30 – 10:00am*

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Politics is the competition for public power – that is, the power to make decisions for others. Comparative Politics is the study of this competition in countries other than our own. We learn a lot about our country and the choices we have made about how to structure competition for power by examining nations, cultures, and societies beyond the United States. Is public power best exercised by a few, or distributed among many? How do countries emerge and endure as political communities? What is the role of religion and cultural diversity in politics? How do government choices produce more or less equitable societies? Why have some countries developed more quickly than others? What is the relationship between local, national, and global politics? What explains, contains, or promotes political violence? How do we promote, attain and sustain democracy in diverse and sometimes divided cultural contexts? Over the course of the semester we will examine different theoretical answers to these questions and use country cases to help us evaluate those answers.

### QUEST II AND THE UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM

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Introduction to Comparative Politics is a **Quest II** course, the second in your series of courses addressing one of the three core signature questions at the heart of the *University Studies Program* (USP). In this course we will examine: **How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?** Understanding cultural differences and being able to competently navigate a culturally rich, diverse, and complex world is an essential learning outcome (a core goal) of your liberal education at UWO and an indispensable life skill. **Intercultural knowledge and competence** is the understanding of one's own culture as well as cultures beyond one's own; the recognition of the cultural values and history, language, traditions, arts, and social institutions of a group of people; the ability to negotiate and bridge cultural differences in ways that allow for broader perspectives to emerge; and the skill to investigate a wide range of world views, beliefs, practices, and values (including your own core values and beliefs).

One of the goals of the USP is to provide you with a broad understanding of the human experience through an exploration of different disciplines. Major academic divisions like **social science**, and their disciplines, like **political science**, present us with alternative approaches or “ways of knowing” about nature, culture and society.

Introduction to Comparative Politics is in the **society category**; this means we want you to start thinking like a “social scientist” and using some of the tools of political science to confront kinds of fundamental questions posed in the course description above. Additionally, this course satisfies your **USP Global Citizenship requirement**; and it is one of the gateway courses to advanced study in Political Science (see the end of the syllabus for more course recommendations.)

**Global Citizenship** is the knowledge of nations, cultures, or societies beyond the U.S.; the recognition of how interaction, interdependence, and inequity among diverse geographical, social, political, or economic systems have shaped historical and contemporary global challenges and opportunities; and the skills to engage with the responsibilities of informed citizenship in a complex, interdependent, and changing world.

Our exploration of the domestic politics of other countries and our exploration of disciplinary “ways of knowing,” including the use of social science methods, are all part of what it means to be **liberally educated**. A liberally educated person is prepared to deal with *complexity, diversity, and change*. Such individuals possess broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth knowledge of a specific area of interest. *A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings* (adapted from AAC&U).

**Quest II** courses emphasize **Ethical Reasoning**. *Ethical reasoning* is a form of reasoning we all do when we ask questions like “Should I do this?” “Is it right to do that?” “Is this policy good?” “Am I doing what I should to be a good person?” “What should a good person do?” People engage in other kinds of reasoning too. For example, we might use theoretical reasoning to analyze the way a system of ideas or claims is connected or practical reasoning to problem solve – to work out what to do and how to do it. Ethical reasoning is values based – about good or right versus that bad or wrong. In the context of our country studies, we will examine how people, including ourselves, arrive at the values that they have, and consider the consequences of people's ethical (on unethical) choices on others in their political community.

Developing your ethical reasoning skills requires you to be able to ‘assess your own values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions’ (adapted from the AAC&U VALUE Rubric). In your Quest III course, you will examine the last of the Signature Questions and engage in a significant community experience.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** *By the end of this course, you should be able to:*

- Define and apply key concepts in comparative politics.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of specific historical events in the context of the political and economic development of the countries studied.

- Compare and contrast the political systems of the countries explored in the course, paying particular attention to historical, political, economic, geographical, and moral aspects of governance in each country.
- Investigate how differences in world views, beliefs, practices, and values affect the fundamental goals of politics in diverse contexts.
- Identify, assess and articulate ethical issues related to course materials.
- Define and explain ethical reasoning and recognize ethical issues and questions.
- Recognize and understand the reasons for your personal beliefs and world view through comparative study and reflection; identify and understand arguments that challenge your views and engage in difficult, but respectful, conversations with those who share or do not share your beliefs.
- Understand how different government types respond to political, economic, resource, and social challenges.
- Explain how different electoral systems impact representation in democracies.
- Use the ‘comparative method’ and your knowledge of politics in diverse countries to analyze contemporary political problems and issues.

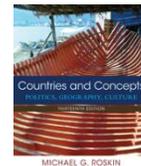
#### **ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING:**

**Assignments:** There are multiple short assignments associated with this course. Some of these are submitted on D2L, such as current event responses and reading reactions, others will be completed in class either individually or collaboratively. A final cumulative comparative project is due at the end of the semester (we will discuss this in class).

**Chapter Quizzes and Exams:** You have chapter reading quizzes and a chapter test on every chapter in REVEL. These are taken and graded in REVEL. You will have a short cumulative final exam at the end of the semester.

#### **COURSE POLICIES**

**Text:** *Countries and Concepts: Politics, Geography, Culture. Michael G. Roskin. Published by Pearson, 13<sup>th</sup> edition.*



Your text is available at the bookstore; it is an e-book with REVEL – *you are buying an access code to the REVEL version of the text.* I chose this format to significantly reduce your textbook costs. If you would like a loose leaf paper copy it is available for purchase separately from the publisher. Directions for accessing your text are on D2L. You will need to have access to a computer or other connected device (tablet, iPad, phone) to complete your readings and assignments. Computer labs are available across campus and you may check out a laptop or iPad for use at the library as needed.

**Supplementary readings** and activities are provided within REVEL or on D2L depending on the assignment.

## All readings are required.

I encourage you to regularly follow current events through the news feeds available through our course D2L site, the library, and the World Politics News Review blog – the blog is linked to your text and provides commentary on current events using the concepts covered in this course.

**Individual Meetings:** You must meet with me, either individually or in small groups of 2-3 students, sometime in the first four weeks of class. That way I get to know you better and you are more comfortable coming to see me across the semester.

**Study Expectations:** It is usually expected that students will spend about 2 hours of study time outside of class for each hour we spend together inside of class – that’s 3 hours a week of class time, and about 6 hours a week on preparing for class. Some students will need more study time, and some less.

**Grading:** Final Grades will be calculated using UWO’s 93/90/87 grading scale as follows:

Reading Responses (D2L)	15% of final grade
REVEL Overall Score (REVEL)	25% of final grade
Current Event Assignments (D2L)	10% of final grade
Activities (in-Class)	15% of final grade
Final Exam	15% of final grade
Final Project	20% of final grade

You may check your points on REVEL and other grades on D2L at any time. Please let me know right away if there is an issue with a posted grade. If you have grading questions, please come see me. You may challenge a grade—this request must be typed, based on clear reasoning related to the material, and submitted within a week of receiving your graded work.

### Tips for doing well in this class:

- **Do your reading before** the class meeting for which it is assigned and be prepared to discuss the material and ask questions
- **Come to class** – really! We will do a lot of work together in-class. Students with poor attendance tend to do poorly. I do keep track of your attendance; but it is not part of your grade.
- **Bring your readings and notes to class** with you so that you can participate fully in these in-class activities and assignments. You may bring a tablet or laptop to access your readings and course materials during group work.
- **Take notes on your reading**, keep a list of key terms and definitions (particularly from the textbook), and write down questions you may have while reading. I highly recommend taking hand written notes.
- **Observe common sense classroom etiquette.** Treat others with respect, and be respectful of, and open to, differing opinions and attitudes.

- ***Come see me in office hours*** and/or communicate with me about issues, difficulties, absences etc. as they come up. If you are struggling or are not doing as well as you would like to be doing, come talk to me; we can discuss strategies to improve and what further assistance you might need.

***Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:*** “Academic Honesty is fundamental to the University, and academic misconduct is taken very seriously. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, *for the appropriate citation of sources*, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors” (UWS, 14.01, emphasis added).

- Plagiarism is using someone else’s ideas, words, theories, evidence, findings, argument, etc. and passing them off as your own by not properly attributing or acknowledging the original source of those ideas.
- Students may inadvertently plagiarize when they fail to provide page numbers for quotations in a paper, or when they paraphrase or summarize the work of others without acknowledging the source in the text of their paper.
- Plagiarism in its many forms is wrong, unethical and dishonest. At minimum plagiarism in this course will result in a failing grade on the specific assignment and may result in other disciplinary action.
- *If you are unsure whether or not what you have written constitutes plagiarism (in this class, or in another class you are taking), or you do not understand how to cite the work of others, don’t hesitate to ask me!*

**Excused absences, make-ups and late work:** My goal is for you to learn the material, stretch your academic abilities, and gain an appreciation of cultural and political diversity. If you need to miss class, communicate with me so we can work to make sure you don’t fall behind. Making up an in-class assignment requires *an excused absence*. REVEL assignments are fully accessible a week in advance and due prior to class on the due date – they are graded by the publisher at the time they are submitted. Don’t fall behind on these!

**Early Alert:** In the fifth week of class, IF your grade in the course is low, you will receive an email from the Registrar’s Office letting you know. Pay attention to this email, it has lots of information about support services. You should seek out additional help (from me or others) if you are getting below a C and/or if you are not doing as well as you would like to be doing. We can discuss strategies to improve and what further assistance you might need.

**Campus Resources:** You know from Quest I that there are many resources on campus dedicated to your academic and personal success. [Click for a full list of resources available to you on campus.](#)

## COURSE SCHEDULE BY TOPIC

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### PART I INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS (CHAPTER 1)

#### Week 1 – January 31<sup>st</sup> & Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>

**T** – Introduction; how does Comparative Politics work?

- 1.1: The Paralysis Problem



**TH** – What is the difference between *nation* and *state*? How do states form? What do states do (and not do)? What impact does a country's past have on its present politics?

- 1.2: Nations and States
- 1.3: Impact of the Past
- *Problem: State Failure*

#### Week 2 – February 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>

**T** – How do democracies *govern*? How do democracies conduct *elections*? How and why do these rules matter for democratic politics?

- 1.4: Key Institutions
- *Problem: What does democracy mean?*

**TH** – How do social divisions influence political *culture* and patterns of political *interaction*?

- 1.5: Political Culture
- 1.6: Patterns of Interaction
- *Problem: Economic Inequality*

#### Week 3 – February 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>

**T** – What are political *quarrels*? Why is economics important as a political quarrel? Does the size of government matter?

- 1.7: What They Quarrel About
- Read on D2L: Alesina, et al., “Why Doesn't the U.S. Have a European-Style Welfare State?”

**TH** – *Comparative Exploration: the source of rights.*

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## PART II: EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES: UNITED KINGDOM, GERMANY, AND FRANCE

### UNITED KINGDOM (CHAPTER 2)

#### Week 4 – February 21<sup>st</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>

**T** – Why is the UK important to study? What impact does the history have on current UK politics? How does Britain’s parliamentary system of government work?

- 2.1: Impact of the Past
- 2.2: Key Institutions

**TH** – How does the electoral system—single-member districts with plurality— influence their two-plus party system.

- *Problem: Forming government*

#### Week 5 – February 28<sup>th</sup> & March 2<sup>nd</sup>

**T** – How does class affect politics? How does question time hold government accountable?

- 2.3: British Political Culture
- 2.4: Patterns of Interaction

**TH** – Brexit: The UK and the EU

- 2.5: What Britons Quarrel About
- *Problem: Why Brexit?*



### GERMANY (CHAPTER 4)

#### Week 6 – March 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>

**T** – How has Germany managed to become a stable democracy? Why is Germany called a “chancellor democracy”?

- 4.1: Impact of the Past - Germany
- 4.2: The Key Institutions

**TH** – How does the German electoral system differ from that in Britain? How do we design political institutions for desirable outcomes related to democracy such as representation and effectiveness?

- Read on D2L: Allen – “Why doesn’t the US have a multiparty parliamentary democracy?”
- *Problem: “Democratic” Institutional Design.*

#### Week 7 – March 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>

**T** – How and why does Germany’s past linger in current politics? How does it affect political party development and the representation of political values?

- 4.3: German Political Culture
- 4.4: Patterns of Interaction

**TH** – Understanding Germany’s role in the Europe and the world

- 4.5: What Germans Quarrel About
- *Problem: Migration and cultural change*

**SPRING BREAK**  
March 19<sup>th</sup> to March 26<sup>th</sup>

## FRANCE (CHAPTER 3)

### Week 8 – March 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>

**T** – What is the relationship between the French Revolution and the nature of French Democracy? How did the semi-presidential system and the electoral system of the Fifth Republic solve the problems of the Fourth Republic?

- 3.1: Impact of the Past
- 3.2: The Key Institutions

**TH** – What effect has French political culture had on the political system? Is French society concerned more about the individual or the common good? Why? How has this impacted French citizens' expectations of the political system?

- 3.3: French Culture and Identity
- 3.4: Patterns of Interaction

### Week 9 – April 4<sup>th</sup>

**T** – How can we make sense of the upcoming French elections?

- 3.5: What the French Quarrel About
- Read online – “[Will France Sound the Death Knell for Social Democracy?](#)”



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## PART III: NON DEMOCRACIES: RUSSIA AND IRAN

## RUSSIA (CHAPTER 6)

### Week 9-10 – April 6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>

**TH** – Why is it important to study Russia? What effect has the Soviet legacy had on the development of modern-day Russia? Why is Putin so politically popular?

- 6.1: Impact of the Past – Russia
- 6.2: The Key Institutions

**T** – Why is “civil society” so important for democracy? What values support democracy? Can you have democracy if these values are missing?

- 6.3: Russian Political Culture
- Read on D2L – Berman, “Civil Society & the Collapse of the Weimar Republic”



**TH** – Which way Russia?

- 6.4: Patterns of Interaction
- 6.5: What Russian's Quarrel About

\*April 11<sup>th</sup> Event – [Long Night against Procrastination](#)

## IRAN (CHAPTER 12)

**Week 11-12 – April 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> & 25**

**T** – Why is Iran an important country to study? How is Iran different from most other Middle Eastern countries? What role did the U.S. play in the Iranian Revolution?

- Read Section 12.1: Impact of the Past
- Film Night: *Argo*

**TH** – Where is the power truly vested in the Iranian system? What are the key social cleavages in Iran? How are these differences represented politically? Is Iran a democracy?

- 12.2: The Key Institutions
- 12.3: Iranian Political Culture
- Read on D2L – Schedler “Authoritarianism’s Last Line of Defense”

**T** – Which way Iran? Who will win the presidential election?

- 12.4: Patterns of Interaction
- 12.5: What Iranians Quarrel About

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## PART IV: CONCLUSION – STRUGGLING WITH DEMOCRACY

### NIGERIA (CHAPTER 11)



**Week 12-13 – April 27<sup>th</sup>, May 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>**

**TH** – Why is Nigeria an important country to study both from an American and an African perspective?

- 11.1: Impact of the Past
- 11.2: The Key Institutions

**T** – How has social-cultural diversity affected Nigerian politics and stability? Can a country as diverse as Nigeria stay together? Or is it destined to fall apart?

- 11.3: Nigerian Political Culture
- 11.4: Patterns of Interaction

**TH** – Why and how does plentiful oil works against political and economic development?

- 11.5: What Nigerians Quarrel About
- Read on D2L: Weinthal- “Combating the Resource Curse”
- *Problem: Resource curse*

**Week 14 – May 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**Comparative Conclusions, Projects, and Exam**

*Set yourself apart*

Become a  
**Global Scholar**

**Global Citizenship courses set you on a path to distinguishing yourself as a UWO Global Scholar. To find out more visit the [Global Scholar Website](#).**

**If you liked this course, you might also enjoy the following courses for which this one is recommended (check the [Political Science Department website](#) for course schedules):**

84:301	European Union Politics
84:303	Women and Politics
84:309	West European Politics
84:311	East Asian Politics
84:323	Comparative Constitutional Law
84:326	Politics of Development
84:328	Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism
84:336	Russian Politics
84:379	Latin American Politics
84:383	Latin America in International Relations