

GOVT: Introduction to Comparative Politics
GOVT 133 - 001
Spring Semester
January 21 - May 13, 2009

Monday, Wednesday, 3:00-4:15pm, Innovation Hall 105

Professor: Eric McGlinchey
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Office Hours: M, 1-2 PM ; W, 1-2 PM or by appointment

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Political Science, Office Hours: TBA

Course Objectives:

This course introduces students to central concepts of comparative politics—state formation, democratization, authoritarianism, social mobilization, political culture, parliamentarianism, presidentialism and electoral systems. Particular attention is paid to the comparative method, a research methodology used not only in comparative politics, but in the social sciences broadly. Our conceptual travels will take us to concrete places, to states in the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. By the close of this course, students will be able to (1) distinguish among and evaluate the real life consequences of differing types of political rule and (2) apply the comparative method to critically assess causal explanations.

Course Readings:

1. Textbook: Clark, Golder and Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics* (CQ Press, 2009). The textbook can be purchased at the university book Store.
2. Blackboard—We will periodically post short supplementary readings to Blackboard.
3. The *New York Times*—Understanding current events is central to our study of comparative politics. Class discussion will draw from our readings in the *Times*. Course quizzes and exams will also include a current events component.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are required to attend all classes.
2. Students are expected to have read the assigned chapters *prior* to class and to be prepared for class participation.
3. There will be a short *geography quiz* the third week of class.
4. There will be *weekly* surprise *quizzes* and class exercises administered using *Scantrons*. Quizzes will be based on current events and the end of chapter exercises in your text. Please always come to class with a Scantron. Scantrons can be purchased at the university bookstore. *Quiz credit extends only to students who stay for the full duration of the lecture.*

5. There will be *two midterm exams and one comprehensive final exam*. Exams will include multiple choice, short answer and essay questions.
6. *Students are required to complete a five page research paper due April 27, 9am*. For this paper, students will:
 - pose an original research question guided by the comparative method
 - review existing theories/hypotheses that address this question
 - marshal empirical data to evaluate these hypotheses
 - explore the extent to which the paper's findings can be generalized more broadly
7. Cell phones may used prior to and after but not during class. *This applies both to texting and voice communications*.
8. Make-up exams/quizzes and paper extensions will be given only if students have proper documentation that can be verified. In place of an email, please see me during office hours to discuss missed/late work. If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to religious holidays or travel, please inform me within the first two weeks of class. *I strictly adhere to the University's Attendance and Absence policies*. These policies can be found on page 5 of this syllabus.

*****This syllabus may change as the semester progresses.***

Honor Code:

The George Mason University Honor Code states: "Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee." Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code in the 2008-9 University Catalog (http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/pdfs/catalog_0809.pdf) and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be pursued according to the guidelines detailed in the University Catalog.

Please do see me if you have any questions regarding the honor code.

Special Needs:

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should contact the Disability Resource Center (703) 993-2474.

Enrollment:

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. The last day to add is February 4. The last day to drop is February 20. After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

Grading

Geography Quiz	20
Midterm 1	90
Midterm 2	90
Five Page Research Paper	100
Final Exam	100
Weekly Quizzes / Class Exercises	100
Total	500 points

Grading Scale:

A+: 490-500	A: 460-489	A-: 450-459
B+: 440-449	B: 410-439	B-: 400-409
C+: 390-399	C: 360-389	C-: 350-359
D+: 340-349	D: 310-339	D-: 300-309
F: 299 and below		

Lecture Meeting and Graded Assignment Dates

<u>Week No.</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Week 1	January 19 January 21	Martin Luther King Holiday
Week 2	January 26 January 28	
Week 3	February 2 February 4	→ Geography Quiz
Week 4	February 9 February 11	
Week 5	February 16 February 18	
Week 6	February 23 February 25	→ Midterm 1
Week 7	March 2 March 4	
March 9-15 Spring Break		
Week 8	March 16 March 18	
Week 9	March 23 March 25	
Week 10	March 30 April 1	
Week 11	April 6 April 8	→ Midterm 2
Week 12	April 13 April 15	
Week 13	April 20 April 22	

Week 14	April 27 April 29	→	5 Page Research Paper Due through Blackboard
Week 15	May 4		
Final Exam	May 11	→	Final Exam, Monday, 1:30 pm–4:15 pm

Course Reading Schedule

Week 1, January 21, Course Introduction

- Carefully read the syllabus
- Visit the course website
- CGG, Ch. 1, “Introduction”

Week 2, January 26, 28

- CGG, Ch. 2, “What is Science?”

Week 3, February 2, 4

- CGG, Ch. 3, “What is Politics?”
- February 4—Geography Quiz

Week 4, February 9, 11

- CGG, Ch. 4, “The Origins of the Modern State”
- CGG, Ch. 5, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy” (1st half of chapter)

Week 5, February 16, 18

- CGG, Ch. 5, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy” (2nd half of chapter)
- CGG, Ch. 6, “The Economic Determinants of Democracy”

Week 6, February 23, 25

- February 25—Midterm 1

Week 7, March 2, 4

- CGG, Ch. 7, “Cultural Determinants of Democracy”

Spring Break Reading Assignment

- CGG, Ch. 8, “Democratic Transitions”

Week 8, March 16, 18

- CGG, Ch. 9, “Does Democracy Make a Difference?”

Week 9, March 23, 25

- CGG, Ch. 10, “Democracy and Its Varieties”

Week 10, March 30, April 1

- CGG, Ch. 11, “Parliamentary, Presidential, and Mixed Democracies”

Week 11, April 6, 8

- April 8—Midterm 2

Week 12, April 13, 15

- CGG, Ch. 12, “Elections and Electoral Systems”

Week 13, April 20, 22

- CGG, Ch. 13, “Social Cleavages and Party Systems”

Week 14, April 27, 29

- CGG, Ch. 14, “Institutional Veto Players”
- April 27—5 Page Research Paper Due through Blackboard

Week 15, May 4

- CGG, Ch. 15, “Consequences of Democratic Institutions”

Final Exam May 11, 1:30-4:15

Mason 2008-2009 Policies on Attendance and Absence¹

Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor’s grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Absence for Religious Observances or Participation in University Activities

It is Mason’s policy to encourage its faculty to make a reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays or to participate in university-sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, forensics team, dance company, etc.) without academic penalty. Absence from classes or exams for these reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence. Students who miss classes, exams, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance or for participation in a university activity will be provided a reasonable alternative opportunity, consistent with class attendance policies stated in the syllabus, to make up the missed work. *It is the obligation of students to provide faculty, within the first two weeks of the semester, with the dates of major religious holidays on which they will be absent, and the dates for which they are requesting an excused absence for participation in any university-sponsored activity scheduled prior to the start of the semester, and as soon as possible otherwise.* Students requesting an excused absence for participation in a university-sponsored activity must provide their instructor with a letter from a university official stating the dates and times that participation in the activity would result in the student missing class.

¹ GMU 2008-09 Course Catalogue: http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/index.html#attendance_policies