

## **Comparative Politics**

PL 223-2

### **Course description:**

The first part of this course covers the different concepts of comparative political analysis, while the second part compares and contrasts different political systems in a global context. The course analyses political institutions, functions, and entities; discussing reasons, and methods. Political culture, interest articulation, and political socialization are treated. Emphasis will be placed on the issues of policymaking, government, elections, and political parties. The course provides a comparative analysis of different states' political systems, including United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China. The class format includes lectures, discussion, teamwork, presentations, and audiovisual materials. The students will be asked to produce a final research project, making extensive personal use of information and communication technology. Guest speakers and field trips are planned.

### **Course aims:**

This course attempts to provide the student with a general understanding of the different concepts and manifestations of politics in a comparative and global context. A major goal is to provide the student with the necessary tools to analyze comparative politics from theoretical and practical perspectives. Priority is given to conceptualization of different phenomena and to the analysis of political entities. Critical thinking and comparative analysis will be applied to achieve a clear understanding of comparative politics.

### **Learning outcomes:**

Students will learn how to critically analyze processes and concepts related to different political systems. They will be able to relate government, politics, and players within the political arena and society. Students will learn to contextualize and explain the process of government and politics with current international events. Students will be capable of critical analysis applied to the changing realities of different political systems in a global context. Students will develop an ability to conduct basic research, and organize and present their findings in a logical and independent way.

### **Textbook:**

- Mahler G. S., *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Pearson, 2013. (ISBN 9780205852529)
- Powell G. B. et al., *Comparative Politics. A Theoretical Framework*. Longman, 2012. (ISBN 9780205082865)
- Supplementary Reading Materials to be assigned (*assigned readings*)

### **Required reserved readings:**

- Bingham Powell G., Dalton R. J., Strøm K., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*. Pearson 2011. (ISBN 0205109136)
- McCormick J., *Comparative Politics in Transition*. Wadsworth, 2011. (ISBN 1111832579)
- Dickovick J. T., *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Oxford, 2012. (ISBN 0195392108)

### **Recommended reserved readings:**

- Curtis M. et al., *Introduction to Comparative Government*. Longman, 2006. (ISBN 0321364813)
- Kesselman M. et al., *Introduction to Comparative Politics*. Cengage, 2006. (ISBN 1111831823)
- Caramani D., *Comparative Politics*. Oxford, 2011. (ISBN 0199574979)

## **Program:**

- Unit 1 Introduction. Methodology. Definitions. Comparative Political Analysis. Issues in Comparative Politics.  
(Jan. 22, 24) (assigned readings)
- Unit 2 Constitutions and Ideologies. The Separation of Powers. Political Ideologies. Classification of Regimes.  
(Jan. 29, 31) (Mahler, p. 1 - 48; Powell, p. 1 - 37; assigned readings)
- Unit 3 Legislative Institutions. Legislative Structures and Parties. Legislative Functions. The Legislative Process.  
(Feb. 5, 7) (Mahler, p. 49 - 76; Powell, p. 38 - 45; assigned readings)
- Unit 4 Executive Institutions. The Executive Roles. Public Administration and the Bureaucracy. Political Culture.  
(Feb. 12, 14) (Mahler, p. 77 - 107; Powell, p. 46 - 56; assigned readings)
- Unit 5 Judicial Institutions. Legal Cultures. Judicial Functions. Judiciaries in the Political Arena.  
(Feb. 19, 21, 22) (Mahler, p. 108 - 126; Powell, p. 57 - 68; assigned readings)
- Unit 6 Political Behavior and the Political Environment. The Political System. The Role of the Political Elite.  
(Feb. 26, 28\*) (Mahler, p. 127 - 153; Powell, p. 69 - 80; assigned readings)

### **\* MIDTERM EXAM**

- Unit 7 Case Study: A Political System Compared and Contrasted. The European Union. Class Discussion.  
(Mar. 5, 7) (Powell, p. 81 - 94; assigned readings)
- Unit 8 Pluralism. Political Parties. Interest Groups. Social Movements. The Notion of Civic Society.  
(Mar. 19, 21) (Mahler, p. 154 - 175; Powell, p. 95 - 105; assigned readings)
- Unit 9 Public Policy. The Policy-Making Process. Domestic Policy. International and Foreign Policy.  
(Mar. 26, 28) (Mahler, p. 176 - 193; Powell, p. 106 - 122; assigned readings)
- Unit 10 The British Political System. The British Constitutional System. Executive and Legislative Structures.  
(Apr. 2\*, 4) (Mahler, p. 194 - 228; Powell, p. 123 - 132; assigned readings)

### **\* PROJECT PROPOSAL**

- Unit 11 The French Political System. Unitary Government. Political Parties and Elections. The Constitutional Council.  
(Apr. 9, 11) (Mahler, p. 229 - 261; Powell, p. 133 - 145; assigned readings)
- Unit 12 The German Political System. Federalism. Executive and Legislative Structures. Policymaking.  
(Apr. 16, 18) (Mahler, p. 262 - 291; Powell, p. 146 - 166; assigned readings)
- Unit 13 The Russian Political System. Ideology. The Political Heritage. Federalism. Political Succession.  
(Apr. 23) (Mahler, p. 323 - 353; Powell, p. 167 - 181; assigned readings)
- Unit 14 The Chinese Political System. Class Discussion: Globalization. Integration and Interdependence.  
(Apr. 30, May 2\*) (Mahler, p. 354 - 387; Powell, p. 182 - 200; assigned readings)

### **\* FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT \* PORTFOLIO**

(May 6 - May 10, t.b.s. \*)

### **\* FINAL EXAM**

#### **Films/Audiovisual Materials Sessions:**

- (1. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on power"
- (2. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on diversity"
- (3. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on ideology"

#### **NOTE:**

The syllabus schedule may undergo reasonable changes in relation to guest speakers, field trips, make-ups, discussions, events, and other contingencies.

**Course requirements:**

- Regular attendance and participation in class.
- Midterm in-class Exam.
- Final in-class Exam.
- Presentation, Reports and other assignments.
- Final Research Project (with project Proposal and Portfolio).
- Activities.

**Class Attendance and participation:**

Regular attendance and active participation in class is required. **Attendance requirements:** A maximum of four absences are allowed throughout the semester. Any additional absence will result in a penalization of one grade level (e.g.: from B+ to B for five absences, B+ to B- for six absences, B+ to C+ for seven absences, etc.). Two latenesses count for one absence. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by calling students' names. Students not answering will be marked absent. Students arrived late will ask the instructor to be marked late at the end of the class, after which attendance records will not be modified.

**Use of Computers in class:** The use of personal computers and technological devices in class is not permitted except for taking notes, or contributing to class activity during designated times. Students not respecting the rule will be penalized by getting no points in the Class Participation requirement (worth 10% of the final grade). Recording and filming in class is not allowed.

**Midterm in-class Exam:**

Midterm and final exams have the same format. The exam has two parts of equal value. The first part is an essay, the student will choose one theme out of three proposed, and will write a well-organized essay. The second part of the exam is made of ten terms to be concisely defined.

**Final in-class Exam:**

Midterm and final exams have the same format. The exam has two parts of equal value. The first part is an essay, the student will choose one theme out of three proposed, and will write a well-organized essay. The second part of the exam is made of ten terms to be concisely defined.

**Presentation, Reports and other assignments:**

Students are required give a short individual or team in-class presentation on a specific topic of their choice, approved by the instructor and related to the class program. The presentation will be well organized, concise, and include (when opportune) audiovisual and electronic materials. A draft presentation must be submitted to the instructor before presenting in class. An electronic version of the presentation must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files send by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline.

**Final Research Project:**

The final research project (3,000 words) will be on any topic of the student's choice related to the class program. The topic should be precisely defined and worthy of investigation. An electronic version of the project must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files sent by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline. To produce the final project, students will receive written instructions in class. During the semester, students will show the instructor their final project work in progress and receive checks. **Portfolio:** In order to produce their final project, students will keep a portfolio of research materials during the semester. The portfolio will be shared with, and evaluated by the instructor. The production of the final project is a work in progress during the semester. The portfolio and the paper project are progressive steps toward completion of the final project. A portfolio containing samples of reference materials must be attached to the final project.

**Activities:**

**Library session:** The class will meet sometimes in the library to receive instruction on electronic tools and sources. Individual assistance will be provided to the students for their research. To be announced. **Guest speakers:** Guest speakers expert in the fields related to the program may be invited during the semester. To be announced. **Field trips:** Field trips may be scheduled during the semester in connection with ongoing cultural events of interest in Rome. To be announced.

**Assessment Methods:**

- Class participation: 10%
  - Midterm in-class exam: 20%.
  - Final in-class exam: 25%.
  - Presentation, reports, and other assignments: 15%.
  - Final Research Project (with project Proposal and Portfolio): 30%.
- Improvement over the semester will be rewarded.

Letter grades correspond to the numerical scale:

A to A- = 100% to 90%. B+ to B- = 89% to 80%. C+ to C- = 79% to 70%. D+ to D- = 69% to 60%. F = <60%.

**Assessment Criteria:**

**A.** Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

**B.** This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

**C.** This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

**D.** This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

**F.** This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

**Journals:**

*The Journal of Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Comparative European Politics, Comparative Strategy.*

**Recommended Films:**

Some class viewing may be scheduled during the semester. To be announced.

Megahey L., *The Advocate*. Wajda A., *Danton*. Riefenstahl B.H.A., *Triumph of the Will*. Mikhalkov N., *Burnt by the Sun*.

**Academic honesty**

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

**Students with learning or other disabilities**

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

**This syllabus is on line:** [www.gabrielesimoncini.it](http://www.gabrielesimoncini.it)

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