POLS 2113:  
Introduction to Comparative Politics  
Spring 2018  
9:30-10:20 am MWF  
Classroom Building 201

Contact info  
Dr. Holley E. Hansen  
Murray Hall 203  
Email: holleyh@okstate.edu  
Office Hours: 9 am-noon & 4-7 pm³ Th, or by appointment

Course Description  
This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics, one of the major  
subfields in political science. Comparative politics analyzes domestic politics around the  
world and seeks to make generalizations. This is a task far too large for any single  
introductory course; nevertheless, students who successfully complete this course will have  
a far easier time understanding domestic politics outside the US and how these contrast  
with our own political system.

By the end of this course you will have an understanding of:
- Various terms used in comparative political science such as political systems, regimes,  
governments, states, and ideologies;
- Politics and the struggle to balance freedom and equality.
- The major aspects of liberal democratic and nondemocratic ideologies;
- The major political economic features of democratic and nondemocratic regimes;
- The political history, regimes, political competition, societies, political context, foreign  
relations and the major political conflicts of six contemporary political systems: The United  
Kingdom, Germany, Russia, China, South Africa, and Iran;
- Some understanding of the relationship between the institutions listed above.

Required Reading  
The following book is required for the course, and is available for purchase from the  
university bookstore:

O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. Cases and Concepts in  
Comparative Politics. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

All other readings are posted on the course’s webpage. Readings should be done by class  
time on the day it is assigned.

About TopHat  
We will be using the Top Hat (www.tophat.com) classroom response system in class. You will  
be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and  
tablets, laptops, or via text message (SMS). You can purchase this at the university bookstore  
or by going directly to the TopHat website.

¹ I am one of the volunteers for the Pete’s Pet Posse Therapy Dogs program along with my dog, Cooper. As part of  
my volunteer activities, Cooper will be present during my Thursday evening office hours. If you need to meet during  
this time and would prefer not to have a dog around, just let me know and I will make alternative arrangements.
You can visit http://tinyurl.com/THStudentRegistration for the Student Quick Start Guide, which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system. An email invitation will also be sent to your email account if you don’t receive this email, you can register by visiting our direct Top Hat course URL: https://app.tophat.com/e/469887

Top Hat will require a subscription. There are three options to choose from:

- $26 for 4 months of unlimited access
- $38 for 12 months of unlimited access
- $75 for lifetime student access

Class Expectations

This course is NOT...

…easy. Expect to read – A LOT! – and study for quizzes and exams.

…a current events course. This is a class about teaching you how to think like a political analyst, which means we cover a lot of history, theories, and concepts.

…somewhere you get to talk about your feelings. In the social sciences, strong arguments are made with evidence, not opinion or ideology, and we judge the quality of our readings, my lectures, and your work based on what facts we can bring to bear.

I do expect...

…manners. College is a stepping stone to your professional career, and you should conduct yourself as a professional in the classroom. No need for you to wear a suit and tie, but these things will help make the classroom experience more fulfilling for all students:

- No food. Drinks (especially those with caffeine!) are welcome.
- No sleeping in class, and especially, no snoring!
- Cell phones can be distracting to fellow students – please make sure to mute yours and avoid checking your messages during class.
- Keep computer use off the games and/or social networks and on academic content.

…regular attendance. While I do not take daily attendance (see “Participation” in the grading section for more details), you will not do very well in this course if you regularly miss lecture.

…assignments to be completed in a timely manner. Any assignments for the class handed in after the due date will be penalized 1/2 of a letter grade for every day it is late (beginning at the end of class time). Assignments will not be accepted for grading 1 week after the due date.

…academic integrity. Any work submitted by the student must reflect the student’s own work. Plagiarism is theft of another’s work or ideas, and is a violation both of the student handbook and academic ethics. Not only that, it’s a felony that violates US copyright laws.

In case you are wondering, plagiarism includes:
1) Claiming someone else’s work as your own.
2) Copying the exact phrase from another source without giving the author(s) credit.
3) Using data from another source without giving author(s) credit.
4) Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
5) Using an idea or concept from an author without giving credit to the source.
6) Giving incorrect information about the citation source.
7) Changing the words or phrasing of the sentence but still keeping the original meaning without giving credit to the source.

From this list, you might notice that most of the time, all it takes to NOT plagiarize is to properly cite and give credit to the people from whom you are borrowing information or ideas. When in doubt, cite it!

For more information, see the OSU Syllabus attachment at the end of this syllabus.

Grading
Following university guidelines, our grading scale is:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional &amp; outstanding work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Adequate work; superficial grasp on concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Very poor work; poor understanding of the material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing; unacceptable work</td>
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Remember, “A” is a rare grade reserved for projects that demonstrate outstanding skill and effort.

Our class work includes: Participation. I will not be taking attendance, but will grade you for your overall quality and quantity of participation. Your participation score will be divided in the following ways:

- The first 15%: Participate in-class OR through Top Hat’s weekly discussion question. To receive a checkmark, you need to contribute something of substance; one word answers will not net you any points. Likewise, asking or posting a question that can be easily looked up in the reading will also yield no points.
- The remaining 5%: At the end of the semester, I’ll judge the overall quality of your participation. Students who regularly attend the course and actively participate will receive full points here…other students, not so much!

I will update the gradebook on Brightspace every few weeks so you can see how you are doing in your participation.
**Regular reading quizzes.** We cover A LOT of material in a semester, so it is important to keep up with reading and note-taking to be successful. Students should expect a short quiz (5 questions, multiple choice) on the readings at the start of most classes. You will be allowed to use any of your own notes or flashcards when taking the quiz, but not the reading itself.

We will be taking 12 reading quizzes this semester. I do not allow quiz make-ups, but I will drop your two lowest quizzes from your final grade. This gives you a chance to cover times when you are sick or when class conflicts with other activities.

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<th><strong>10% total</strong></th>
<th>(1% per quiz)</th>
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**Two in-class exams.** Our exams will be a combination of a “fill in the blank” (or “fill in the table”) and multiple choice. The exams are closed book and closed note.

No make-ups are possible without a 24-hour prior notice or a written medical excuse.

| **40%** | (20% per exam) |

**Country Analysis Paper.** This 5-6 page paper asks students to choose one of countries in our textbook an analyze a specific problem or success in this country. More details about this assignment are available at the end of the syllabus and online. We will be dividing this into two assignments to help make this project (and grade!) more manageable.

| **30%** | 

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Course Schedule and Readings

**Part I: An Introduction to Comparative Politics**

This section covers the major goals, ideas, and terminologies common to comparative politics, and will provide a foundation for the rest of the course.

**Wed, Jan. 17 – What is Comparative Politics?**
- Buy all books for the class, sign up for TopHat, & read the syllabus
- Take the online syllabus quiz (available on TopHat)

**Fri, Jan. 19 – An Introduction to the State**
*Readings:*
  - O’Neil et al., Chapter 2, pp. 25-39

**Mon, Jan. 22 – “Strong” versus “Weak” States**
*Readings*
  - O’Neil et al., Chapter 2, 39-50
*In class:*
  - Watch & discuss the PBS Frontline episode “The Secret History of Isis”

**Wed, Jan. 24 – The Consequences of State Failure**
*Readings*
*In class:*
  - Watch & discuss the PBS Frontline episode “The Secret History of Isis”

**Fri, Jan. 26 – States and Nations**
*Readings*
  - O’Neil et al., Chapter 3, pp. 53-65
*In class:*
  - Watch & discuss the PBS Frontline episode “The Secret History of Isis”

**Mon, Jan. 29 – Political Ideology**
*Readings*
  - O’Neil et al., Chapter 3, pp. 66-74

**Wed, Jan. 31 – Political Culture**
*Readings*
  - O’Neil et al., Chapter 3, pp. 74-81
Fri, Feb. 2 – Why Global Growth & Poverty Matters

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 83-85

Mon, Feb. 5 – Political Economy: How the State and the Economy Interact

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 94-102, 109-111, 114 (first paragraph only!)

Wed, Feb. 7 – Political Economy Theories and Their Solutions

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 102-109, 112-113
- “Foreign aid face-off: Can we end poverty with wads of cash?” *LA Times*

Fri, Feb. 9 – How the Global Economy is Changing

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 86-94

**PART II: Liberal Democracy**

It might be said that no two democracies are the same! We will cover similarities that span different democratic regimes, but also consider how democracies vary.

Mon, Feb. 12 – What is Democracy?

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 145-148

Wed, Feb. 14 – Why and When Do Countries Democratize?

**Readings (readings are a little heavy today, but as a trade-off, we’ll have no readings on Fri!)**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 148-152
- O’Neil et al., United Kingdom, pp. 203-210
- O’Neil et al., Germany, pp. 293-301

Fri, Feb. 16 – Lessons in Democratization

**No Readings**

Mon, Feb. 19 – Democratic Differences: Executive-Legislative Relations

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 152-153, 155-159
- O’Neil et al., Germany, pp. 301-305

Wed, Feb. 21 – Executive Accountability

**Readings**
- O’Neil et al., United Kingdom, pp. 211-215

**In class**
- Watch *Prime Minister Question Time from the British House of Commons*
Mon, Mar. 5 – First Exam

PART III: Non-democracy

While democracy has been on the rise since the 1990s, the last few years has seen democracies falling into dictatorship and non-democracies becoming more repressive. Why are some countries unable to move towards democracy, and how do authoritarian leaders maintain their hold on power?

Wed, Mar. 7 – The Modern Non-democracy: The Rise of Hybrid Regimes

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 357-361, 370-377
- O’Neil et al., Russia, pp. 417-420

Fri, Mar. 9 – Tools of Non-Democratic Control

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 366-370

Mon, Mar. 12 – The Path to Non-Democracy

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 361-365
- O’Neil et al., Russia, pp. 420-425

In class
- Begin watching and discussing the PBS Frontline episode “Putin’s Way”
Wed, Mar. 14 – Putin’s Rule  
**Readings**  
- O’Neil et al., Russia, pp. 425-435  
**In class**  
- Continue watching and discussing the *PBS Frontline* episode “Putin’s Way”  
- Paper Assignment Part I due  

Fri, Mar. 16 – Non-democracy and the Resource Curse  
**Readings**  
- O’Neil et al., Russia, pp. 437-440  
- O’Neil et al., Iran, pp. 563-565  
**In class**  
- Finish watching and discussing the *PBS Frontline* episode “Putin’s Way”  

**Mon, Mar. 19-Fri, Mar. 23: Spring Break**  
*No Class.*  

Mon, Mar. 26 – How Oil Reinforces Nondemocracy  
**Readings**  

Wed, Mar. 28 – Political Instability and Revolution  
**Readings**  
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 5, pp. 119-121, 122-127  

Fri, Mar. 30 – Regime Collapse in Eastern Europe & the Arab World  
**Readings**  
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 5, pp. 138-139  

Mon, Apr. 2 – Iran’s Dynastic Legacy  
**Readings**  
- O’Neil et al., Iran, pp. 541-549  
- Optional:  
**In-class**  
- Watch and Discuss *Persepolis*
Wed, Apr. 4 – Iran’s Revolution: Why does radicalism so often win?

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Iran, pp. 549-550
- Optional “reading”:

In-class
- Watch Persepolis

Fri, Apr. 6 – Life in the Islamic Republic

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Iran, pp. 550-556

In-class
- Finish watching Persepolis

Mon, Apr. 9 – Iran’s Struggle to Reform

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Iran, pp. 556-563

Wed, Apr. 11 – Protesters who Fight Back Against Authoritarianism

Readings

In-class
- Watch PBS Frontline episode, “Who’s Afraid of Ai Weiwei?”

Part IV: Economic Development

Countries in the “Global South” face many unique challenges, but some countries have seen amazing growth in recent years. China and India make an especially interesting comparison; it is hard to find two countries more different, but both have seen phenomenal growth – along with significant problems – in the last three decades. Can they maintain this growth into the future, and can other countries follow their path to growth?

Fri, Apr. 13 – Understanding Low Income Countries

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 10, pp. 483-486, 492-497

Mon, Apr. 16 – Colonial and Post-Colonial Legacies

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 10, pp. 486-492
Wed, Apr. 18 – Theories of Growth and Development

Readings
- O’Neil et al., Chapter 10, pp. 497-500, 504-508

Fri, Apr. 20 – State Evolution in India and China

Readings
- O’Neil et al., China, pp. 445-450
- O’Neil et al., India, pp. 511-516

Mon, Apr. 23 – How Mao Screwed Up China’s Economy

Readings
- O’Neil et al., China, pp. 450-452, 453-456

Wed, Apr. 25 – China’s Reform & Opening

Readings
- O’Neil et al., China, pp. 452-453, 456-461

Fri, Apr. 27 – Neoliberalism & India’s Growth Despite Chaos

Readings
- O’Neil et al., India, pp. 516-518, 533-536

Mon, Apr. 30 – The Limits of China’s Economic Model: Corruption & the Environment

Readings
- O’Neil et al., China, pp. 474-478
- Pei, Minxin. 27 May 2016. China’s Middle Class Is About to Demand Big Changes. Retrieved from Fortune at http://fortune.com/2016/05/26/china-middle-class-changes/

Wed, May 2 – The Limits of China’s Economic Model: Demographics

Readings

In Class
- Watch PBS News Hour clip, “The unprecedented aging crisis that’s about to hit China”

Fri, May 4 – India’s Development Problems

Readings
- Optional:
  - O’Neil et al., India, pp. 536-539
Wed, May 9 – Second Exam
8-9:50 am
**Final paper also due:** upload your file to the online Dropbox and bring a paper copy to class.
Country Analysis Paper

One career path for people who major specialize in Comparative Politics is to become a foreign policy analyst working for a government agency or a private consulting firm. Some analysts focus on a specific country or region of the world (e.g. Sub-Saharan Africa or Russia), others on global trends and broad patterns (e.g. economic development, human rights, state failure, or conflict).

In this paper, you will explore what it's like to be a comparative analyst by choosing any one of the countries listed in the *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics* text and then analyzing a specific problem that country faces or discussing the causes of a major political success. More specifically, students should:

1) Choose one specific issue or problem confronting your country (e.g. civil war, economic development challenges) or focus on a surprising puzzle regarding a success of your country (e.g. high women’s representation, or maybe a lack of conflict or surprising economic development, even when others in the region are prone to these problems)
2) Lay out three factors that may explain this problem or puzzle.
3) Critically evaluate these causal explanations and assess which you think is the most convincing explanation for the pattern you see in your country

This project is worth 30% of your final grade, but we will be breaking this assignment into the following parts:

10% Part I: Draft Outline + Bibliography (See details below)
20% Part II: Final paper

Part I: Draft Outline + Bibliography

To help make sure you are on the right track with this project, students will first complete a 1-2 page paper outline detailing the country you have chosen, the problem/puzzle you will be focusing on, the major factors you will be analyzing, and a VERY basic mention of what evidence (facts, examples, statistics, etc.) you plan to use to analyze those theories/factors.

For your bibliography, you will need 5 sources. One can be our textbook, but the other 4 must draw from other academic or professional sources. Academic press books and articles are encouraged, but you might also make use of professional sources, such as working papers from the World Bank or analysis pieces by a reputable think-tank such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institute, or Stratfor. No news articles or blog posts allowed!

To evaluate this assignment, I will use a very basic grading scale:

- Students who put good effort into this assignment will receive 100% (even if the specific parts of the assignment will need revising).
- Students who turn in incomplete work (missing information in their outlines, incomplete bibliographies, etc.) will receive a 50%.
- Students who turn in no assignment will receive a 0.
Part II: The Final Paper

Students are welcome to make any changes to their previous assignment before submitting their final paper. Since the details of what is required in the assignment is covered above, here’s the formatting rules:

- Length: 6 pages maximum
- 1 inch margins
- All text should use Times New Roman, 12-point font
- You are encouraged to use a title page. This title page will not count towards your page limit.
- APSA or Chicago citation style (in-text parenthetical citations + alphabetical reference list at the end)
- Body of the paper should be double-spaced
- Reference list should begin right after the conclusion (no need to put it on a new page!), and it should be single-spaced with one space between each source

Some Tips for Completing “A” Quality Writing

On all assignments, students will be grade on their accuracy and detail in presenting the material as well as their ability to communicate this information efficiently and effectively. As such, I expect all assignments to be well-written; poorly written assignments will lose points.

All work will be graded on the quality of writing, clarity, organization, and inclusion of all the necessary components. Quality academic writing means:

**Basic writing skills**
- Proper grammar & spelling
- Proper verbal agreement
- Proper punctuation use
- Proper paragraph construction (3-6 sentences, no 1+ page paragraphs!)
- Agreement between subjects in a sentence (e.g. the party, it)
- Correct possessive plural form (e.g. the United States’ not the United State’s; its, not it’s)
- No apostrophes in plural nouns (e.g. the 1990s, not the 1990’s)
- Well-organized and clear structure

**Proper academic/social science writing**
- No contractions (e.g. don’t, it’s)
- Avoid normative or opinion comments (focus on the facts!)
- No colloquialisms or slang
- Minimal use of adverbs
- Minimal passive voice
- Use active voice in the present tense (when appropriate)
- Use headings & subheadings to clearly organize your discussion
- Well-researched and detailed
- Proper citation

Also, in the social sciences it is ok to write “I think,” “I argue,” or “I recommend” in your writing, especially as it helps distinguish your thoughts from someone else’s!