

Introduction to Comparative Politics  
POL 103  
Fall 2012  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30AM–12:50PM  
Location: Javits 111

Martijn Schoonvelde  
Department of Political Science  
Stony Brook University  
*Email:* martijn.schoonvelde@stonybrook.edu  
*Office:* SBS S-737  
*Office Hours:* Tuesdays 2–4 P.M. and by appointment

## Introduction

This class provides an introduction to comparative political science. The course starts with a brief introduction to scientific reasoning in the context of the social sciences and specifically comparative politics. We then move on to the big question of the origin of the state, covering contractual and predatory approaches. The second big topic is the question of why some countries are democratic, while others are not and how democratic transitions come about. Further topics then are collective decision-making, types of democratic regimes and institutions, consequences of electoral rules and party systems, as well as policy outcomes. At the same time, you will learn some basic concepts of game theory, a tool that helps us analyze political decision-making, and will understand how political scientists test their theoretical ideas using data and statistics.

## Required Text

There is one required text for this course which is available at the campus bookstore and online:

- *Principles of Comparative Politics* (2nd Edition) by William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder and Sona Nadenichek Golder.

Supplementary material will be posted on Blackboard or distributed via e-mail if necessary. All class communication will be sent via Blackboard to the e-mail address on file with the university.

## Course Requirements

*Attendance and Participation:* Although attendance will not be taken, students are expected to attend every class. Students who miss class are responsible for all material missed. Beyond attendance, students are expected to have completed all of the assigned reading before class. Due to the large amount of material covered each meeting, it is imperative that everyone be familiar with the material before each class begins.

Completing the reading before class also allows students to engage in thoughtful discussion and makes class more interesting.

*Examinations:* Final grades will be calculated on an 0-100 scale. Scores of 100-94 receive an “A”; 93-90 an “A-”; 89-87 a “B+”; 86-84 a “B”; 83-80 a “B-”; 79-77 a “C+”; 76-74 a “C”; 73-70 a “C-”; 69-67 a “D+”; 66-60 a “D”; “63-60 a “D-”; and below 60 an “F.”

There will be two exams covering material from the lectures, discussions, and the textbook. Both exams are multiple choice and non-cumulative. This means that no exam will contain material covered by the one before it. Make-up exams will be allowed only with a documented excuse (e.g., a Doctors note explaining why you were too ill to take the exam). However, you must let me know if you will miss an exam before it is given. If you cannot reach me in my office before the exam, leave me a message (martijn.schoonvelde@stonybrook.edu).

*Extra Credit:* I strongly encourage everyone to seize extra credit opportunities. There will be several opportunities to earn extra credit by completing homework assignments. As an example, this may be a two-page response paper to a question I pose in class, or answers to a problem set. Practice sessions guided by TAs will be scheduled as the semester progresses.

Grades will be based on these components:

- *Midterm Exam:* (50%)
- *Final Exam:* (50%)

## Classroom Policies

*Electronic Devices:* Students are permitted to bring electronic devices to class but use of these devices must be limited to acceptable classroom activities. Laptop computers may be used solely for note taking. Any internet activity (including checking email), gaming, or other use that does not directly pertain to this class is unacceptable. Likewise, students are expected to silence their cell phones and refrain from talking, texting, or otherwise using their phones for the duration of the class period. If you feel you will not be able to abide by this policy, please leave your electronic devices at home so you won't be tempted.

*Email:* Writing a professional email is an important skill one should master before graduation. All emails to the instructor or teaching assistant should include the following: a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and that it pertains to POL 103; a greeting more professional than "Yo" or "Hey;" a clear question or request; and should identify the sender by name. Emails lacking any of these criteria will not be returned. Most emails will be returned within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends, although circumstances may arise which delay response time.

*A List of Do's and Don'ts (Mostly Don'ts)*

Do's:

- Attend all classes.
- Read all of the assigned material before class.
- Participate in class discussion.

- Ask for help as soon as you feel yourself falling behind—not the evening before an exam.

Don'ts:

- Don't ask me if you have to do something. I will always tell you no—but keep in mind there are always consequences for failing to do it.
- Don't ask me how to get an A in this course. The syllabus clearly states how to achieve this desired outcome—accumulate 94% (or more) of the total available points.
- Don't ask me if something we are discussing in class is important. Assume if we are talking about it that it is important.
- Don't complain if you are tardy and miss information. Chronic lateness is your problem, not mine.
- Don't ask me to email you anything. Most things will be placed on Blackboard. If I distribute something in class and you are absent, it is your responsibility to get it and this does not mean asking me for it.
- If you miss class for any reason, don't ask me if you missed something important. Assume you missed something important and figure out how you are going to obtain that information.
- Don't text or talk on your cell phone, sleep, talk to your fellow classmates, read the newspaper, check your email or Facebook, GChat/IM, shop online, or do work or reading for another class during class time. If you feel compelled to engage in any of these activities, STAY HOME (seriously).

## Course Schedule

*\* This syllabus serves a general plan for the course; deviations (announced) may be necessary.*

### Week 1

#### **August 28:**

First Day of Class, Overview

#### **August 30:**

What is Political Science / Comparative Politics?

Readings: Chapters 1 & 2

### Week 2

#### **September 4 & 6:**

Game Theory Basics and the Exit, Voice and Loyalty Game

Readings: Chapter 3

## **Week 3**

### **September 11 & 13:**

Politics and the Origins of the State

Readings: Chapter 4

## **Week 4**

### **September 18 & 20:**

Measuring Democracy

Readings: Chapter 5

## **Week 5**

### **September 25 & 27:**

Elections and Cultural Determinants of Democracy

Readings: Chapter 6 & 7

## **Week 6**

### **October 2:**

Loose Ends, Review

### **October 4:**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

## **Week 7**

### **October 9 & 11:**

Democratic Transitions, Does Democracy Make a Difference, Varieties of Dictatorship

Readings: Chapters 8 & 9

## **Week 8**

### **October 16 & 18:**

Varieties of Dictatorship

Readings: Chapter 10

## **Week 9**

**October 23 & 25:**

Social Choice, Group Decision-Making

Readings: Chapter 11

## **Week 10**

**October 30 & November 1:**

Parliamentary, Presidential and Semi-Presidential Democracies

Readings: Chapter 12

## **Week 11**

**November 6 & 8:**

Electoral Systems

Readings: Chapters 13

## **Week 12**

**November 13 & 15:**

Social Cleavages and Party Systems, Duverger's Theory

Readings: Chapter 14

## **Week 13**

**November 20:**

TBD

**November 22:**

NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING

## **Week 14**

**November 27 & 29:**

Institutional Veto Players

Readings: Chapter 15

## **Week 15**

### **December 4 & 6:**

Varieties of Democracy and Political Outcomes, Review, Loose Ends  
Readings: Chapter 16

## **Finals Week**

**December 12, 5:30–8:00PM:**  
**FINAL EXAM**

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

## **Academic Integrity**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health & Technology Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

## **Critical Incident Management**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.