SYLLABUS

Professor: Alfred P. Montero
Office: Willis 407
Phone: x4085 (Office)
Email: amontero@carleton.edu
Web Page: http://people.carleton.edu/~amontero
Office Hours: Mondays 10 a.m.-12 p.m.; Tuesdays 1 p.m.-3 p.m. and by appointment on Skype on Thursday evenings (Skype username: amontero9601)

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to the basic concepts, methods, primary empirical materials, theoretical approaches, and current challenges of comparative politics. Students will be trained to think and write critically on substantive issues in the politics of different countries. Although comparative politics is often defined as “the study of all countries excluding the United States,” this course will not abide by that rather perfunctory definition. The U.S. will be included at different points in the course as a baseline for comparison.

As a primer for newcomers to this subdiscipline of political science, the course has been organized with an increasing level of difficulty. Students begin with an introduction to the most basic tools of political science; then they are trained to analyze complex empirical materials. Later, they must make their way up the “ladder of abstraction” to the tricky world of theory-building and hypothesis-testing.

In the first section of the course (Session 1), students will examine the methods, concepts, and epistemology of comparative politics. Learning how to use these tools to study politics is similar to “basic training.” I prefer: a “bootcamp for the mind” - not very pleasurable, but very necessary. Aspiring majors in political science and/or international relations will find this primer useful. I strongly recommend that such students enroll in POSC 230 Methods of Political Research soon after completing this course.

The second section of the course (Sessions 2-4) introduces students to six country cases - Britain, Germany, and the “BRICs” – Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Students will also receive a primer on the European Union. This survey will provide students with a basic lay of the political land. Students will learn about the crucial moments, institutions, processes, and individuals that shaped the political experiences of these major actors in world politics. The surveys will also present several “mid-range propositions” - causal statements about particular sets of countries that come in handy when attempting to understand complex empirical materials.

As students use these empirical cases and mid-range propositions, class lectures will introduce students to some of the theoretical arguments that have been built on the comparative study of the countries examined in this section. The study of Britain and Germany will inform our on-going discussion about diverse routes to democracy; Russia and China will provide empirical material for the application of theories about state-building and revolution that are taken from work on Western Europe; the study of China will highlight the problems of transitioning to democratic governance in the context of “late late” development; and analysis of the European Union will inform our examination of how the effectiveness of public policies might be evaluated using social science
methods. Study of Brazil or India will spearhead our examination of theories of modernization and democratization, the final section of the class (Session 4).

In addition to instruction on political science methods, theory, empirical data, and the data analysis project, students in this course will receive workshop instruction on writing, oral presentation skills, and research techniques. Workshops will occur during the regular class time though off-class time options for further instruction will be available on a recommended basis.

What is Expected of Students

Students will be expected to read, think, criticize, and form arguments. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts from previous lectures. The best students will be critical but balanced in their assessments, and will develop coherent arguments that they can defend in their writing and their in-class discussion. Attendance is required.

Reading Materials

This course requires your purchase of one textbook, which is presently on sale at the college bookstore:


The following is optional for purchase (available on Amazon.com and other purveyors):


All the other reading materials for this course are available on Moodle. This includes clippings from periodicals such as The New York Times, the Financial Times, the Economist, and audio and video materials. Students wishing to deepen their quantitative skills will have access to podcasts and other materials providing instruction on multiple statistical techniques. Additional resources are available on the course’s web page (http://people.carleton.edu/~amontero/cpr.htm).

Grading

Assessment of the students in this course will be based on their performance on two short papers, a group data analysis project with oral presentation and written report components, and classroom participation. The grade breakdown follows:

<p>| First Writing Assignment | 20% |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Writing Assignment</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Data Analysis Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Report:</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Dynamics:</td>
<td>(5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation:</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Report:</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation (including periodic diagnostic exams)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Writing Assignments

Paper assignments in this course are of varying lengths. Yet they must all be typed, paginated, and double-spaced with 12cpi font size and one-inch margins (unjustified). I require the use of Times New Roman font type as this is a cross-platform variety.

These assignments must be turned in as PDF files unless otherwise indicated by 5 p.m. in the student’s hand-in folder on the Courses directory on the due date specified below. Late work will receive no credit. Technical problems involved in converting and uploading work onto Courses will not be accepted as a reason for late or improperly formatted work. Students remain responsible for addressing all glitches unless they are systemic. Proper use of spelling, punctuation, and grammar is expected. Since ability to edit your own work and produce concise argument is a touchstone for assessing and developing your critical skills, students will not be allowed to surpass the required number of pages. A handout will be distributed with the particular parameters of each of these assignments well before the due date. Note: This course is a WR2 course.

Paper #1 (Methods Exercise):

Students will be asked to select a single article from a list of citations, find and download a copy in PDF format. Once acquired, students will evaluate the article by identifying the main argument, the key variables, indicators for variance, and main concepts. Students must specify if the concepts are clear to them or not. If not, they must explain why. This paper must be four to five pages in length. Additional requirements of this Methods Exercise will be made available in a handout.

Paper #2 (Mid-Range Proposition Building Exercise):

Based on their study of Britain, Germany, Russia, and China students will prepare a five to six page paper proposing a causal argument about the formation and maintenance of democracy. They will support their argument with a brief qualitative comparison of two of the three countries listed above. Papers that integrate light research and present both quantitative and qualitative data to
support the author’s claims will receive the highest grades.

**Group Data Analysis Project**

As the class begins to consider empirical cases, the students will be divided into groups of 3-4 members. Each group will be charged with the task of collecting quantitative data on a number of countries as part of a collaborative project involving a choice of hypotheses concerning the link between socio-economic development and democratization. Each group will work with the professor to focus their project and they will consult Danya Leebaw, one of the social science librarians, for help in acquiring the necessary data. Each research team will carry on some of their discussions in Moodle so that the professor may monitor the group’s progress. Using Excel and Stata, a statistical program, each group will analyze the quantitative data they have collected and render a report of 6-8 pages due at the end of the term. Each group will present their data formally in a timed presentation to the class during the final week of the term. A detailed handout will describe the format and other aspects of this project during Session 2.

While each member of the research groups will receive a share of the group score on the written report and the oral presentation, peers will prepare confidential, written insights on the contribution of all other members. Additionally, group members will be required to post on their Moodle conference evidence of consistent progress. This data and the professor’s own observations will be used to adjust the individual score for group members, if need be. Students ought to be aware that the poor performance of any one member of their research team can affect the scores of their colleagues. Hence, group dynamics scores are, like the presentation scores (although less strictly so), the products of collective responsibility.

The group assignment will be evaluated with four grades – the first for a preliminary report on the variables and data the group is working with; the second for the relative capacity of the group members to collaborate successfully; the third for the group oral presentation; and the fourth for the final report due at the end of the term.

**Class Participation**

Communicating your insight into the subjects analyzed in this course is an integral part of the learning experience. In no way do I consider class participation a residual category for subjectively determining the final grade. In this course, I will evaluate your performance in both formal, scheduled presentations and informal class discussion. The following are structured presentation formats that will be used in this course, in addition to the formal presentation of the group research project:

1. A simulation on Russian democracy and state capacity.

2. Two debates: one on the future of the EU and a second on human rights and political liberalization in China.

3. Small group discussions on some reading.
In addition to these activities, occasionally students will prepare homework assignments or answer written and oral questions based on the readings and the lectures. These periodic “diagnostics” will assess listening and reading comprehension skills. They will compose half of the total participation score.

**Electronic Equipment Policy**

For years I have allowed students to use laptops in class to take notes. However, based on much scientific evidence as well as personal experience, it is evident that such practices encourage inattention and multitasking that degrades the ability of students to learn. There is also plenty of scientific evidence that taking pen-and-paper notes is far superior to note-taking on laptops. The use of laptops and tablets in this class will be strongly discouraged unless a student can prove that they absolutely need such a device in the classroom. Preference will be given to students who have an officially sanctioned accommodation (see Special Needs below), but students without such accommodations may also be given permission to use laptops and iPads for approved purposes. Use of such devices in class does not designate any student as having special needs.

**The Grading Scale**

I will be using the following grading scale in this course:

- 98-100 A+
- 94-97 A
- 91-93 A-
- 88-90 B+
- 83-87 B
- 79-82 B-
- 76-78 C+
- 72-75 C
- 68-71 C-
- 67/below D/F

**Academic Misconduct**

Given the fact that academe relies upon the ethical conduct of scholars, students are held to the same standards in their own work. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For further information, see the useful handout on “Avoiding Academic Misconduct,” available on the course webpage.

**Special Needs**

Students requiring access to learning tools/special schedules approved by Student Support Services should contact me at the beginning of the course.

**NOTE:** Readings must be completed for the dates assigned below.
SECTION I

BOOTCAMP FOR THE MIND:

THE TOOLS OF STUDYING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Session 1: Science! Assumptions, Causal Relationships, Concepts, Method, and Variables

Toward a Science of Politics: The Rational-Choice Assumption (September 15, Monday)

Richard Harter, “Piltdown Man” (A Cautionary Tale About The Importance of Verification in Scientific Inquiry). (Study the webpage to get the main idea of what happened and listen to the PBS Nova podcast on Moodle).

Epistemology: The Assumption of Rationality in Political Science (September 17, Wednesday)

Analyze the treatment of the scientific method in one of three cases available on Moodle:

This American Life, “Mr. Holland’s Opus,” Nov. 11, 2011.

The Marc Hauser case (two articles: Bartlett (2012) and Wade (2010)).


How Do We Know a Good Causal Argument When We See One? (September 19, Friday; September 22, Monday)


Variables, Definitions, and Conceptualization (September 24, Wednesday)

Skills Workshop #1: Methods Exercise (September 26, Friday) (*Venue change: WCC 138*)

Skills Workshop #2: How to Find Data – A Presentation by Danya Leebaw (September 29, Monday) (*Venue change: WCC 138*)


Review Excel spreadsheet program. Prepare bivariate correlation homework assignment for September 30, Tuesday.

**SECTION II**

**DIFFERENT ROUTES TO MODERNITY AND DEMOCRACY**

Session 2: The Advanced Capitalist States: Class, the State, and Institutions in the Building of Democracy

**Britain**

“No bourgeoisie, no democracy”: The Barrington Moore Theorem (October 1, Wednesday)

KKJ, Chapter 2, Sections 1-3


Critiques of Barrington Moore: Skocpol and Institutionalist Arguments (October 3, Friday)


KKJ, Chapter 2, Sections 4-5

British Politics in Comparative Perspective (October 6, Monday)

Assorted articles from *The Financial Times* and *The Economist* on Moodle.

**SHORT PAPER #1: METHODS EXERCISE DUE (October 7, Tuesday)**
Germany

How Democracies Die: By Natural Causes or Murder? (October 8, Wednesday)


KKJ, Chapter 4, Sections 1-3.

**THE DATA ANALYSIS GROUP ASSIGNMENTS ARE DISTRIBUTED** (October 8, Wednesday) – **MOODLE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BEGIN AFTER THIS DATE**

Bringing the Social Back In: Social Democracy and Its Crisis (October 10)

KKJ, Chapter 4, Sections 4-5.


**Skills Workshop #3: Data Analysis Research** (Dataset Preparation) (October 13, Monday) *(Venue change: WCC 138)*

Review Shivley’s chapters 6-7, and 9.

The European Union

History and Institutions (October 15, Wednesday)

Europa webpage ([http://europa.eu/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)) (Become familiar with the material on this page. Also review the Statistics area).


Assorted articles from *The Economist* on the European Union on Moodle.

**PRELIMINARY DATA REPORTS DUE** (October 17, Friday)

The Travails of the Modern EU: The Euro Crisis (October 17, Friday)

Assorted articles on the Euro crisis from *Financial Times* and *The Economist* on Moodle.

**NO CLASS - MIDTERM BREAK (October 20, Monday)**

**Debate #1: The Future of the EU (October 22, Wednesday)**

**Skills Workshop #4: Working with Stata (October 24, Friday) (Venue change: WCC 138)**


**Classes on Monday, Oct. 27 and Wednesday, Oct. 29** are cancelled due to a conference.

**Session 3: The BRICs: From Socialism to Capitalism**

**The Russian Federation**

**State-Building As Organized Crime: The Russian Case (October 30, THURSDAY)**

***Special schedule: 7:30-8:40 p.m. WCC 233***


KKJ, Chapter 8, Sections 1-3

**Russian Democracy as a Problem of State-Building (October 31, Friday)**

KKJ, Chapter 8, Sections 4-5.


**Russian Democracy in Action: The Russia Simulation (November 3, Monday)**

China

**From Political Revolution to Economic Reform (November 5, Wednesday)**

KKJ, Chapter 14, Sections 1-5
Film: “PBS Frontline: Young and Restless in China.” (Watch prior to class meeting).

Does Economic Development Guarantee Democratization? (November 7, Friday)


Guest Speaker: Prof. Kent Freeze

China’s Growth and Development: The China Debate (November 10, Monday)

SHORT PAPER #2: PROPOSITION-BUILDING EXERCISE DUE (November 11, Tuesday)

Session 4: The BRICs: From Underdevelopment to Globalized Growth

Brazil

Development Without Equity? (November 12, Wednesday)

KKJ, Chapter 9, Sections 1-3

Globalization and Improved Social Welfare? (November 14, Friday)

KKJ, Chapter 9, Sections 4-5


Session 5: Student Perspectives on the Development-Democracy Nexus

Data Analysis Group Presentations (November 17, Monday; November 19, Wednesday)

PEER EVALUATIONS DUE (November 20, Thursday)

DATA ANALYSIS GROUP REPORTS DUE (November 24, Monday)