

## **PS 4308: Seminar in Comparative Politics**

**Spring 2016**

Online Version

### **Contact Information**

Dr. David Watson

Office: Lawrence Hall room 203.

Office Hours: T and TR 2-4am, and by appointment

Office Phone: 837-8742

Email: [dwatson@sulross.edu](mailto:dwatson@sulross.edu)

**Class Overview:** This course serves as the core seminar in the sub-field of comparative politics. Students will be introduced to the development of comparative politics covering chronologically the major topics and methods of analysis. The course begins with the behavioral revolution and focuses on modernization theory. Then, the course turns to the various critiques of behavioralism: institutionalism, dependency theory, analysis of the state, and agency-based analysis. Finally, the course ends with various topics covered in the current, post- behavioral era.

**Format:** The size of the class permits me to forgo a pure lecture format. Instead, we will engage in a more collaborative environment. In other words, this class will rely on a great deal of discussion. As a result, classes like this will succeed or fail based on your efforts much more than mine. As this class is exclusively online, all required work will need to be emailed to the instructor.

### Grading:

**Participation:** to be assessed based on the following criteria:

10% Discussion questions.

10% Class participation exhibited through thoughtful discussion and discussion questions.

10% Summaries of Coursework.

**Summaries:** For each assigned reading, a one-page single spaced summary is due by Wednesday of that week, by midnight.

**Weekly Questions:** One of the most underrated skills in academia is the ability to ask *good* questions. (Contrary to popular belief, there are such things as stupid questions.) This is your chance to practice. The questions should be analytical (theoretical) or methodological in nature and can focus directly on the reading or attempt to develop a tangential line of inquiry. In the latter case, these questions may be ideas for future dissertations and/or conference papers. Perhaps you were inspired by an “off hand” comment in a footnote, or would like to examine how a particular work’s thesis might be updated to understand contemporary politics. You may also develop questions that “speak” to multiple readings or other regions of the world. Be creative. Questions will be graded on a +/- basis. You are required to turn in at least 12 sets of weekly questions. You need not turn in questions for the first week of class (Jan. 28) since you won’t have yet read this syllabus or the readings. You also are permitted two “bye” weeks of your own choosing. These are to be emailed to me by 2:00 each Wednesday before the class meets.

**Class Participation:** Part of your grade will be based on class participation. Although the instructor will come with some structured design, the discussion is free to follow whatever path develops. Consider the Discussion Board to be a good, old-fashioned barroom debate (only more sober).

**Term Paper:** 20% of final grade: Each student will pick a topic relevant to comparative politics and write a 10-12 page research design/paper. It is important to remember that graduate school focuses on the ideas and criticisms of previous work, and this is the purpose of these papers. The responses should present testable hypotheses and an argument in favor of one particular view point and not merely summarize the readings. The student has discretion over which topic is selected; however, it is ill-advised to put this off until the final two weeks of the semester.

**Midterm and Final Examinations:**

25% each: These will be question prompts in which students will have a week to respond. A typical answer will be at least 5 pages in length and will have proper citations and style.

**Class Goals:**

Behavioral and Social Sciences – BA in Political Science

Program Learning Outcomes

The graduating student will:

- Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration.
- Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.

We will be repeatedly trying to address several objectives in this class.

1. Critique the basic literature on comparative politics.

Method of Assessment: Exams 1 and 2.

2. Analyze the development of theories in comparative politics.

Method of Assessment: Exams 1 and 2.

3. Assess the current state of comparative political theory.

Method of Assessment: Exams 1 and 2.

4. Display the ability to create independent research based critically thinking about assigned reading topics.

Method of Assessment: Exams 1, 2, and the term paper.

And addressing several questions, including:

1. What is the relationship between wealth and democracy?
2. Can political institutions mitigate ethnic conflict?
3. How do political attitudes affect regime type?
4. How does civil society affect politics?
5. Does regime type affect economic outcomes?
6. What causes democratization?

**Method of Evaluation:**

Participation, Discussion Questions, Examinations, Research Paper

**Materials:**

There is a required book for this class. You will need to order it as soon as possible, as the third class week will utilize it. It is:

Mayer, Lawrence. Comparative Politics: The Quest For Theory and Explanation (2007). Sloan Publishing, LLC. 2007. (ISBN 978-1597380027).

**\*All other reading assignments will be made available through blackboard.**

**Class Outline:**

The following represents a tentative class schedule.

**Week 1: January 22nd.**

**Topic:** Course introduction and Overview.

**Have Read: Articles 1 and 2.**

**Week 2: January 29th**

**Topic: Modernization Theory**

**Have Read: Articles 3, 4, and 5.**

**Week 3: February 5th**

**Topic:** Modernization Theory/Democratization.

**Have Read: Articles 6, 7, and 8.**

**Week 4: February 12th**

Foundations/ Basic Concerns.

**Have Read: Mayer Chapter 1, and assigned chapter from Mayer book.**

**Week 5: February 19th**

**Topic:** Democratization II.

**Have Read: Articles 9, 10, and 11.**

**Week 6: February 26th**

**Topic:** Democratic Institutions.

**Have Read: Articles 12, 13, and 14.**

**Week 7: March 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Topic:** Ethnic Conflict.

**Have Read: Articles 15, 16, and 17.**

**Week 8: March 12th**

**No Class: Spring Break**

**Week 9: March 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Topic: Midterm Exam.**

**Week 10: March 26th**

**Topic:** Civil Society.

**Have Read:** Articles 18, 19, and 20.

**Week 11: April 2nd**

**Topic:** Ethnic Conflict/Consensus

**Have Read:** Movie Week

**Week 12: April 9th**

**Topic:** Globalization.

**Have Read:** Articles 21, 22, and 23.

**Week 13: April 16th**

**Topic:** Lingering Issues of the State.

**Have Read:** Articles 24, 25, and 26.

**Week 14: April 23rd**

**Topic:** Party Systems.

**Have Read:** Articles 27, 28, and 29.

**Week 15: April 30th**

**Topic:** Failed States.

**Have Read:** Articles 30, 31, and 32.

**Week 16: May 7th**

**Topic:** Turn in Final Exams

Disability Policy: It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such an accommodation because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact Joyce Sesters (University Center 211), the coordinator for program accessibility 837-8178.