

Introduction to Comparative and International Politics (GO 103-001)—Prof. Ginsberg—Ladd 307
MWF 11:015 am-12:10 pm; Office Hours (Ladd 314) MF 8:30-10:00 am, M 12:15-2:15 pm,
W 8:30-9:00 am and 12:15-1:00 pm; and by appointment

Four Quotes Relevant to the Study of Comparative and International Politics

“Without comparison, the mind does not know how to proceed.” Alexis de Tocqueville

In studying comparative politics, “you will truly be studying yourself in relation to the rest of humanity.”
Michael J. Sodaro

“To learn without thinking is in vain; to think without learning is dangerous.” Confucius

“Learning or knowing anything requires both thought and investigation, theory and fact.” Henry R. Nau

Six Course Objectives

- introduce students to the conceptual foundations and methods of inquiry in two related political science subfields—comparative government and international politics
- enhance student knowledge of different nation-states with focus on political development, political culture, and political institutions
- advance student knowledge of the evolving international order and its major players, issues, and dynamics
- investigate the relationship between comparative and international politics
- develop and improve critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills
- prepare students for advanced coursework in government and international affairs

Course Requirements

- four quizzes (each 15 percent);*
- three five-page think pieces (10 percent each);** and
- active participation (10 percent) in discussion of readings; classroom and written exercises; responses to study questions; definitions of key concepts; and regular class attendance***

*All exams must be taken as scheduled—no exceptions.

**To assure fairness to all, there can be no late submissions of work. All deadlines are posted in syllabus. The Government Department stresses the importance of good writing skills. See attached “Writing Statement.”

***The Government Department stresses the importance of mutual respect in the classroom. See attached “Policy on Civility and Comportment in the Classroom.” Turn off cell phones. No text messaging. No unexcused absences.

Required Texts

Michael J. Sodaro, *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*

Henry R. Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations*

Schedule of Lectures, Reading Assignments,* Videos, and Quizzes

* bring scheduled reading to class; key concepts/study question responses will be assigned and are due at start of class

Part One: Introduction to Comparative Politics (Sodaro Text)

Concepts and Methods

1-23	Major Topics and Methods. Chs. 2-3
1-26	Power and States. Chs. 4-5
1-28	Matching Nations with States. Ch. 6, pp. 147-157
1-30	Israel and Palestine and former Yugoslavia. Ch. 6, pp. 157-169
2-2	Values and Institutions in Democracies, Ch. 7
2-4	Types of Democracies. Ch. 8 (pp. 194-205)
2-6	Types of Electoral Systems. Ch. 8 (pp. 205-219)
2-9	Conditions of Democracy: Afghanistan and Iraq. Chs. 9-10
2-11	Political Participation and Political Culture. Chs. 11-12
2-13	Political Ideology. Ch. 13
2-13	Optional Review Session TBA
2-16	First Quiz

Comparing Political Systems

2-18	Britain. Ch. 16
2-20	France. Ch. 17
2-23	Germany. Ch. 18
2-25	Japan. Ch. 19
2-27	Russia. Ch. 20
3-2	China. Ch. 21
3-3	Optional Review Session. TBA
3-4	First think piece due
3-6	Second Quiz

Part Two: Introduction to International Politics (Nau Text)

Theory and War

3-16	Theoretical Perspectives. Intro. and Ch. 1, pp. 20-34
3-18	Theory and Levels of Analysis. Ch. 1, pp. 34-71
3-20	Theoretical Perspectives and History. Ch. 2
3-23	World War I. Ch. 3
3-25	World War II. Ch. 4
3-27	Cold War. Ch. 5
3-30	After the Cold War. Ch. 6
4-1	Terrorism. Ch. 7
4-3	Catch-up
4-3	Optional Study Session TBA

Transnational and International Issues in Conditions of Globalization

4-6	Globalization in History and Theory. Ch. 8
4-8	Globalization in Practice. Ch. 9
4-10	Development. Ch. 11
4-13	Foreign Aid. Ch. 12
4-15	Inequality and Injustice. Ch. 13
4-17	Global Environment. Ch. 14
4-20	Human Rights. Ch. 15
4-22	Second think piece. No class. Study Day
4-24	Third Quiz
4-27	Global Governance. Ch. 16
4-29	Review, Catch-up, and Course Evaluation. pp. 536-545
5-8	Fourth Quiz and Third Think Piece

Instructions for Assignments

Student Participation and Contribution

Students are expected to bring the relevant reading to class each day, arrive on time to discuss reading and other assignments, and submit responses to study questions and key concepts as assigned. No unexcused absences are permitted. Missing class before Spring or Thanksgiving break in order to fly or drive home early is not permitted. Each unexcused absence beyond the first instance will result in a full letter drop in the participation grade. If students cannot make class, for whatever reason, they are required to let Dr. G. know before the start of class by phone. Since late arrivals to class are disruptive, students are asked to arrive on time. For each late arrival beyond the first two, the student will suffer a half-letter grade drop in the participation grade. Please consult the appended Government Department “Policy on Civility and Comportment in the Classroom.” Due dates for assignments and scheduled exams, which are detailed in the syllabus, are fixed and cannot be changed. In fairness to students who meet deadlines, and to best prepare for the “zero tolerance” of late work in either graduate/law school or the workplace, no late submissions will be accepted. In order to anticipate last minute hitches, do not wait until it is too late to print out a document. Students are asked not to send the professor their written work by electronic mail.

Exercises

Study Questions. Responses to study questions—which serve as written assignments for students and lend structure to lectures and discussions—are required as assigned. The questions are designed to encourage students to think creatively and analytically on the basis of what they have learned in the reading (or film). When you respond to study questions, explain what you mean by using examples. Be concrete. Dr. G. may require students either to submit their written responses for evaluation or to come to class prepared to discuss them. Study questions may be included in the quizzes.

Key Concepts. Key concepts are building blocks in students’ understanding of comparative and international politics. Dr. G. assigns key concepts for each chapter. For each key concept students should provide a brief definition, offer a date and an example when appropriate, and explain how the concept is relevant to the study of either comparative politics or international politics. Students are more apt to learn, define, and remember key concepts if they first understand the context and significance of those concepts. Students may wish to reserve a section in their notebooks for a glossary or use note cards. Students should find their definitions only in the assigned text or in the lectures (and **not** other non-course sources). Dr. G. may require students either to submit their key concepts for evaluation or to come to class prepared to define key concepts in the course of discussion. Students’ knowledge of key concepts is tested in the quizzes.

Think pieces offer students an opportunity to write creatively, critically, and analytically about what they have learned. Thus, think pieces entail even more in-depth thought and elucidation of ideas than the study questions found at the end of the chapters. A think piece is not a research paper, but rather a thought-provoking essay that revolves around the support of creative and original ideas. Therefore, citations (numbered endnotes on the sixth page entitled “Endnotes”) should be limited to necessary support of the student’s original ideas. In order to get feedback, students should consult with Dr. G. when selecting a think piece and structuring an argument. Dr. G. makes available for examination excellent think pieces of students from previous years. The Writing Center is a good place to go for critiques of draft papers. Criteria for evaluating excellence in student think pieces include

- cover page (creative title/subtitle)
- clear introduction that features a provocative argument or theme with a description of the main points around which the piece revolves
- effective delivery and overall quality of presentation
- originality, creativity, and persuasiveness
- spelling and grammar

- page numbers, margins, and paragraphs
- response to query
- accuracy of content
- clear conclusion that links back to the theme and purpose of the piece
- support of argument in body of piece with illustrative examples
- adherence to five-page length
- citation page as needed
- consultation with Dr. G.

Sodaro Study Questions—Use Examples to Make Your Responses/Explanations Concrete

Chapter One

- What did Mark Twain mean when he wrote “the ancients stole our best ideas”?
- What are three advantages of studying comparative politics and why?
- Are democracies more peaceful than nondemocracies?

Chapter Two

- What are three major differences between democratic and authoritarian regimes?
- What are five major sources of political conflict?
- What do political left and political right mean and what are the origins of these terms?
- What is the difference between political ideology and theory?
- What are three significant observations drawn from the data in Tables 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5?

Chapter Three

- What five steps are used to test/verify a hypothesis? Explain each step.
- What are the benefits and pitfalls of a scientific/empirical approach to studying comparative politics?

Chapter Four

- What is political power?
- What is the difference between dominance and influence?
- Why is the rule of law in a democracy so important?
- What are three significant observations drawn from examining the data in Table 4.1?

Chapter Five

- What is the difference between a state and a government, a state and a nation, and a state and a sovereign state? Why are such distinctions important?
- What did Sodaro mean when he wrote, “...sovereignty isn’t what it used to be”?
- What are the purposes of a state from the perspective of Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Smith?
- What are the differences between a head of government and a head of state?
- What are the different types of heads of government and heads of state?
- What are the major types of legislatures?
- What are the major types of states?
- What most contributes to the role of the military in Pakistan and Turkey?

Chapter Six

- What are the distinguishing characteristics of a people that define their identity as a nation?
- What is a nation-state and when did it originate?
- What are the major types of nationalism--both positive and negative types?
- For minority nations that are within states but retain a strong sense of national identity, what are the choices they have (or do not have) to constitute themselves as a distinct entity? Cover the entire spectrum of options.
- Why is it so hard to stitch together a single Sudanese national identity?
- What are other examples of nations without states? Explain why each nation is stateless.
- What would happen in the world if all nations received statehood? What would be the consequences?
- Why is statehood so elusive for the Kurds?
- Why has it been so difficult to date to establish a Palestinian state? What are the prospects for an independent Palestine?
- Why did Yugoslavia disintegrate in the 1990s? What are the lessons learned?

Chapter Seven

- What is the role of democratic values and respect for the rule of law in democracies?
- What are the differences between representative and direct democracy?
- Should a democracy based on freedom of expression and a free press permit or not permit publication of depictions of the Prophet Muhammad (which Islamic law forbids)?
- Do you think economic well-being (e.g., right to a job) and a clean environment (e.g., clean water) should be included in the rights guaranteed in a democracy?
- What are the impediments Egypt faces as it attempts to democratize its government?
- Should democracies encourage the development of democracy in countries where antidemocracies and militantly anti-western parties enjoy significant popularity? Or should they support semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes that keep these parties under control while limiting democracy for everyone else as well?

Chapter Eight

- What are the major differences between presidential, parliamentary, and mixed presidential-parliamentary systems?
- What are the main advantages and disadvantages of coalition governments?
- What are the three types of electoral systems? List pros and cons of each.
- Does the evidence support the hypothesis that PR electoral systems tend to result in higher voter turnout than plurality systems?

Chapters Nine and Ten

- What is the difference between democratization and democratic consolidation and why is the distinction important?
- What are ten conditions that help explain why and how democracies get established and endure?
- How do our ten conditions for democracy help us to explain democracy's past failures and potential for Afghanistan?
- How do our ten conditions for democracy help us to explain democracy's past failures and potential for Iraq?

Department of Government Writing Statement

The Government department faculty believe that the ability to produce grammatical, lucid prose is a prerequisite for clear thinking and cogent argumentation. Department members therefore take note of the quality of the writing when assessing student work, and each faculty member may shape her or his grading policies accordingly. Competence in written expression is one of the defining properties of a liberally educated person. Writing well also has practical value. We offer as evidence of this a comment by one of our alumni, a successful lawyer:

My experience has taught me that the single skill most lacking in college graduates is the ability to craft proper written arguments. Professors should emphasize grammar and sentence structure at all course levels. In order for your graduates to succeed, they must be able to express themselves perfectly in writing. Anything less dooms them to failure.

The most important way that students can improve their writing is by reading and responding to instructors' comments on their assignments. Failing to read such comments and revise accordingly constitutes a refusal to take advantage of one of the key benefits of a liberal arts education. The "conversation" that occurs between faculty and students through the medium of student exams and papers is singular to liberal arts colleges. Your peers at larger institutions do not necessarily enjoy the benefits that accrue from having full-time teacher-scholars read and comment on their writing. We urge you to take advantage of your privileged position. There are also several other ways that students can improve their writing outside of the classroom:

1) Read widely and voraciously. Your reading should not be confined to your coursework. The more you read, the more you will learn about grammar, syntax, organization, and style. Try to read as many different "genres" as possible (e.g., history, biography, memoirs, fiction, etc.). *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books* provide both concise and lengthy reviews of recently published books that can help you distinguish the flawless from the fatuous. You should also not hesitate to ask faculty for book recommendations.

2) Purchase a "style manual" or a "grammar and usage guide." Even the most fluid writers sometimes need help with a grammar rule. The Skidmore Guide to Writing is a good place to start. We also strongly recommend that students purchase *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Students who aspire to more than mere competency should purchase both *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White and *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, by H.W. Fowler. "Strunk and White," as the former is affectionately known, is not technically a style

manual, but it remains the most readable, succinct primer on how to generate correct and compelling prose. "Fowler" was an "epoch-making book" well before Winston Churchill invoked it during WW II to chastise the Director of Military Intelligence for using "intensive" rather than the correct "intense" in the plans for the invasion of Normandy. It remains the essential source for those who are "not satisfied with catching the general drift and obvious intention of a sentence" but insist that "the words used must... actually yield on scrutiny the desired sense."

3) Look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. You cannot know the "right word" if you only know the "wrong words." It is important to look up every word whose definition eludes you. Poor word choice can cause misinterpretations and misunderstandings. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, there is a difference between "a horse chestnut and a chestnut horse."

4) Keep a "commonplace book." One records in a commonplace book particularly well-written, insightful, or meaningful passages from his or her reading. Thomas Jefferson knew that mimesis could be an effective learning technique. He kept a commonplace book for most of his life, and no one ever accused him of being "derivative" (though he may have cribbed a bit from John Locke). Your commonplace book does not need to be a leather-bound, gold-embossed folio. A spiral notebook will do the job. By transcribing trenchant quotations, sublime turns of phrase, or vivid vignettes from your reading, you will improve your ability both to identify and to produce exquisite prose.

5) Write "e-letters." We recognize that the only people who compose letters today are those perverse few who cannot get enough of Dangerous Liaisons. Email and instant messages have developed their own conventions that abet rapid communication but are contrary to the rules of "formal writing." This is unfortunate because electronic communications provide students with excellent opportunities to improve their writing. Crafting a readable and memorable "e-letter" requires the same skills as those needed to compose a clear and compelling argument. John Adams averred in one of his letters to Thomas Jefferson that, "You and I ought not to die before we explain ourselves to each other." E-letters can help you to "explain yourself" to others in ways that are transferable to your coursework.

The classroom experience is the heart of liberal education, and as such is the most important aspect of your Skidmore College education. Presumably, if you did not agree you would not be attending Skidmore. The faculty of the Government Department takes this understanding as the basis of our educational efforts. It is in an attempt to honor the centrality of the classroom experience that we offer this department policy on civility and comportment.

As is stated in the Student Handbook, your presence at Skidmore College is contingent upon your acceptance of, and full adherence to, the Skidmore College Honor Code. This honor code is distinct from the oath you take when writing a paper or taking an exam – it is in fact much more all-encompassing, and much more demanding.

The Code includes the following statement: *"I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the College regulations."* Elsewhere, the Code also calls all Skidmore students to *conform to high standards of fair play, integrity, and honor."*

What does it mean to do act honestly, with integrity, and according to high standards of fair play, particularly in the classroom? In our view, it includes, minimally, the following.

1. No student shall lessen the learning experience of others in the classroom by arriving late to class.
2. No student shall lessen the learning experience of others in the classroom by leaving the classroom while class is in session, except for true medical emergencies.
3. Cell phones must be turned off during class.
4. No student shall disrupt the learning experience of others in the classroom by talking to a neighbor, writing notes to other students, reviewing one's mail, reading the newspaper, completing homework for other classes, or playing with the laptop computer, while class is in session.
5. No student shall disrespect other Skidmore students, professors or the housekeeping staff by putting feet on the desks or other furniture in the classroom, or by leaving trash, food, or recyclables in the room at the end of the class session.

While we will hold all students to these minimal expectations, we also have some suggestions for those who seek to go beyond the bare minimum of civil classroom comportment to become the type of mature, responsible, active learners who are an asset to any classroom and society at large. These include the following.

6. Every student should take copious and meaningful notes both on assigned readings and during classroom sessions. Note taking is an important skill—if you do not already possess it, you should acquire it.

7. Every student should take some time to review the notes that he or she has taken on the day's assigned reading before each class meeting. You will be amazed how much more invested and engaged in the class you will feel if you go into the classroom well-prepared.

8. Disruptions in class can be a significant impediment to learning, and no member of the Skidmore community—including faculty and students—should tolerate them. Thus every student should take responsibility for holding his or her peers and classmates to both high academic standards and high standards of civility. If people around you are chatting, passing notes or otherwise detracting from the overall quality of YOUR classroom experience, don't let them get away with it.

9. Individual faculty members in the Government Department will determine the level of sanctions for disruptive behavior.