Semester at Sea, Course Syllabus
Colorado State University, Academic Sponsor

Voyage: Spring 2017
Discipline: Political Science
Course Number and Title: POLS 241 Comparative Government and Politics
Division: lower
Faculty Name: Tao Xie
Semester Credit Hours: 3

Pre-requisites:
This course has no pre-requisites. However, intellectual curiosity in and prior exposure (academic or otherwise) to politics and history of non-U.S. countries would be quite useful.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is an introductory level course in comparative politics, a subfield of political science that compares political systems across countries. Comparison of political systems helps us to understand the imperatives that political systems have in common, as well as the ways in which they vary. Such comparison enhances our understanding of our own political system and the diverse world in which we live. The course exposes students to basic concepts, major theories, and fundamental research methods used in analyzing political systems. Discussion topics include the state, state-building and state failure, political economy, democracy, democratization, non-democratic regimes, federalism, and political violence. By semester’s end, it is hoped that students will have a general understanding of comparative politics, as well as the ability to conduct basic research in the field.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Tailored for a program that is taught during a voyage across three oceans and a dozen of countries, this course has three objectives.
First, it seeks to help students to understand the diverse political systems of countries located along the voyage. Some of these countries are democratic while others are authoritarian; some economically advanced but others trapped in poverty. Some countries practice parliamentary system, while others presidential system. We will discuss the causes and consequences of such variations.
The second objective is to expose students to basic concepts, major theories, and fundamental research methods used in analyzing political systems. Concepts to be discussed include the state and democracy, and major theories include related to democracy and authoritarianism. Basic research methods such as historical-comparative analysis will be introduced.
Since a large number of students come from the United States, the third objective of this course is to convey an understanding of the American political system in a comparative perspective, highlighting the similarities and differences between the United States and other countries.
REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Patrick H. O’Neil
TITLE: Essentials of Comparative Politics
PUBLISHER: W.W. Norton
ISBN #: 978-0-393-91278-4 (pbk.)

AUTHOR: Samuel P. Huntington
TITLE: Political Order in Changing Societies
PUBLISHER: Yale University Press
DATE/EDITION: 2006 (reprint)

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Ensenada—January 5

A1—January 7: Introduction
We will walk through the syllabus and discuss logistics

A2—January 9: Introducing comparative politics
What is comparative politics? How do we compare political systems across countries? What is the relationship between freedom and equality?

O’neil, chapter 1.

A3—January 11: Defining democracy
What is democracy? What are the preconditions for democracy? Is democracy a guarantee of freedom and equality?

O’neil, chapter 5, pp.128-39.

Honolulu—January 12

A4—January 14: Origins of democracy
How did democracy arise in England? How did America become a democracy? Is American democracy exceptional?


**A5—January 17: varieties of democracy**
What is a parliamentary system? What is a presidential system? What are the pros and cons of the two systems?

O’Neil, chapter 5, pp.140-160.

No class January 19

**A6—January 20: advanced democracies**
What are the key characteristics of advanced democracies? What makes them advanced compared with newly democratized countries? What impact does post-industrialization have on these societies?

O’Neil, chapter 8.

**A7—January 22: politics of Japanese style**
How did Japan become a democracy? What are some of the challenges faced by the Japanese democracy? How does Japan manage to be “modern but hardly western”?


Yokohama – January 24-25
Transit – January 26
Kobe – January 27-28

**A8—January 29: understanding the Chinese political system**
Why is China called a party-state? How are China’s top leaders selected? How is leadership structured within the Chinese Communist Party?


Shanghai – January 31 – February 1
Transit – February 2 – 3
Hong Kong – February 4-5
A9—February 6: will China democratize?
Why hasn’t China collapsed, despite repeated predictions to the contrary? What are the prospects for democratization in China?

Yasheng Huang, “Why China Will Not Collapse,” Foreign Policy, summer 1995, pp. 54-68.

A10—February 13: Communist regimes
What is the origin of Communism? What differences and similarities are there between Communist China and Communist Vietnam? What caused the varied outcomes of transformation in the former Communist countries?

O’Neil, chapter 9

A11—February 15: the third wave of democratization
What are the three waves of democratization? What caused the third wave?


A12—February 17: political transition in Myanmar
Can existing theories explain democratization in Myanmar? What was the role of Aung San Suu Kyi in bringing about political reforms in Myanmar? What challenges lie ahead for Myanmar’s democratization?


A13—February 24: diversity of non-democratic regimes
What are the sources of legitimacy in non-democratic regimes? How do these regimes maintain control over the masses? Why are some of these regimes more stable than others?

Rangoon – February 18-22
A14—February 26: democracy with Indian characteristics
How did India become a democracy? Is the Indian democracy exceptional or not? Why is India falling far behind China in economic development?


A15—March 6: federalism
What is federalism? What are the major models of federalism? Does federalism facilitate democracy? Does federalism facilitate economic development?


A16—March 8: origins of prosperity and poverty
Why are some countries rich but others poor? What theories have been proposed to explain cross-national variations in economic development?

O’Neil, chapter 4.

NOTE: On his personal website Przeworski lists the chapter as published in The Evolution of Political Knowledge, but the PDF file says it was published in a differently entitled volume. Due to confusion about citations, I put the URL here.

No Class – March 10

A17—March 11: the state and its origins
What is the state? How did the state arise? Why are the states weak in some countries but strong in others?

O’Neil, chapter 2.


A18—March 13: failed states
Why do some states fail? How do we measure state failure? What are the consequences of state failure?


A19—March 15: politics in South Africa
What is wrong with the South African democracy? Why is corruption so rampant in South Africa? Does

Pippa Green, “Piketty in South Africa,” *New Yorker*, October 26, 2015

Cape Town—March 16-21

A20—March 23: modernization and political instability
Why does modernization in late developing countries often lead to political instability? What is political institutionalization? Is authoritarian rule a necessary evil for late-developing countries?


No Class – March 25

A21—March 26: democracy in Ghana
How did Ghana become a democracy? What is the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah? What political challenges does Ghana face?


Tema – March 28-30
A22—April 2: military participation in politics
What makes the military a special institution? Under what circumstances is the military likely to participate in politics? Why is Africa so prone to military coups?

Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, chapter 4, pp.192-263.

A23—April 4: political violence in Africa
Why is Africa so prone to political violence? Does colonialism have an impact on political violence there? How to prevent political violence in that continent?

O’Neil, chapter 7.

A24—April 7: the Arab Spring: the fourth wave?
How did the Arab Spring happen? What is the current state of Arab Spring countries? Does the Arab Spring represent the beginning of the fourth wave of democratization?


Casablanca – April 9-April 13

Study Day – April 14

A25 Final – April 15:

Arrive Hamburg—April 19

FIELD WORK
Proposal Title #1: Democratic Transition in Myanmar: What happened, why, and how?
Country: Myanmar
Idea: Myanmar is undergoing unprecedented political transformations, as embodied in the most recent presidential election where the opposition party led by Aung San Suu Kyi won by a landslide. The country was under military rule for nearly two decades, but it suddenly embarked on democratic transition. Why this sudden change? How did it happen? What challenges lie ahead and how to address them?
Objectives: The field class aims to 1) expose students to Myanmar’s political, economic, and cultural landscape, 2) help students to find preliminary answers to the above questions by incorporating classroom readings and field class experiences.

Assignments: Students are required to do group presentations on Myanmar’s political transformations. The presentations should incorporate not only classroom readings, but also what they learned from the field class (guided tours, independent visits, and a symposium featuring local students and analysts).


Proposal Title #2: Whither China?
Country: China
Idea: The rapid rise of China in the past three decades has posed many important questions for political scientists. Many predictions to the contrary notwithstanding, China has not collapsed and shows no clear signs of doing so in the near future. What explains the stability of the Chinese party-state? Why hasn’t China democratized, as predicted by theories of democratization?

Objectives: It is hoped that students will 1) gain first-hand knowledge about some aspects of the contemporary Chinese society, 2) apply classroom readings about authoritarian rule to find out preliminary answers to these questions.

Assignments: Students are required to do group presentations on contemporary Chinese politics and economy. These presentations should incorporate not only classroom readings, but also what they learned from the field class (guided tours, independent visits, and a symposium featuring local analysts).

Recommended independent site visit: Permanent Exhibit “The Road to Rejuvenation” at the National Museum of China in Beijing.

FIELD CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT
Proposal Title #1: Democratic Transition in Myanmar: What happened, why, and how?
Country: Myanmar
Site: University of Yangon (tentative)
This field class has three components.
1. Two-hour guided tour of downtown Yangon
2. One-hour-and-half symposium featuring Myanmar analysts (given the sensitivity of the topic, it might be difficult to find Myanmar academics or analysts who are willing to share their perspectives on the political transformations in their own country. If that is the case, I will try to find representatives from Yangon-based foreign NGOs to present their perspectives on the changing political landscape in that country).
3. One hour of interactions with university students (again, if university authority does not approve such activities, I may let students explore the campus and interact with Myanmar students on an individual basis).

Assignment: Students are required to do group presentations on Myanmar’s political transformations. The presentations should incorporate not only classroom readings, but also what they learned from the field class (guided tours, independent visits, and a symposium featuring local students and analysts).

Proposal Title #2: Whither China?
Country: China
Site: East China Normal University (tentative)
This field class has two components.
1. Three-hour guided tour of downtown Shanghai
2. Two-hour symposium featuring one or two Chinese scholars
Assignment: Students are required to do group presentations on contemporary Chinese politics and economy. These presentations should incorporate not only classroom readings, but also what they learned from the field class (guided tours, independent visits, and a symposium featuring local analysts).

INDEPENDENT FIELD ASSIGNMENTS
At each port of call, students are expected to pay close attention to the political aspects of the particular country. Political aspects includes the nature of government (democratic or authoritarian), form of government (parliamentary of presidential), methods of selection for the national legislative body and the highest executive office, major political parties, ethno-religious composition, central-local relations, etc. If appropriate, they should also actively mingle with local residents to get a sense of their views on local politics. Through their own observations, personal experiences, and conversations with local residents, students should have a good sense of the political similarities and differences among countries located on the voyage.

After each port of call students are required to turn in a journal that documents their observations, personal experiences, conservations with local residents, and reflections that are closely related to the political life of the local community. Each journal should be 3-5 pages, double-spaced. Journals account for 10% of class grade.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING SCALE
The course grade has five components: attendance (10%), field class presentation (20%), journal for each port visit (10%), the term paper (30%), and the final exam 30%.

1. Each unexcused absence will result in 2-point deduction in attendance grade. Six unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. Students should make the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. The instructor will make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor’s supervision (e.g., quizzes). In the event of a conflict in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

2. The term paper should be an original research paper—12-point font, 12-15 pages (excluding references), doubled spaced—on any topic covered in the course. Students are required to approach the instructor around mid-semester for discussion and approval of term paper topics. The paper will be evaluated on the basis of originality, argumentation, and language quality.

3. Papers similar or identical to papers in other SAS courses will not be accepted unless approved by the instructor.

4. The 2-hour final exam consists of four essay questions.

5. The final course grade may be adjusted based on the frequency and quality of participation in classroom discussions.

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution).
Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory/Poor</th>
<th>Failing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100%: A+</td>
<td>87-90%: B+</td>
<td>77-80%: C+</td>
<td>Less than 60%:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-97%: A</td>
<td>83-87%: B</td>
<td>70-77%: C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93%: A-</td>
<td>80-83%: B-</td>
<td>60-70%: D</td>
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LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS
Semester at Sea provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation. A memo from the student’s home institution verifying the accommodations received on their home campus is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit this verification of accommodations pre-voyage as soon as possible, but no later than December 15, 2016 to academic@isevoyages.org.

STUDENT CONDUCT CODE
The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one’s own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: “I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment.”

RESERVE BOOKS AND FILMS FOR THE LIBRARY

AUTHOR: Milan W. Svolik
TITLE: The Politics of Authoritarian Rule
PUBLISHER: Cambridge University Press
ISBN #: 978-1-107-60745-3
DATE/EDITION: 2012

AUTHOR: Robert Bates
TITLE: When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa
PUBLISHER: Cambridge University Press
ISBN #: 978-0-521-71525–6
DATE/EDITION: 2008