Course Overview: This course provides an introduction to the comparative study of domestic politics in countries around the world. In this course, you will be introduced to some of the most important concepts, theories, and issues in this subfield of political science. There is some debate about what “comparative politics” means. Many see it simply as learning facts about countries outside the United States. Others believe that it is about comparing political systems in order to generate general statements about politics. In this course, you will be exposed to both of these ideas. You will learn about the domestic politics of a number of important countries. But, you will also be expected to compare them to each other and, crucially, to apply the concepts and theories covered in the course to understand better the politics of these states and domestic politics in general.

Many introductory comparative politics courses spend the first half of the semester on concepts and theories and the second half on specific countries. I take a different approach. Each week, we will focus on a set of concepts and theories important to comparative politics. During most weeks, we will also examine that topic in a group of countries representative of different types of political systems around the world: The United Kingdom (Great Britain), Germany, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, China, India, Nigeria, and Iran, as well as (less frequently) France, South Africa, and Iraq. We will also focus in detail on one additional country during Week 14. You will help select that country. Your short “policy memo” will recommend a certain developing country (the choice of the country is up to you, from the list at the end of the syllabus) based on how it fits—or, more interesting, doesn’t fit—with the theories and concepts presented during the semester. Convince me that we should study it.

Requirements and Grading: You are expected to do the readings for the course on time during the week that they are listed in the syllabus, unless I say otherwise. There are several incentives to do so. Class sessions will be easier to follow if you have completed the readings. The amount of reading is reasonable, but not small. It will not be easy to catch up if you fall behind. From time to time, we will discuss readings in class. This is particularly true of our coverage of the topics in practice in the countries. Along with your attendance, your participation in these and other discussions can affect your final semester grade (see below). There will be twelve quizzes covering the readings during the semester. Finally, on the midterm and final exams, those who bring course readings into their essay answers will receive higher grades—all other things equal—than those who do not.

Three-quarters of your final semester grade will be based on the quizzes (20% total), an in-class midterm (20%), the final exam (30%), and attendance and participation (5%). The remaining portion of the final grade will come from three additional assignments. The descriptions of these assignments are found at the end of the syllabus. They include the short assignment on a leader early in the semester (5%); your discussion posts on D2L (5%), and your “policy memo” (15%). Quizzes will be multiple choice; the exams will be essay-based. In your policy memo, short assignment on a leader, and D2L discussion posts (but not in the in-class exams), spelling, grammar, and other style elements will be taken into account in determining your grade.

Class attendance is mandatory, and it is a small part of your final semester grade. Since situations may arise that make it difficult or impossible to attend a particular class session, you are allowed to miss up to six class sessions during the semester without a major impact on your semester grade. After the sixth absence, I will lower your semester grade by one letter grade (BC to C, for example) with each additional absence. In addition, anyone ending the semester in the “gray area” between two letter grades will be bumped up or down depending on attendance and participation. You should also follow day-to-day events, especially in our countries of focus, during the semester. You can do this by reading weekly news magazines such as The Economist, or reputable online news outlets such as cnn.com or the BBC. We will discuss current events from time to time in class.

Readings: There is only one book which you are required to buy, which is my comparative politics textbook (Lowell Barrington, Comparative Politics: Structures & Choices, Cengage, 2013). Make sure you buy the second edition (2013). The textbook is available at Bookmarq, but you are welcome to purchase it elsewhere. A used copy is fine; just make sure it is the second edition. Many other selected readings will be on the class site for D2L. Go to https://d2l.mu.edu/ and log in. On your home page, scroll down to the “2016 Spring Term” tab, look for the “Political Science” sub-tab, and click on the link “POSC 2401 101 Comparative Politics - 1500_1440_101.” Once you reach the POSC 2401 course home page, click on the “Content” link on the taskbar at the top of the page to access the additional readings.
**Other Important Details:** POSC 2401 falls under the “Individual and Social Behavior” section of Marquette’s Core of Common Studies. As a result, this course will contribute to your ability to understand central concepts, theories, and methods used to explain individual and social behavior in political science; to use knowledge of social scientific methods to analyze examples of individual and social behavior; and to evaluate the applicability of social scientific knowledge for understanding individual and social behavior in particular contexts.

If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services. If you are unsure of what you need to qualify for services, visit ODS’s website at www.marquette.edu/disability-services or contact the Office of Disability Services at 414-288-1645.

While generally a nice person, I take academic dishonesty very seriously. Academic dishonesty violates the core principles (and Honor Code) of Marquette, and it is unfair to your fellow classmates. If you are caught copying during tests/quizzes, plagiarizing on assignments (i.e., representing someone else’s ideas as your own, including by not adequately citing them), or helping someone do either of these, you will receive an F on that assignment, be reported to the Honor Council, and receive any other punishments that are warranted. Don’t test me on this one! Just to be clear, if you take this course, you are accepting Marquette’s Honor Pledge: “I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work. I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others. I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity. My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.” To provide additional incentives for this not to be an issue on the policy memo or early semester short assignment, I will be submitting them to turnitin.com for an originality check after you submit the via the D2L drop box.

**LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE**

**PART I: Political Science, Comparative Politics, and Leadership**


Readings:


D2L #2: “Pride of Place: Landscape in Britain,” *The Economist*.

**JAN. 18: NO CLASS, MLK DAY.**

**Week 2 (Jan 25-28): Science, Political Science, and Comparative Politics**

Readings:


D2L #2: Jean-Germain Gros, “Comparative Politics Made Simple,” AP Central.


D2L #4: “Off the Map; Data and Development,” *The Economist*.

**Week 3 (Feb 1-5): Political Leaders and Their Decisions**

Readings:

D2L #1: “Person of the Year, Angela Merkel: Chancellor of the Free World,” *Time Magazine*, 12/21/2015.


**FEB 1 (MONDAY), “MOST CHALLENGED LEADER” ASSIGNMENT DUE, D2L DROPBOX, BY 5:00 P.M.**
PART II: Economics, Culture, and Identity

Week 4 (Feb 8-12): Economic Structure and Political Outcomes

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 2 (“Economic Class, Development, Systems, and Globalization”).
D2L #1: “Forget the 1%,” The Economist.

Week 5 (Feb 15-19): Political Culture and Ideology

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 3 (“Ideas as Structure: Political Culture and Ideology”).
D2L #3: “What Happened to Brazil?,” Foreign Policy in Focus, 9/23/15.

Week 6 (Feb 22-26): Identity and Social Divisions

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 4 (Identity Structure”).
D2L #1: “Germany’s Identity Crisis,” Politico, 10/12/2015

PART III: Governing Institutions

Week 7 (Feb 29-Mar 4): Political Systems and Their Constitutions

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 5 (“Political Systems and Their Rules”).

Week 8 (Mar 7-11): Executives and Legislatures

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 6 (“Legislatures and Executives”).
D2L #1: “Easy Politics, Bad Policies” The Economist.
D2L #3: “U.S. or Parliamentary System?...” MinnPost, 10/02/12.

MARCH 9 (WEDNESDAY): MIDTERM EXAM, IN CLASS.

Week 9 (Mar 14-18): Courts, Bureaucracies, and Militaries

Readings:
Barrington, CPSC, chapter 7 (“Unelected Components of Government”).
D2L #1: “Britain’s Shrinking Executive,” American Interest, 7/1/2014.
D2L #2: “‘Brazil Cost’ Bureaucracy Continues to Hinder Business,” The Rio Times, 8/6/2015.

MARCH 18: NO CLASS, SPRING AND EASTER HOLIDAY BREAK.
**PART IV: Linking Political Elites and the General Public**

**Week 10 (Mar 28-April 1): Interest Groups and “Civil Society”**

*Readings:*

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 8 (“Political Participation and Approaches to Linking Masses and Elites”).

D2L #1: “Study: US is an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy,” BBC.

D2L #2: “Russia’s Stolen Future,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 5/1/2015.


**MARCH 28: NO CLASS, SPRING AND EASTER HOLIDAY BREAK.**

**Week 11 (Apr 4-8): Electoral Systems and Political Parties**

*Readings:*


D2L #1: “They Said It Couldn’t Be Done: David Cameron’s Surprise Victory,” *The Weekly Standard*.


D2L #3: “Witness to a Landslide; Indian Politics,” *The Economist*.


**APRIL 8 (FRIDAY), POLICY MEMO DUE, IN THE D2L DROPBOX, BY 5:00 P.M.**

*THE DETAILS OF THE ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE END OF THE SYLLABUS.*

**PART V: Understanding Political Outcomes Using Structures and Choices**

**Week 12 (April 11-15): Regime Transitions: Democratization and Democratic Breakdown**

*Readings:*


D2L #1: “What’s Gone Wrong with Democracy?” *The Economist*.

D2L #2: “The Arab Spring: Has It Failed?” *The Economist*.


**Week 13 (Apr 18-22): Policy Outcomes**

*Readings:*

Barrington, *CPSC*, chapter 12 (“Comparative Public Policy”).


D2L #4: “The Center Is Not All: How India’s States Are Luring Foreign Investors,” *Global Asia*, June 2015.

**PART VI: Conclusion**

**Week 14 (Apr 25-29): Politics in ???**

*Readings:*

Barrington, *CPSC*, epilogue, “Structured Choices and the Comparative Study of Politics”.


**FINAL EXAM REVIEW: MAY 2 (MONDAY), IN CLASS.**
DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR SEMESTER ASSIGNMENTS

D2L Discussion Posts

At least five times during the semester, you will post to the class D2L discussion board about a topic/question from a recent class session, a current event in one of the Topic-in-Countries cases related to issues we’re discussing that week, or examples from other countries—including the United States—of how thematic elements from the class play out in practice around the world. At least two of these posts should start a new discussion thread, as opposed to being responses to posts in existing threads. (You are expected to respond to existing posts as well.) Along with how coherent, interesting and important your discussion board posts are, spelling and grammar will be taken into account in your grade on these posts. Posts should, on average, be around two (normal-sized) paragraphs in length.

“Most Challenged Leader” Assignment: Due via D2L, February 1 (Monday).

Question: Which chief executive of the 9 Topic-in-Countries cases is the most “challenged” leader, and why?

Partly because your textbook is not up-to-date with current leaders in our Topic-in-Countries cases, you will answer the question above by writing a short (400-500 words, Times New Roman 12 pt. font) argument about one of the leaders of the countries we are focusing on most closely this semester. Explain why that leader is the most challenged chief executive of the nine TIC cases. In your answer, consider the difficulties facing that leader that require government response, the social, economic and political structures in which this individual must lead, and any aspects of his or her background or leadership style that contribute to these challenges.

Policy Memo Assignment: Due via D2L, April 8 (Friday).

Question: What country should we study in Week 14, and why?

In around 1,500 words (Times New Roman 12 pt. font), answer the question above by writing a “policy memo.” Descriptions of the approach to writing and the typical content of policy memos can be found at the following sites:

http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/files/memo-writing.pdf
https://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/files/writing.pdf

In your memo, you will make a recommendation regarding which one of the countries we should study in Week 14 from the list of countries on the following page. As the links above indicate, there is a not a single, universally accepted format for policy memos. In general, however, they should include a “To/From/Subject/Date” heading; a summary (often call the Executive Summary); an introduction/background section, in which the background discussion is very short or skipped entirely; a discussion/options section – in this case comparing two of the countries from the list – which highlights advantages/disadvantages of each option; and a recommendation section. If you have room, you could include a short conclusion following the recommendation section, though many policy memos stop with the recommendation.

As you choose which two countries to discuss and which one to recommend, consider the topics that we have discussed in the course. How will your country help us to understand better one or more of the concepts
and issues we have examined? Does it fill a void, providing an example of something important that the other countries we are looking at do not?

While it will be tempting to do so, do not describe the countries’ basic histories in your memo. Cover only the history, events, or facts about the countries that you need to make your points about which country we should study. Remember, I want to know why you believe that I and your fellow classmates should spend a week studying the country you choose, and simply having some interesting events in its history will not distinguish it from other potential countries we could study.

The majority of the grade on this assignment will be the effectiveness of the memo in convincing me that “your” country is the best one to study. Thus, your argument matters a great deal, spelling and grammar matter quite a lot, and the looks of your memo matter only a bit. Although it is common to use bullet point formatting in memos, they are best reserved for specific lists within the memo rather than for the entire memo’s text.

Plagiarism is not acceptable in any form. Direct quotations must be in quotation marks, and you should use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations for sources from which you have borrowed any ideas. We will discuss this more in class. While short and in “memo” form, this is a research project. I expect you to find current information about the countries. You should look not only at news magazines like The Economist but also at academic journals that may carry articles on your country. Also, you can (and should) use the readings from class where appropriate.

A References list should be included as an additional page of the memo. This page will not be included in the word count. It is reasonable to have at least 10 sources that you actually reference in the memo.

Possible Countries for the Policy Memo Assignment

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Bahrain
- Belize
- Benin
- Bhutan
- Botswana
- Brunei
- Burundi
- Cabo Verde
- Comoros
- Djibouti
- Dominica
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Grenada
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Guyana
- Kiribati
- Lao PDR
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Maldives
- Marshall Islands
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Namibia
- Nauru
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and Grenadines
- Samoa
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Senegal
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Solomon Islands
- Suriname
- Swaziland
- Togo
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Tunisia
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu