

## Introduction to Comparative Political Systems

Fall 2009

46. 112 201

MWF 1-1:50 PM

Office Hours: by appointment

South Campus, Coburn 109

Ike Sharpless

(617) 913-4969 (cell)

[ikesharpless@gmail.com](mailto:ikesharpless@gmail.com)

**Course Description:** This course introduces the basic theoretical and geopolitical frameworks necessary to understand comparative politics. The course will be front-loaded with a focus on preparing students for the midterm exam. This course is *not* designated as an introduction to American politics and will thus not focus on U.S. electoral or political systems – I am happy to provide an introduction to American political systems if necessary, but will otherwise assume knowledge of the basic tenets of the American political system. The articles assigned are intended as discussion pieces and by no means reflect my personal ideology – constructive disagreement is welcomed. I strongly recommend that you read a relevant news source like *The Economist* or *Financial Times* on a regular basis in order to contribute to your weekly discussion assignments.

### Course wiki

The website for this course is [ikesharpless.pbworks.com](http://ikesharpless.pbworks.com).

### Required Texts

You must have each of the following texts in class every day as required. The first three texts are available at the bookstore, but you should buy the Brown text online.

- Farrell, David M. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. 2001. ISBN 10 – 0333801628.
- Kesselman, Mark, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph, eds. *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. 2009. ISBN 13 - 978-0-54721629-4.
  - Note: you need to buy the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of this book; although it is annoyingly expensive, timeliness is crucial in a course of this nature. The *brief edition* of this text is also unacceptable for our purposes, although the preview available on Google Books may be useful if you're waiting for the text in the mail.
- Kesselman, Mark and Joel Krieger. *Readings in Comparative Politics*. 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0-618426256.
- Bernard E. Brown's *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings*, ISBN 10- 0-155078852. (which can be purchased from [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for as little as \$4, shipping included.)

### Recommended Texts

We will not be reading any of the following books in their entirety this semester. Rather, this is the approved list of texts you will select from to write your longer paper. I own a copy of each, and will bring them to class for circulation and to discuss their relative merits and difficulty level. If you would like to write your longer paper on one or more texts not included in the list below, ask me well in advance.

- Barber, Benjamin R. *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*

- Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*
- Moore, Barrington. *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*
- Rawls, John. *The Law of Peoples*
- De Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*

### **Grading**

If you have any questions about whether and how a specific action will affect your grade—or about specific learning disabilities or religious holiday observance, etc.—please contact me (preferably via email or directly before/after class).

Grading Scale: On all assignments the grading scale is as follows: A 4.0 (94 and above), A- 3.7 (90 to 93), B+ 3.3 (87 to 89), B 3.0 (83 to 86), B- 2.7 (80 to 82), C+ 2.3 (77 to 79), C 2.0 (73 to 76), C- 1.7 (70 to 72) D+ 1.3 (67 to 69), D 1.0 (63-66) and F (62 and below).

- short paper (15%)
  - if you are unsatisfied with the grade on your first short paper, you can rewrite it (or write a paper on an approved topic of your choosing) and I will average the two grades. If the rewritten paper receives a lower grade than the original, I will ignore it. I will be glad to work with students on individual rewrites.
- midterm exam (25%)
- 3 geography quizzes (15%)
- Book review/critique (25%)
  - If the book critique is submitted with enough time for me to examine it, I will be glad to grade a rewrite and average the score of the original and the rewrite.
- Attendance (variable, as much as -20%)
  - I will circulate an attendance sheet during each class. One unexcused absence throughout the semester will be excused, but each additional unexcused absence will lower your grade by a third of a letter.
- Participation (20%)
  - Half of this grade will come from students uploading relevant print or internet media to the pbworks website by Thursday night for group discussion every Friday. Much of each Friday's assignments, and most of the grade for these submissions, will come from reading and commenting on each other's submissions.
  - The other half of this grade will be based on actual participation in class
- (optional) extra credit assignment (5-10%, based on assignment)

### **Note on Grading Papers and Late Submissions**

I will subtract points for spelling and grammatical errors – be sure to check your work carefully before submitting it; you can rewrite papers if you are dissatisfied with your grade. I will also dock your assignment grade by a third of a letter grade for every unexcused class day a paper is overdue.

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, refer first to the U. Mass Lowell Undergraduate Catalogue under ‘Academic Integrity’. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by email, phone, or in person. I would much prefer to clarify a small confusion than to be forced to give you a failing grade in the class.

### Citation Policy

Use whichever standard citation format works for you, but use the same format throughout your work and be sure that all relevant information is included. If possible, include a web citation in addition to—but not instead of—a text citation. While useful for in-class queries and quick references, Wikipedia is not a valid citation source.

### Technology Policy

I welcome you to bring your laptops to class, but only to enrich class discussion with online research and to take (hopefully quiet) notes. I fully endorse the use of ‘Web 2.0’ applications, but only if they are relevant to the material at hand. Outside of the classroom, you are welcome to use such sites as [www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com) to locate your weekly media sources. If you do so, feel free to add me as a friend at [surllyotter.stumbleupon.com](http://surllyotter.stumbleupon.com) for greater ease of online communication. Accessing Facebook, etc. is strictly forbidden while in class, and any violations beyond the first will be subject to the docking of a third of a letter grade.

In addition to the obvious quick searches available online via Wikipedia and Google, the following are all useful **online reference sources** for use both in class and at home. I will provide additional links to videos and news sources throughout the semester; the sources below are intended as general references and as a starting point for Friday assignments.

### News Media –

- [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com)
- [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)
- [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)
- [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)
- [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)
- <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/>
- [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)
- <http://www.newser.com/>
- <http://www.odemagazine.com/>
- <http://www.newyorker.com/>
- <http://www.onpointradio.org/>
- <http://www.tnr.com/>
- [www.harpers.org](http://www.harpers.org)
- [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)
- <http://newstimeline.googlelabs.com/>
- <http://english.aljazeera.net/>
- <http://www.newsvine.com/>
- <http://mondediplo.com/>
- [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)
- [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)

### University Webcasts

- <http://webcast.berkeley.edu/>
- <http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/web/home/home/index.htm>

### Blogs –

- <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/>
- <http://opiniojuris.org/>
- ‘top 50 foreign policy blogs’, <http://www.mastersincriminaljustice.com/blog/2009/top-50-foreign-policy-blogs/>
- <http://eulaw.typepad.com/>
- <http://balkin.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.chinalawblog.com/>
- <http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/>
- <http://www.undispatch.com/>
- <http://whirledview.typepad.com/whirledview/>
- <http://washingtonbureau.typepad.com/china/>
- <http://www.globalissues.org/>

### International

- ‘Policy research from leading think tanks worldwide’, <http://www.policypointers.org/>
- <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/>
- <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/>

### Online Videos –

- FRONTLINE: “Inside the Meltdown” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/meltdown/view/>
- The Bill Moyers Journal, <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/index-flash.html>
- “Commanding Heights: the Battle for the World Economy”, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/>
- <http://www.witness.org/>
- TV from around the world, <http://delicast.com/tv/>

### Useful map quiz study site (see also: GeoTap app for Iphone and Ipod Touch) –

- <http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/>

## Course Outline

**\*nota bene – reading assignments are subject to revision anytime up to the class prior to their assignment. If you miss a class, be sure to verify the next day’s readings\***

**Wed. Sept 2 – introductions and class policies**

**Fri. Sept 4 – Understanding comparative politics and electoral systems**

- Farrell, ch. 1
- ICP, ch. 1

### **Module I: Comparative Politics in Western Europe**

**Wed., Sept. 9 – Britain and Political Performance**

- ICP, ch. 2 (Britain), sections 1, 2 (skim if necessary), 5

**Fri., Sept. 11 – Britain and the Single Member Plurality System**

- Farrell, ch. 2 (Single Member Plurality Systems)
- ICP, ch. 2 (Britain), sections 3-4

**Mon., Sept. 14 – The End of History and History Reborn**

- RCP
  - Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, pp. 10-17
  - Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, pp. 18-31

**Wed., Sept. 16 – The Question of Democratization**

- RCP
  - Robert Dahl, “Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition”, pp. 154-159
  - Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value”, pp. 171-180

**Fri., Sept. 18 – Current Events Assignment and Short Paper Discussion**

- Current events assignment (pertaining to material to date)

**Mon., Sept. 21 – France and the Majoritarian System**

- ICP, ch. 3 (France), sections 1, 2 (skim if necessary), 5
- Arend Lijphart, “Majoritarian versus Consensual Democracy” (in Brown, pp. 175-184)

**Wed., Sept. 23 – France and the Majoritarian System, day 2**

- Farrell, ch. 3 (Majoritarian Electoral Systems)
- ICP, ch. 3 (France), sections 3-4
- RCP

- Alfred Stepan, with Cindy Skach, “Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism” (skim if necessary), pp. 284-292

**Fri., Sept. 25 –Map Quiz and Class Discussion**

- First Map Quiz – European Countries
- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Module II: The State System and Proportional Representation**

**Mon., Sept. 28 – States and Nations**

- Brown
  - Max Weber, “What is a State?”, pp. 146-150
  - Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In”, pp. 151-158

**Wed., Sept. 30 – States and Nations, day 2**

- RCP
  - Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”, pp. 43-52
  - Martin van Creveld, “the Fate of the State”, pp. 70-82
  - Saskia Sassen, “The State and Globalization”, pp. 89-95

**Fri., Oct. 2 – Current Events Assignment and Recap to Date**

- Short paper due
- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Mon., Oct. 5 – Brazil**

- ICP, ch. 9 (Brazil), sections 1, 2, 5

**Wed., Oct. 7 – Brazil and the List System of Proportional Representation**

- Farrell, ch. 4 (The List System of Proportional Representation)
- ICP, ch. 9 (Brazil), sections 3-4

**Fri., Oct. 9 – Rapid Overview of Mixed Systems**

- Farrell, ch. 5 (Mixed Electoral Systems)
- ICP, ch. 4 (Germany), section 4 (skim if necessary; primarily for context)
- Study guide for midterm exam provided and discussed

**Wed., Oct. 14 – Prep for Midterm**

**Fri., Oct. 16 – Midterm Exam**

**Module III: Civil Society, Protest, and the Case of Nigeria**

**Mon., Oct. 19 – The Civil Society**

- RCP

- Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”, pp. 365-376
- Sidney Tarrow, “A Movement Society?”, pp. 353-365

**Wed., Oct. 21 – Revolution and Protest**

- Brown
  - Alain Touraine, “Social Transformations of the Twentieth Century”, pp. 111-116
  - Francois Furet, “Democracy, Utopia and Revolution”, pp. 123-134

**Fri., Oct. 23 – Review of civil society / revolution and protest**

- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Mon., Oct. 26 – Focus on: Nigeria**

- ICP, ch. 8, sections 1, 2, 5

**Wed., Oct. 28 – Nigeria, day 2**

- Wed., Oct. 28 – ICP, ch. 8, sections 3-4

**Fri., Oct. 30 – Map Quiz and Discussion**

- Second Map Quiz: African Countries
- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Module IV: Focus on Asia**

**Mon., Nov. 2 – China**

- ICP, ch. 13 (China), sections 1, 2, 5

**Wed., Nov. 4 – China, day 2**

- ICP, ch. 13 (China), sections 3-4
- Arthur Waldron, “The End of Communism in China” (in Brown, pp. 216-221)

**Fri., Nov. 6 – Focus on China in current affairs**

- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Mon., Nov. 9 – India**

- ICP, ch. 6 (India), sections 1, 2, 5
- Karl Marx, “British Rule in India” (in Brown, pp. 64-65)

**Fri., Nov. 13 – India, day 2**

- ICP, ch. 6 (India), sections 3-4
- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

**Mon., Nov. 16 – Iran**

- ICP, ch. 12 (Iran)

Wed., Nov. 18 –

- ICP spillover
- Bernard Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy” (in Brown, pp. 238-246)
- RCP
  - Vali Nasr, “Lessons from the Muslim World”, pp. 276-281

Fri., Nov. 20 – Map Quiz and current events

- Third map quiz: Asia
- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

## Module V: Revisiting Electoral Systems in a Globalizing World

Mon., Nov. 23 – Final Focus on: Electoral Systems

- Book Critique Topic and Bare-Bones Outline Due
- Farrell, chs. 7-8

Wed., Nov. 25 – Electoral Reform in British Columbia

- “Making Every Vote Count: the Case for Electoral Reform in British Columbia”, available at <http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public>
- HKS Student PowerPoint on British Columbia, available on the course documents page

Mon., Nov. 30 – Presidential vs. Parliamentary Democracy

- Brown
  - Juan J. Linz, “The Perils of Presidentialism”, pp. 342-352
  - Donald L. Horowitz, “Comparing Democratic Institutions”, pp. 352-355

Wed., Dec. 2 – Special Session on Topic Selected by Discussion

Fri., Dec. 4 – Book Critique Discussion/Workshop and Current Events Assignment

- Current events assignment (pertaining to material since last assignment)

Mon., Dec. 7 – Globalization

- Selected passages from “Commanding Heights: the Battle for the World Economy”, available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/>. I recommend that you order this film in advance on Netflix (the screen on PBS annoyingly won’t go to full screen). It is six hours long, and although I will only be assigning select passages, the whole film is very useful to watch.

Wed., Dec. 9 – Globalization, day 2

- RCP
  - Joseph Stiglitz, “Globalization’s Discontents”, pp. 140-152



- Fareed Zakaria, “The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad”, pp. 376-385

**Fri., Dec. 11 – Globalization, day 3**

- Current events assignment (pertaining to globalization)

**Monday, Dec. 14 – left empty for course recap and catching up**

**Tues., Dec. 22 – Book Review/Critique**