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# Introduction to Comparative Politics

## POLI 2053

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### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Jonathan C. Nickens  
Office: 320 Stubbs Halls  
Email: jnicke8@lsu.edu  
Office Hours: M 11:30a-12:30p  
or by appointment

### COURSE INFORMATION

Louisiana State University  
Fall 2021  
Section 003  
212 Coates Hall  
MWF 12:30p-1:20p

### Course Overview

#### *Course Description*

This course provides a university-level introduction to comparative politics by addressing broad themes related to domestic politics and types of governments in countries around the world. Specific topics include modern state formation, variation in regime type, electoral systems and their effects, as well as other core topics & concerns of the sub-field. In addition, attention will be given toward theories relating to political violence & civil conflicts, and lesser developed countries. While comparative politics covers a wide-ranging area of study, this course is designed to provide the student with a firm grasp and understanding of the sub-field's fundamental issues, while also surveying several other important and emerging topics. Additionally, the course also features detailed examinations of case studies relating to individual countries in order to discuss how theories work and evolve in practice.

#### *LSU Learning Competency Statement for the Social Sciences*

LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

### Required Reading

1) The textbook listed below is required for this course. It can be found at university and area bookstores. The textbook is also available online for purchase at various online bookstores and websites. Required readings from the textbook are listed in the **Lecture Topics** section of this syllabus.

Newton, Kenneth and Jan W. van Deth (2016). Foundations of Comparative Politics: Democracies of the Modern World, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cambridge University Press

2) Several topics and class meetings for this course will require additional or alternate readings not found in the textbook. These materials are listed in the **Lecture Topics** section of this syllabus, and will be uploaded to the course Moodle site in .pdf format for download. It is the student's responsibility to access and read the appropriate materials for the assigned class period. If the documents are unavailable or cannot be accessed for any reason, inform the instructor so that technical issues can be corrected/modified.

3) Students will also be required to read select news articles provided by the instructor. See 'Graded Items' → 'Quizzes' below for more information.

## **Graded Items**

### *Composition of Course Grade*

Scores for each graded item will be based on a range of 0-100, and weighted according to the table below.

<b>Graded Item</b>	
Attendance	10%
Quizzes (3 x 5%)	15%
Exam # 1	25%
Exam # 2	25%
Exam # 3 (Final Exam)	25%

### *Attendance*

Attendance is mandatory in this course, and student roll will be taken at several different class meetings, at the discretion of the instructor. Since this particular class is large in size, roll may be taken at rotating intervals or by other methods devised by the instructor. This policy is in conjunction with a University-wide effort to bolster student attendance, as research has shown that students who attend class regularly have improved performance scores. Attendance scores are based on 100 total points. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence before it affects their attendance score. After one unexcused absence, your attendance score drops 20 points for each following unexcused absence. See table below:

<b>Unexcused Absences</b>	<b>Attendance Score</b>
1 or less	100
2	80
3	60
4	40
5	20
6 or more	0

### *Quizzes (3)*

Students will take three in-class quizzes on dates noted by the instructor in the **Course Calendar**. Content for quizzes will be taken from news articles selected by your instructor and posted on Moodle. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions. You will need a small scantron for quizzes.

### Exams (3)

Content for exams are taken from in-class lectures and assigned readings (textbook chapters & other chapter readings). The format for exams will be multiple choice. The exams are non-cumulative.

#### -Exam #1-

This exam will test for content covered during the first third of the course. The format for this exam will be multiple choice. Exam #1 will be administered in-class on **September 24, 2021**. You will need a small scantron for this exam.

#### -Exam #2-

This exam will test for content covered during the middle third of the course. The format for this exam will be multiple choice. Exam #1 will be administered in-class on **October 29, 2021**. You will need a small scantron for this exam.

#### -Final Exam-

This exam will test for content covered during the final third of the course. This exam is not cumulative. The format for this exam will be multiple choice. The Final Exam will be administered on **December 7, (Tue) from 12:30pm – 2:30pm**. The location for the Final Exam will be the normal classroom. You will need a small scantron for this exam.\*

\*Note: The Final Exam date and time is set by the University and cannot be moved, modified, or made-up, unless qualifying circumstances are met and approved by the HSS Dean's Office.

### Grade Calculation

A graded item is an exam, quiz, attendance, etc. Each graded item is based on a 100 point total (0-100). Your score for each graded item is the number of points received. Final grades for students will be calculated by multiplying their score for each graded item times (x) the weighted percentage for each graded item. The weighted graded items are then added together and a final grade given based on 100 point totals.

### ***SAMPLE FOR FINAL GRADE***

<b>Graded Item</b>	<b>% of Grade (Weight)</b>	<b>Score (Example)</b>	
Attendance	10%	90	9
Quizzes (3 x 5%)	15%	80 (avg).	12
Exam #1	25%	95	23.75
Exam #2	25%	83	20.75
Final Exam	25%	89	22.25
<b>FINAL GRADE</b>			<b>87.75 B+</b>

## **Grading Policies**

### *Absences, Missed Exams and Make-ups*

Allowance for the excusing of missed class and make-ups of missed exams & quizzes will be in accordance with University policy, which outlines valid reasons for such occurrences. Valid reasons include, but are not limited to, serious illness, death in the immediate family, religious observances, and scheduled trips for academic & athletic purposes. Proper documentation is required for any excused absence or missed examination period. If possible, let the instructor know before missing class. If you miss a class lecture, feel free to *occasionally* obtain notes from a classmate (see below for what constitutes academic dishonesty, as you cannot access notes from websites, email chains, etc.) You can then ask me specific questions concerning the material, but I cannot provide you with notes or presentation slides.

If you miss a quiz or exam, contact the instructor immediately so that the situation can be evaluated and arrangements made, if applicable. If you have documentation that notes your excused absence, **email me** a scanned version or photo of the document. In cases where make-ups are allowed, you will be given an alternate quiz/make-up exam different from the in-class version to ensure academic integrity. Note that the Final Exam schedule is set by the University and cannot be amended, meaning that make-ups are not allowed for this exam and you cannot take the exam at any other time/date (without official approval from the Dean's Office). For complete information on the University's attendance and exam make-up policy, see the Regulations section of the LSU General Catalog.

### *General Grading Policy*

Grades are based on the academic performance of the student, as it pertains to assigned coursework and examinations, and in accordance to the grading scale, weighting, and policies listed in this syllabus. Any questions or concerns about graded work are welcome, and should be directed toward the instructor in-person during office hours or by appointment.

### *Grading Scale*

Grading for this course will be consistent with the plus/minus grading scale adopted by the University, and as outlined in the LSU General Catalog.

Letter grade	Score				
A+	100-97.00	A	96.99-94.00	A-	93.99-90.00
B+	89.99-87.00	B	86.99-84.00	B-	83.99-80.00
C+	79.99-77.00	C	76.99-74.00	C-	73.99-70.00
D+	69.99-67.00	D	66.99-64.00	D-	63.99-60.00
F	<60				

## **Course Policies & Expectations**

### *Note on Participation and Preparation*

Students are expected to come to class on-time, prepared and ready to engage in material comprehension, as well as ready to participate (if applicable) in classroom discussions concerning the week's topics. Students should frequently check the course Moodle page in order to access additional readings or supplemental materials posted by the instructor at an on-going basis.

### *Diversity*

Diversity is fundamental to LSU's mission and the University is committed to creating and maintaining a living and learning environment that embraces individual difference. Cultural inclusion is of highest priority.

### *Special Accommodations*

LSU is committed to providing adequate accommodations to all students with documented and approved disabilities. As per University policy, special accommodations approved by LSU Disability Services will be incorporated into individual student learning, and will remain confidential. Eligible students should contact Disability Services (115 Johnson Hall, 225-578-5919), so that official approval can be processed. Eligible students should notify the instructor as soon as possible and provide official documentation.

### *General Statement on Academic Integrity*

Louisiana State University adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth guidelines for student behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community.

Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Advocacy and Accountability. For undergraduate students, a first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. For a second academic violation, the result could be suspension from LSU. For graduate students, suspension is the appropriate outcome for the first offense.

Note that academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) viewing other students' answers during quizzes/exams, accessing & viewing testing materials from previous courses or previous semesters, sharing notes through group email chains, note swapping websites, et cetera. I have no problem with you obtaining notes from an individual classmate on an occasional basis when you miss class. But this must not be on a regularly recurring basis and may not be done through any type of collective group effort (exceptions are made for students with appropriate and documented Special Accommodations).

### *Plagiarism*

Students will refrain from plagiarizing the academic property of others and to utilize appropriate citation method for all coursework. For this course, it is recommended that you use the APSA citation style. Ignorance of the citation method is not an excuse for academic misconduct. Remember there is a difference between paraphrasing and quoting, and how to properly cite each respectively.

### *Technology Use*

Laptop use in class is for note-taking, research purposes and academic-centered use. This privilege is contingently permitted, but may be rescinded at any time. It is an obvious concern that laptop use is a distraction to students during lectures, and I encourage you to keep electronic use to a minimum. Sustained abuse of laptop privileges may result in punitive adjustments to a student's participation grade when it becomes apparent to the instructor that technology is being used for purposes other than academic learning. Cell phone use is not allowed and should be avoided. Likewise, use of other technological devices is prohibited, unless approved by the instructor. Students may not record lectures or class discussions using any type of electronic device. Concerns related to this or any policy listed above should be discussed with the

instructor, as amicable modifications will be based on genuine needs of the student, as it relates to learning in a university environment.

### *Communication and Conduct*

All communication with the instructor and all written work should be prepared using formal, standard language. In other words, do not use “texting” language or other abbreviated jargon to communicate your thoughts and ideas for this class.

Additionally, all students are required to conduct themselves appropriately at all times and in a professional, courteous manner. This means it is necessary for you to treat others with respect and courtesy. Talking while the instructor or another student is talking will not be tolerated. Conduct that is disruptive and/or not respectful of an academic environment will also not be tolerated. Severe violation of these guidelines will be reported to the LSU Office for the Dean of Students.

### *General Statements*

If in doubt about any policy, requirement, or content-related matter, please contact the instructor. Also, it would greatly benefit students to read and become familiar with the LSU General Catalog. This catalog contains the official policies and regulations of the University. I am more than willing to provide additional information or explanation to questions related to course content posed by students. Questions or concerns may be addressed in-class, through email, in-person during office hours, or by appointment. I will respond to emails within a timely manner, but allow up to 24 hours for responses. I am also available to meet before/after class to discuss questions or concerns.

LSU provides each student with a University-affiliated email (ex. [jsmith4@lsu.edu](mailto:jsmith4@lsu.edu)) which you should have already activated and currently use. If you have not activated your University email account, you should do so immediately, as all course communication will be sent to this email address.

### *Covid-19 Protocols & Student Learning*

It is the individual’s right to decide what is best for them. However, LSU strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Visit [www.lsu.edu/roadmap/vaccines/](http://www.lsu.edu/roadmap/vaccines/) to learn how to get vaccinated on campus. Vaccination helps keep our campus community safe, helps protect those among us who are most vulnerable to COVID-19, and is our path back to more normal operations and the full college experience that our students deserve.

For the Fall 2021 semester, LSU has decided to return to on-campus learning. Note that if the university approves a return to remote learning, the instructor may transition the course to an online class. I will provide a detailed and thorough plan if this were to be the case.

### *Integrated Learning*

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students’ practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of Social/Behavioral Sciences and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of Global Learning.

### *Class Structure & A Few Words*

Being an introductory course, class structure is primarily lecture-based. In addition, students are required to independently read assigned materials noted in the syllabus. Content for examinations will be taken from in-class lectures and assigned readings (excluding news articles, as these are only used for quizzes). Students who are not completing the assigned readings are not obtaining all of the information needed for examinations, as the assigned readings may include topics/concepts not covered in class. Also, this course involves some student-involved discussion, but such discussion is not grade and is designed to supplement and reinforce lecture theories and topics.

**Check your email, check the course Moodle page, and check the Course Calendar (see below) on a regular basis. Be proactive!**

The instructor reserves the right to amend any of the policies, requirements, or statements pertaining to this course/syllabus. Any modification of the syllabus or class schedule (for unexpected events such as emergencies, extenuating circumstances, etc.) will be conveyed to student either in-class or via email, with as much advance notice as reasonably possible.

There are two appendices to this syllabus:

- 1) **Lecture Topics**, which provides topical information that is to be discussed during the course, along with assigned reading chapters. It is your responsibility to keep up with where we are in terms of topics and lecture material.
- 2) **Course Calendar**, which list the dates for: class meetings, exams & quizzes, university holidays, and other notations needed by the student.

Have a great semester and Geaux Tigers.

## **LECTURE TOPICS**

**(in order of class discussion)**

- Lecture 1      Comparative Politics: An Introduction**  
Required Reading: Lim 2016 (pp. 1-13)
- Lecture 2      The Modern State**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 1 (pp. 15-24)
- Lecture 3      Regime Types: Democracies & Autocracies**  
Required Reading: Siaroff 2005, Chapter 3
- Lecture 4      Constitutions**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 4 (pp. 75-85)  
Ginsburg & Simpser 2014 (pp. 1-24)
- Lecture 5      Presidential & Parliamentary Systems**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 5
- Lecture 6      Autocracies: Varieties of Autocratic Rule**  
Required Reading: Siaroff 2005, Chapter 8
- Lecture 7      Electoral Systems, Party Systems & Voters**  
Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 13 (pp. 273-274; 280-285)  
Textbook, Chapter 12 (pp. 251-256, including Briefing 12.1)
- Lecture 8      Political Violence and Civil War**  
Required Reading: Moro 2017
- Lecture 9      Political Violence and Civil War: Northern Ireland Case Study**  
Required Reading: Fitzduff and O'Hagan 2009
- Lecture 10     Autocracies: Institutions and Current Trends**  
Required Reading: Walker 2015
- Lecture 11     Comparative Political Economy**  
Required Reading: Barrington et al. 2018



**Lecture 12    Less Industrialized States & Failed States**

Required Reading: Wood 2008

**Lecture 13    Communism and Politics: Transitions from Autocracy to Democracy**

Required Reading: *To Be Determined*

**Lecture 14    Looking Toward The Future: Regime Types**

Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 17

**Lecture 15    Collective Action: Individuals and Mass Movements**

Required Reading: Textbook, Chapter 10

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## COURSE CALENDAR

DATE	CLASS TYPE	GRADED ITEM/SPECIAL
Aug 23	Syllabus / Course Outline	First Class Meeting
Aug 25	Lecture	-
Aug 27	Lecture	-
Aug 30	Lecture	-
Sept 1	Lecture	-
Sept 3	Lecture	-
Sept 6	*No Class*	Labor Day
Sept 8	Lecture	-
Sept 10	Lecture	Quiz #1
Sept 13	Lecture	-
Sept 15	<i>*Lecture Tentative*</i>	Academic conference (see Instructor)
Sept 17	<i>*Lecture Tentative*</i>	Academic conference (see Instructor)
Sept 20	Lecture	-
Sept 22	Lecture	-
Sept 24	Examination Period	Exam #1
Sept 27	Lecture	-
Sept 29	Lecture	-
Oct 1	Lecture	-

Oct 4	Lecture	-
Oct 6	Lecture	-
Oct 8	Lecture	Quiz #2
Oct 11	Lecture	-
Oct 13	Lecture	-
Oct 15	Lecture	-
Oct 18	Lecture	-
Oct 20	Lecture	-
Oct 22	*No Class*	Fall Holiday
Oct 25	Lecture	-
Oct 27	Lecture	-
Oct 29	Lecture	Exam #2
Nov 1	Lecture	-
Nov 3	Lecture	-
Nov 5	Lecture	-
Nov 8	Lecture	-
Nov 10	Lecture	-
Nov 12	Lecture	Quiz #3
Nov 15	Lecture	-
Nov 17	Lecture	-
Nov 19	Lecture	-

Nov 22	Lecture	-
Nov 24	*No Class*	Thanksgiving
Nov 26	*No Class*	Thanksgiving
Nov 29	Lecture	-
Dec 1	Lecture	-
Dec 3	Lecture	Last class meeting
Dec 7 (Tue.)	Examination Period	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> 12:30pm - 2:30pm