

***Political Science 260: Introduction to Comparative Politics***  
***Section #1***  
***Northern Illinois University***  
***Fall 2009***

Instructor: Joseph Scanlon  
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Class Hours: TTH 8:00am-9:15am  
Class location: DuSable 459  
Office Hours: T 10:00am-11:30am, Th 10:00am-11:30am (and by appointment)  
Office Location: DuSable 461

**Course Objectives:**

Welcome to POLS 260! The objective of this course is to provide students with a foundation for studying politics and government through a comparative perspective. This means that students will be introduced to the essential concepts and theories of comparative politics, as well as several different political systems. Politics and government often differ greatly between states, and sometimes even within states. The way people behave and understand the role of government differs everywhere, and even those political systems given the same label tend to function differently from one country to the next. For example, the institutions of democracy in one country may operate differently than that of the institutions of democracy in another country. This could mean different electoral systems, or a different arrangement of any of the “branches of government.”

In this course, students will learn the importance of history, the key institutions, the impact of culture, and the prominent social, political, or economic issues for Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Russia, China, Mexico, Nigeria, and India. Through the study of these eight countries, students will learn to speak generally about the roles of politics and government, the strengths and weaknesses of various types of political systems, and will also gain a better understanding of how their own government works.

**Required Text:**

Michael Roskin, Countries and Concepts: Politics, Geography, Culture 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Longman, 2009).

If other required readings appear on the syllabus, it is noted where these readings can be accessed.

**Required Coursework:**

Attendance: 25 points  
Quizzes: 20 points (2 x 10 points each)  
Country comparison paper: 80 points  
Exam #1: 80 points  
Exam #2: 80 points  
Final Exam: 100 points  
Total points available for this class: 385

**Grading scale** (number of points achieved out of total points available):

90-100% = A  
80-89% = B  
70-79% = C  
60-69% = D  
00-59% = F

## **Important Dates:**

9/15 – Quiz #1  
9/29 – Quiz #2  
10/13 – Exam #1  
11/10 – Exam #2  
11/24 – Country comparison papers due  
12/10 – In-class final exam

## **Explanation of required coursework:**

1. There is a maximum of 25 Attendance points possible in this class. Between 9/1 and 12/3, there will be 25 meetings in which attendance will be officially taken. For each unexcused absence, the instructor will deduct one point from the 25 maximum points.
2. Students will take two quizzes over the course of the semester. Quizzes will be a mix of multiple choice and true and false.
3. The country comparison paper is a 4-5 page paper and requires students to compare either a single key institution between two countries or a specific element of political culture between two countries. The countries selected for the paper must be among those studied in class. The objective of this paper is to allow students the opportunity to directly apply what they have learned in class in the form of a paper. In order to fulfill this assignment, each student will be required to both submit a hardcopy to the instructor and upload the paper to Safe Assign. Additional information about the country comparison paper will be distributed in a separate handout.
4. Exams #1 and #2 will consist of 40 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each. The first exam will cover materials from the first day of instruction through the first review session, while the second exam will cover materials discussed after the first exam through the second review session.
5. The final exam will consist of 35 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each. Additionally, the final exam will also feature an essay component where each student is expected to answer two 15 point essay questions. The multiple choice portion of the final exam will cover only those materials discussed after exam #2. The essay portion of the final exam will be comprehensive in that students will have the opportunity to draw on any of the countries studied in class. Students will be given four potential essay questions in advance of the final exam, and will then select two of three essay questions appearing on the final exam.

## **Course Policies:**

1. Makeup exams and quizzes will only be given in the event of extraordinary circumstances. If such circumstances arise, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. As a means of maintaining fairness, the instructor reserves the right to request documentation to support an absence from an exam and/or quiz. If a student fails to notify the instructor of their absence, and fails to provide any sort of documentation upon request, a score of zero will be assigned for that exam and/or quiz.
2. Late papers will be accepted, but will be assessed a penalty of four points/five percent per day. This penalty will be waived in the case of extraordinary circumstances. The instructor reserves the right to request documentation to support late papers. Papers should be submitted directly to the instructor. Please request permission in advance if you will be unable to submit your paper directly to the instructor.
3. Students are expected to exercise proper etiquette in the classroom. Please adhere to the following rules:
  - Attempt to arrive to class on time. If you are late, do not disrupt other students while finding a seat. This usually means taking a seat with easy access.
  - If you must leave early, notify the instructor in advance and take a seat very near the exit as to minimize disruption.

- Do not walk in and out of classroom at will.
- Electronic devices should be silenced before class. If special circumstances dictate that an electronic device needs to be set to make noise, simply let the instructor know in advance.
- Do not talk while either the instructor is talking or other students are contributing to class discussion.
- Class discussion will remain respectful. Be mindful of your both your instructor and fellow students and abide by those expectations set forth by the University. In short, disagree but do not disparage.

4. Incomplete grades will be granted in the event of extraordinary circumstances preventing a student from completing the assigned coursework within the semester calendar. As a means of maintaining fairness, the instructor reserves the right to ask for documentation needed to support a request for an incomplete. Without documentation, the instructor reserves the right to not assign the incomplete grade.

5. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Regarding plagiarism, the NIU Undergraduate Catalog states that “students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging them. Students guilty of or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.” The above statement encompasses a paper written in whole or in part by another; a paper copied word-for-word or with only minor changes from another source; a paper copied in part from one or more sources without proper identification and acknowledgement of the sources; a paper that is merely a paraphrase of one or more sources, using ideas and/or logic without credit even though the actual words may be changed; and a paper that quotes, summarizes or paraphrases, or cuts and pastes words, phrases, or images from an Internet source without identification and the address of the web site. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid such an incident, please see this link:  
<http://polisci.niu.edu/polisci/audience/plagiarism.shtml>

6. In regards to religious observances, the University asks instructors to make students aware of the following policy. “Northern Illinois University as a public institution of higher education in the State of Illinois does not observe religious holidays. It is the university’s policy, however, to reasonably accommodate the religious observances of individual students in regards to admissions, class attendance, scheduling examinations and work requirements. Such policies shall be made known to faculty and students. Religious observance includes all aspects of religious observance and practice as well as belief. Absence from classes or examinations for religious observance does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. To request accommodation, students who expect to miss classes, examinations or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall provide instructors with reasonable notice of the date or dates they will be absent.” The instructor is respectful and fully supportive of students who wish to participate in religious observances. Excused absences will be provided, but students must understand and follow the above policy with respect to reasonable notice and making up work.

7. In regards to students with disabilities, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NIU is committed to making reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Those students with disabilities that may have some impact on their coursework for which they may require accommodations should notify the University’s Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR). CAAR will assist students in making appropriate accommodations with course instructors. It is important that CAAR and instructors be informed of disability-related needs during the first two weeks of the semester. The CAAR office is located on the 4th floor of the University Health Services building and its phone number is (815) 753-1303.

8. Through undergraduate writing awards, the Department of Political Science will recognize, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Winners are expected to attend the Department’s spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and \$50.00. Papers, which can be submitted by students or faculty, must be supplied in triplicate to a department secretary by February 28. All copies should have two cover pages – one with the student’s name and one without the student’s name. Only papers written in the previous calendar can be considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year’s competition even if the student has graduated.

9. Please consult the [Department of Political Science Web Site](#) on a regular basis. Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to <http://polisci.niu.edu>

10. Please take advantage of the [University Writing Center](#) located at Stevenson South, Tower B, Lower Level. The Writing Center is a great resource, and with their help, students can greatly enhance their academic experience at NIU. Good writing is an important part of any successful college career, and the Writing Center is there to help students improve their writing skills. The Writing Center is open from 800am-830pm, Monday through Thursday. Students can call (815) 753-6636 to make an appointment. Please visit <http://uwc.niu.edu/> for more information about what the Writing Center does and what you will need to bring for your appointment.

11. Extra credit is **not** available on an individual basis. However, extra credit opportunities may arise for the class as a whole.

**Semester Schedule** (please note that I reserve the right to adjust the semester schedule as needed):

Week #1

**Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics**

8/25 – Introduction to course

8/27 – Roskin, chapter 1 – The Concept of Country

Danièle Caramani, Comparative Politics, “Defining Democracy,” pp. 113-117 (Course Reserves)

Week #2

**Part II: The Developed Areas (Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia)**

9/1 – Roskin, chapter 2 – Britain: The Impact of the Past

9/3 – Roskin, chapter 3 – Britain: The Key Institutions

Week #3

9/8 – Roskin, chapter 4 – British Political Culture

9/10 – Roskin, chapters 5 & 6 – Britain: Patterns of Interaction & What Britons Quarrel About

Week #4

9/15 – **Quiz #1**

Roskin, chapter 7 – France: The Impact of the Past

9/17 – Roskin, chapter 8 – France: The Key Institutions

Week #5

9/22 – Roskin, chapter 9 – French Political Culture

9/24 – Roskin, chapters 10 & 11 – France: Patterns of Interaction & What French Quarrel About

Week #6

9/29 – **Quiz #2**

Roskin, chapter 12 – Germany: The Impact of the Past

10/1 – Roskin, chapter 13 – Germany: The Key Institutions

Week #7

10/6 – Roskin, chapter 18 – Japan (pp. 258-274, pp. 281-287, pp. 291-292)

William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder and Sona Nadenichek Golder, Principles of Comparative Politics, “Elections and Electoral Systems,” pp. 463-473 (Course Reserves)

10/8 – Exam #1 review session

Week #8

10/13 – **Exam #1**

10/15 – Roskin, chapter 19 – Russia: The Impact of the Past

Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy" *Foreign Affairs*, pp. 22-34 (BB)

Week #9

10/20 – Roskin, chapter 20 – Russia: The Key Institutions  
Zakaria continued, pp. 34-43

**Part III: The Developing Areas (China, India, Mexico, Nigeria)**

10/22 – Roskin, chapter 24 – China: The Impact of the Past

Week #10

10/27 – Roskin, chapter 25 – China: The Key Institutions  
John L. Thornton "Long Time Coming," *Foreign Affairs*, pp. 2-12 (BB)  
10/29 – Roskin, chapter 26 – Chinese Political Culture  
Thornton continued, pp. 12-22

Week #11

11/3 – Roskin, chapters 27 & 28 – China: Patterns of Interaction & What Chinese Quarrel About  
11/5 – Exam #2 review session

Week #12

11/10 – **Exam #2**  
11/12 – Roskin, chapter 30 – Mexico (pp. 477-493)

Week #13

11/17 – Roskin, chapter 30 – Mexico (pp. 493-509)  
11/19 – Roskin, chapter 31 – Nigeria (pp. 511-524)

Week #14

11/24 – **Country Comparison Papers Due**  
Roskin, chapter 31 – Nigeria (pp. 524-539)  
Thomas L. Friedman, "The First Law of Petropolitics," *Foreign Policy* (BB)  
11/26 – No class (Thanksgiving)

Week #15

12/1 – Roskin, chapter 29 – India (pp. 444-458)  
12/3 – Roskin, chapter 29 – India (pp. 458-474)

Week #16

12/10 – **Final Exam in class, 8:00am-9:50am**