

PolS 2: Comparative Politics

San José State University, Fall 2009

Kathryn L. Wood

Office: Clark Hall 406N
E-mail: kwood1@email.sjsu.edu
Phone: (408) 924-5569

Hours: Tuesdays (9/1 – 12/8), 3 to 5 pm
Wednesdays (10/28 – 12/2), 9:30 to 11am
Thursdays (9/3 – 10/22), Noon to 1:30 pm

Course Times and Place: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30–2:45 pm,
Hugh Gillis Hall 116

Course Description

University F2006 – Sp2008 Catalog Description:

Comparative analysis of different kinds of political systems; their political institutions, processes and policies; the environments in which they occur and their consequences.

As this course is part of the general education requirement for Comparative Systems, Cultures and Environments (D2), it is designed to ensure that students would learn how to compare and contrast two or more ethnic groups, cultures, regions, nations or social systems. To that end, this course will concern itself with the concepts involved in representing minority interests in modern democracies. We will be examining the nature of democracy and representation as general concepts, as well as the various specific forms they take in the world today. The countries that we will be discussing are India, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey, each of which has developed unique ways of giving the minorities of those countries political representation. The types of government that we will cover range from Presidential to Parliamentary, and we will explore the various the arrangements of representative selection, from First-Past-the-Post to simple Proportional Representation. By the end of the semester, students will be able to identify the political and electoral systems – both theoretical and actual – that are best at enfranchising the under-represented ethnic and social minorities.

Students will be responsible for all the reading and lecture notes, as well as participating regularly in class discussions. The instructor is aware that the vast majority of the students taking the course is not studying politics as a major, but rather as a graduation requirement. Therefore, the professional jargon will be kept to a minimum in an attempt to make the lectures interesting. However, you should keep in mind what might be boring you to tears could be utterly fascinating to others.

Students should take advantage of office hours to discuss in more depth concepts that are unclear, and especially for help understanding the concepts involved in the assignments.

Learning Objectives

1: *Identify and analyze the social dimension of society as a context for human life, the processes of social change and social continuity, the role of human agency in these processes, and the forces that engender social cohesion and fragmentation.* Students will explore the various models of political representation as they pertain to how political and electoral systems have been changed by states to create greater social cohesion across ethnic and social cleavages. The countries chosen for study in this course have experienced societal fragmentation driven by minority dissatisfaction with systems that have historically under- or dis-enfranchised those groups. Homework assignments geared toward examining how each state created greater representation opportunities for minorities will assist students in internalizing this learning objective. Further, the term paper will allow students to explore the various models of representation and choose the best system given the context of their simulated country for creating cohesion and minimizing further fragmentation. Lastly, the course midterm examination will test the internalization of the theoretical models of representation and their impact on cohesion and fragmentation.

2: *Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.* Students will explore how each state's contexts led to the political and electoral systems created. Emphasis will be made on how the various contexts played a role in any changes made to the modern system. Homework assignments geared to examining the changes made to a state's system and the ramifications of those changes will assist students in internalizing this learning objective.

3: *Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.* Students will be able to identify the interests of the various types of minorities – ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class – and the cultural, historical, and environmental causes for their demands to have their interests promoted by the political and electoral systems. The homework assignments will target student understanding of these concerns. The final examination will test the students' ability to identify those dynamics.

4: *Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.* Preparation for the term paper will engage the students in a negotiation process in which they will apply the general concepts and the practical knowledge gleaned from the course. Students will take on roles of various social and ethnic groups within a simulation country in order to come up with new political and electoral systems for which they will need to interact with representatives of other groups. Students will be encouraged to apply the experiences of real countries in order to assess how well a system would work for their simulated country.

5: *Compare and contrast two or more ethnic groups, cultures, regions, nations, or social systems.* This ability will be assessed with both the midterm and the final exam as students will be asked to compare and contrast theoretical and actual systems.

Students must fulfill a minimum writing requirement of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline of comparative politics. This will be easily covered by the homework and the term paper.

Exams and Assignments

Homework Assignments: There will be 8 assignments, each worth 5% of your final grade (for a total of 40%). The assignments are due on the dates listed in the course calendar. **NO** late assignments will be accepted. Only in very exceptional circumstances will assignments be accepted via the internet. Lack of printer access is not one of those circumstances. These assignments are based on the lectures and the readings; keep up with both to do well on the assignments.

These assignments were created to be completed in two pages (250-500 words), and no more. The essays that go over the two-page limit will be dinged in points. The reason for this is to teach students to be concise and avoid the “spray and pray” method of writing. Writing shall also be assessed for grammar, clarity, and coherence. Thus, 5 points will be given to work that is concise, well-written, and proves an understanding of the course material. Work that is good, but lacking in one of the above qualities, will be awarded 4 points. 3 points will be received for work that barely proves you might understand the material, and 2 points for work which shows that you are not putting in the required effort to understand the material. You will get at least 1 point if you just turn in a page with your name on it. Again, there will be no late assignments accepted, as there is plenty of time to work on each short assignment. For the sake of uniformity, the assignments must observe the following format: font, Times New Roman; size, 12; margins, one inch on all four sides; color, black ink; line spacing, double.

There will be a map quiz on **September 8** – you will be expected to find all the countries listed above, as well as Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Cuba, France, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Japan, Sudan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela (a total of 20 countries). This quiz is worth 5% of the course grade.

The midterm exam, which will be held after the general concepts of democracy and representation have been covered– on **October 8**, or when the class has developed enough of an understanding of the concepts to be tested – is worth 15% of the final grade distribution.

The final exam will encompass the seven countries covered in the second portion of the course. This exam is worth 20%. See below for information on the date and time for the final exam.

The remaining 20% of your course grade will be based on a term paper. This paper will involve active participation in a negotiation process, whereby each student will be assigned an ethnic/minority group to portray in a fictitious country and must negotiate for the best political and electoral systems to maximize that ethnic/minority group’s interests. This will require that students become fairly well versed in the advantages and disadvantages of the various processes and structures so as to not fall victim to other groups trying to maximize their own interests. The term paper will discuss the final agreed-upon electoral system and governmental structure. While the papers are written individually, the negotiation is a group effort. The assignment of the groups will occur in the 8th week of class, after the midterm exam; the information packet on the fictitious country will be handed out at that time. The term paper will be due Tuesday, **December 8**, the last day of class. As with the weekly assignments, this paper must observe the

following format: font, Times New Roman; size, 12; margins, one-inch on all four sides; color, black ink; line spacing, double.

Thus, the grade breakdown is as follows:

Homework:	40% (8 x 5%)
Map Quiz:	5%
Midterm:	15%
Term paper:	20%
Final:	20%

The course grade will not be on a curve, which is not as advantageous as some students believe, but rather ‘weighed’. This means that should the highest total grade in the class be less than 97%, that highest grade will be used to recalculate everyone’s grade as though it was at 97%. The following is an example of how this works: Ismael’s total points for the course is 76 and the highest total points earned by a student in the class is 92; the new “100%” would be 95 and Ismael’s grade is recalculated to be 80, thereby earning him a B- for the course.

Schedule for Final Exam

The final exam is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, **December 15 at 12:15 pm**. Only those students who present *excellent* reasons why they must reschedule their final exam, and do so no less than three weeks prior to the scheduled exam date as dictated by university rules (S06-4), will have consideration for alternative examination. Those same university rules dictate that no student should have to take more than two (2) final exams on the same day. As you must make your request in advance, it is to your advantage to assess as soon as possible when your finals for all your courses will be and make arrangements accordingly.

Reading Material

The reader should be online through the university library <<http://catalog.sjlibrary.org/search/p>>, with the exception of the Madison piece which is available at the weblink listed below. If you do not have access to the internet, or your access is irregular, please see me and we will arrange for you to get the readings another way. My reason for putting the readings online is so that you can obtain access to the materials at any time of the day, and the only cost to you is that of printing, should you choose to print them out. See the calendar below for the reading order.

Calendar

Week One: (August 25 / 27):

Informational Day – Syllabus and Q&A about the course.

August 27: **Furlough (personal) Class does not meet**

Week Two: (September 1 / 3)

James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10* <<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>>

Schmittter & Karl, “What Democracy Is ... And Is Not.” Journal of Democracy v2 n3, Summer 1991.

[9/3: *Last day to Drop*]

September 4: **Furlough (campus staff and personal)**

Week Three: (September 8 / 10) [9/11: *Last day to Add*]
Catt, “What Do We Mean by Democracy?” Democracy in Practice, 1999

*Map Quiz in class 9/8

*Homework #1 due 9/10: What is Democracy?

Week Four: (September 15 / 17)

Reilly, “Introduction: Democracies in Divided Societies” Democracies in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management, 2001

September 18: **Furlough (campus staff and personal)**

Week Five: (September 22 / 24)

September 22: **Furlough (all faculty) Class does not meet**

Blais & Massicotti “Electoral Systems”, in Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting, Le Duc, Neimi, & Norris, editors, 2002

*Homework#2 due 9/24: Does democracy heal or create cleavages in societies?

Week Six: (September 29 / October 1)

[detailed lecture on Proportional Representation – bring the Le Duc, et al. reading]

Week Seven: (October 6 / 8)

*Homework #3 Due 10/6: In general, is Plurality, Majoritarianism, or Proportional Representation electoral systems better for minority representation than the others?

October 7: **Furlough (personal)**

Midterm exam 10/8 – bring a **large** (Green) Blue Book

Week Eight: (October 13 / 15)

Barker, et al., “An Initial Assessment of the Consequences of MMP in New Zealand” in Mixed Member Electoral Systems, Shugart and Wattenberg, editors 2001

Term paper assignment of simulation countries and groups: 10/15

Week Nine: (October 20 / 22)

October 19: **Furlough (all faculty)**

Ansari, “Minorities and the Politics of Constitution Making in India” in Minority Identities and the Nation-State, Sheth & Mahajan, editors, 1999

*Homework #4 due 10/22: Why was changing the electoral system of New Zealand necessary?

Week Ten: (October 27 / 29)

Toprak, “Islam and Democracy in Turkey” Turkish Studies, 6:2 (June 2005); pp. 167 – 186

Optional: Arat, “Democracy and Women in Turkey” Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 6:3 (1999), pp. 370-387

Week Eleven: (November 3 / 5)

Hazan, "Israeli Mixed Electoral System: Unexpected Reciprocal and Cumulative Consequences" in Mixed Member Electoral Systems op.cit.

*Homework #5 due 11/5: Are Islam and Democracy mutually exclusive?

Week Twelve: (November 10 / 12)

[11/12: *Last day to Withdraw*]

Davenport, "Constitution Making" The Birth of a New South Africa 1998

November 13: **Furlough (campus staff and personal)**

Week Thirteen: (November 17 / 19)

Levy & Bruhn, "The Rise of Political Competition" Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development, 2001

Optional: Needler, "The Structure of Government" Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict, 1995; pp 81 – 90

*Homework #7 due 11/19: Comparing Israel and South Africa, is it better to have a small house of representatives or a large one?

Week Fourteen: (November 24 / 26)

Heywood, "The Electoral and Party Systems" The Government and Politics of Spain 1995

Last day to request an alternative final exam date: 11/24

November 25: **Furlough (personal)**

November 26: **Thanksgiving**

Week Fifteen: (December 1 / 3)

Complete Country Simulation: Final Negotiations

*Homework #8 due 12/3: Why is the liberal sectors of Spanish society considered under-represented?

Week Sixteen: (December 8)

Term paper due

Review for Final Exam

December 9: **Furlough (personal)**

Week Seventeen: (December 15)

Final Exam, 12:15 pm

Absences

Absences are not acceptable; however, you all are adults, so I will not be taking attendance and will expect you to get the notes from someone who was in class. However, should poor attendance become truly endemic, I will institute weekly in-class quizzes in place of homework assignments. As a good portion of the lecture time is spent in discussion of the ideas, it is best to not become dependent on the notes of others rather than attending class – the others might be enjoying the discussion too much to note down what was discussed. Tardiness should be avoided, as you will have my undivided attention when you enter after the class has begun.

University Policy Information

Per the Academic Senate Policy, F06-2:

The University desires it known that Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires that you be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions, no matter how minor, to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Any work that is done for another course, current or past, *cannot* be turned in for credit in this course. If you are unsure of the policy on Academic Integrity, please see the information on the university website:

http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that student with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.

Disclaimer

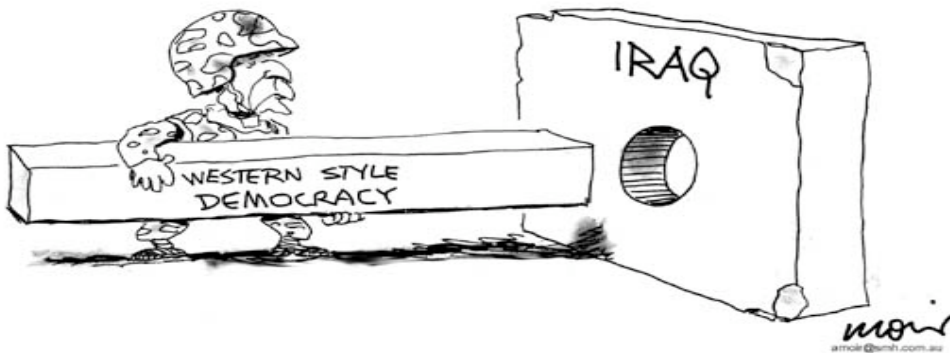
All of the above information is subject to change with fair notice from the either the Department of Political Science or the professor. The professor reserves the right to administer a pop-quiz at anytime – usually due to chronic lack of attendance – the points from the pop-quiz (one point per question) will be treated as extra credit in the final point distribution.

Final Words

It should be remembered that what you will get out of this course is directly proportional to the effort you put into it.

Final Grades are not “given” but rather “earned”.

Finally, as I am wont to say: high schools give diplomas; colleges give degrees; an ***education*** is what you give yourself.



Source: <http://www.sauer-thompson.com/archives/opinion/CartoonMoirVH4.jpg>

Kathryn's Top 35 Grammar Pet Peeves to Avoid

35. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
34. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
33. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
32. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
31. Avoid clichés like the plague (they're old hat).
30. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
29. Be more or less specific.
28. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
27. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
26. No sentence fragments.
25. Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
24. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
23. Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
22. One should never generalize.
21. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
20. Don't use no double negatives.
19. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
18. One-word sentences? Never.
17. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
16. The passive voice is to be ignored.
15. Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas.
14. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
13. Kill all exclamation points!!!!
12. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
11. Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth-shaking ideas.
10. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.
9. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
8. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
7. Puns are for children, not groan readers.
6. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
5. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
4. Who needs rhetorical questions?
3. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
2. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

And the number one on Kathryn's Pet Peeve list.....

1. Their are words that must be used for they're proper meaning or there misused.