

POL 1100 E: Comparative Politics – Fall 2021
Meeting Time: Tues/Thurs. 10:00 am – 11:15 am
Classroom: Cushing 108

Instructor: Dr. Kirstie Lynn Dobbs
Office: Cushing Hall 17b

Office Hours: M/W 11:00 am - 12:00 pm, Tues. 11:30 am - 12:30 pm; also by appointment

Office Hours Sign Up [Link](#)

Office Hours Zoom Link

<https://merrimack.zoom.us/j/99900279201>

Email: dobbsk@merrimack.edu

Course Description

Have you ever wondered why democracies exist in some countries, but authoritarian regimes persist in others? Or have you ever questioned why in the modern age of global human rights, a ruthless dictator can still brutally oppress his people without any outside intervention? Perhaps you have yearned for a deeper understanding of how your generation might be positioned to make a positive difference across the world. In this course, we will grapple with these types of questions as you are introduced to broad debates in comparative politics while gaining an understanding of how comparativists use various theories and methodologies to understand political phenomena.

The pedagogical method applied to this class is a mixture of a lecture-based and active model of teaching. Students are expected to take notes during lectures and are also expected to be actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions. A “flipped” model of teaching will also be utilized in this course, where students are expected to have done the reading / learned the textbook material prior to coming to class. This will allow us to spend more time applying the concepts in active-learning sessions rather than lecturing on basic terminology. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. If a student is more than 15 min late without notice, they will be counted as tardy. Be on time!

Readings

O’Neil, Patrick, Karl Fields, and Don Share. (2021). *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics, 2nd edition*. W.W. Norton & Company. New York, NY.

In addition to this book there will be supplemental readings that will be available on the course's blackboard course page. Readings should be completed *before* coming to class to enhance and facilitate lectures and class discussion. You should anticipate approximately 60 - 100 pages of reading per week.

Email Correspondence

I am very flexible and more than happy to accommodate students based on their needs. Students may email me at any time during any day of the week to ask for extensions or other accommodations. However, please give me at least 24 hours to respond. I typically do not answer emails on the weekends. If you email me Friday night after 5:00 pm, please do not expect

a response till Monday morning. If you email me after 5:00 pm during the week, please do not expect an email till the following day.

Participation and Engagement

Students are expected to attend the course synchronously each week. If you miss class, the PowerPoint lectures will be available for two weeks after the class has ended. My powerpoints are interactive, and students gain weekly engagement points by participating during the lectures. If you miss class, you can still make up these points by completing the activities in the PowerPoint on your time within two weeks after missing class. The links to the powerpoints and the access codes will be available on Blackboard.

Missing Class

If you miss class, you are still expected to complete ALL asynchronous assignments in the module by SUNDAY at midnight of that module week. Accommodations can be made, but you need to alert me that you need an extension before the assigned due date!

Credit Justification Statement

In this hybrid course, students will be expected to do the following amount of work:

- Classroom hours: 1.5 per week
- Reading per week: 4-5 hours per week (on average)
- Prep work for class-based discussion: 2-3 per week (on average)
- Researching and writing: 2-3 per week (on average)
- Video exercises and critical thinking tasks: 1-2 per week (on average)
- Exam preparation: 1 hour per week (on average)
- Total: 11.5-15.5 hours per week

Access to Blackboard

All course materials will be uploaded to Blackboard. This includes class lectures (videos), rubrics, and assignment sheets. Grades will also be posted on this site. To access Blackboard, go to <https://blackboard.merrimack.edu/ultra/institution-page> and use your Merrimack login credentials to access the course site.

Learning Outcomes

The main goal of this course is to help students feel more **empowered** regarding their ability to understand and be active in global politics. After completing the course each student should:

- Have a solid understanding of democracy and authoritarianism and different types of political institutions
- Understand global patterns in political behavior
- Think critically about power and how the distribution of power shapes politics
- Think analytically about democratization
- Articulate different theories and concepts associated with comparative politics and apply them to different case studies

- Have a more grounded understanding of the major political/social issues and how they are connected in countries across the world
- Be better prepared to think critically about the health of contemporary democracies across the world

Grading

Semester Quizzes 22%

Comparative Country Profile Paper Round One 17%

Country Profile Paper Round Two 28%

Weekly Engagement Points 28%

Final Presentations 5%

Grading Scale

A 93-100

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 59 and below

Assignments

Semester Quizzes (22%)

You will take 11 reading quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes are available on Blackboard within each course module. You are expected to take this quiz by midnight the Sunday prior to the class officially lecturing on that module. These quizzes are open book, open note, and untimed.

Comparative Country Profile Paper Round One (17%)

For this project, you are to imagine you are working as a research consultant for the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Your professor (c'est Moi) is your supervisor, and at the end of the semester, you will present to me your analysis of the current economic, social, and political context of your country. You will also give recommendations on how NDI might work with the state to strengthen democracy in this country.

During round 1 of this paper, you will write 3-4 pages focusing on ONE country of your choice. You want to identify where your country is the weakest in terms of either becoming, sustaining, or strengthening its democracy. Not only will you identify where your country is weak, but why. Is it corruption? Is it a weak or stagnating economy fueling unrest? Is it a lack of modernization or perhaps it's related to democratic culture? Perhaps parties and intense polarization are hindering democratic processes in your country? These are just a few examples. The prompt for this paper will be located on Blackboard.

Comparative Country Profile Paper Round Two (28%)

For round two, the same principles apply, but you will compare the country you wrote about in round 1 with another country of your choice. You may use either a most-similar or most-different systems decision in your analysis. You will either choose a country that is very similar to the country in your round 1 paper but has a very different outcome (MSSD), OR you will choose a country that is very different from your country in round 1 but has a similar outcome (MDSD). This paper will be 6-8 pages in length. You may use material from your round 1 paper in your round 2 paper. A rubric will be provided.

Weekly Engagement Points (28%)

Each week, you will be awarded engagement points for responding to discussion questions, polls, quiz questions, and other activities in class. All of these activities are accessible in the Nearpod presentation that is used to guide the lecture in class. If you cannot attend class, you will complete the Nearpod lecture at your own pace via an accessible link on Blackboard. These links are located in the Nearpod presentation folder. You will have **two weeks** after the missed class to make up your engagement points. The access codes associated with each presentation are also located in the folder.

Final Presentations (5%)

During our final exam period, you will present your research from your comparative country profile paper. Each presentation will be short and succinct - no more than 5 minutes. A rubric will be provided.

Suggested News Outlets

- *The Washington Post*
- *The New York Times*
- *The Economist*
- CNN
- NPR Politics Podcast; NPR's Up First
- BBC Global News Podcast

Due Dates and Late Policy:

All assignments must be turned in on their due date through Blackboard. Students must be present for exams and group presentations. Only unforeseen emergencies with valid documentation will permit students to remake exams and their group presentations. Any assignments that are turned in late will receive a 5 percent deduction for each day (24 hours) that the assignment is tardy.

Assignments that are five days late will no longer be accepted, and you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Please anticipate all possible contingencies (computer failure, printer issues, etc.) and please contact me before or as soon as possible if an issue arises. If a student contacts me about an issue after the assignment is due, I can no longer make accommodations for that assignment.

Missed classes/Late Assignments: The only excusable reasons for missing a class or exam or

handing in an assignment late are serious illnesses and family emergencies. In either case you must both 1) notify me of your situation in a timely manner and 2) provide appropriate documentation. Assignments handed in late without documentation will be penalized by 10% for each date they are late.

Statement of Community Standards

The following statement is taken from Merrimack College's Student Handbook under Community Standards.

Before all else, the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Merrimack College form an Augustinian community that supports and challenges its members in the pursuit of truth. We declare and celebrate our common purpose, and commit ourselves:

- to serious study, generous service and courageous leadership
- to academic integrity and personal growth
- to civilized discourse in the exchange of ideas
- to friendship, diversity, and mutual respect
- to primacy of conscience and the spiritual life
- to responsibility for the common good, and
- to pride in our school and ourselves

Students have the right to express their views so long as there is neither use nor threat of force, nor interference with the rights of others to express their views (Faculty Handbook 2016, 50).

Academic Integrity Policy

For undergraduate courses:

All work for this class must be your original work. Presenting material from other sources, either print or electronic, as one's own work constitutes plagiarism. Please review [Merrimack College's Academic Integrity Code](#) and consult the [library's web site](#) for a discussion on academic integrity.

Academic Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office

Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities through the Accessibility Services Office. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services Office [website](#), [email](#) or by visiting their office on the third floor of McQuade Library.

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Students already registered with the Accessibility Services Office are encouraged each semester to request their letters to be emailed, and students are responsible to then email the letter to their instructors personally. While it is understood that some students will not use all accommodations in all courses, accommodations can not be made retroactively.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week of 8/30 Introduction to Course

- Week 1 (in-class)
 - Course Syllabi and expectations
 - Active Listening Activity
 - What is 'politics?'
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 5
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 1
 - Ch. 1 Quiz

Week of 9/6 What is Comparative Politics?

- Week 2 (in-class)
 - Class Lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 12
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 2
 - Ch. 2 Quiz

Week of 9/13 States

- Week 3 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 3
 - Ch. 3 Quiz

Week of 9/20 Nations and Society

- Week 4 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 26
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 4
 - Ch. 4 Quiz

Week of 9/27 Political Economy

- Week 5 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY OCTOBER 3

- Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 5
- Ch. 5 Quiz

Week of 10/4 Political Violence

- Week 6 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY OCTOBER 10
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 6
 - Ch. 6 Quiz

Week of 10/11 Democratic Regimes

- Week 7 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work Quiz DUE SUNDAY OCTOBER 17
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 7
 - Round 1 of Comparative Country Profile Paper due

Week of 10/18 Developed Democracies

- Week 8 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY OCTOBER 24
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 7
 - Ch. 7 Quiz

Week of 10/25 Developed Democracies: Case Studies

- Week 9 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY OCTOBER 31
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 8
 - Ch. 8 Quiz

Week of 11/1 Non-democratic Regimes

- Week 10 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 7
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 9

Week of 11/8 Communism and Postcommunism

- Week 11
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 14
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 9
 - Ch. 9 Quiz

Week of 11/15 Communism and Postcommunism: Case Studies

- Week 12 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous work DUE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 21
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 10

Week of 11/22 Developing Countries

- Week 13 (in-class)
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 28
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 10
 - Ch. 10 Quiz

Week of 11/29 Developing Countries: Case Studies

- Week 14
 - Class lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE SUNDAY DECEMBER 5
 - Read *Cases and Concepts* Ch. 11
 - Ch. 11 Quiz
 - Round 2 of Comparative Country Profile Paper Due

Week of 12/6 Globalization and the Future of Comparative Politics

- Week 15
 - Class Lecture
- Asynchronous Work DUE DATE TBD
 - Country Profile Paper Presentations