GOVT 105- Introduction to Comparative Politics  
St. Lawrence University  
Spring 2014  
Hepburn 113

Dr. Kristin McKie  
Email: kmckie@stlawu.edu  
Office Hours: Mondays 9:30-11:00am  
Office: Hepburn 206  
Office phone: 315-229-5209

Course Overview and Goals

How should a country transitioning to democracy shape its political institutions? What differentiates authoritarian and totalitarian regimes? Why is some political action violent and some peaceful? How effective is citizen protest? Why are some areas of the world more developed than others?

These are some of the many questions we’ll tackle together in this course. Through discussion, lecture and in-course activities, we’ll analyze theory and look for evidence in country case studies to understand politics in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America and Australasia. Together we’ll explore political institutions such as the role of the state, the meaning of democracy and authoritarianism, and how different electoral systems impact governance. Next, we’ll look at political identities and interests by studying how individuals form their political identity and how citizens seek to change government through participating in parties and interest groups, activism and political violence. Finally, we’ll look at the how the intersection between politics and economics plays out across the world by exploring economic development and redistribution in and between states.

Course Readings

Readings for each week of our course will be drawn from two required sources:

   A copy of this textbook can be purchased at the SLU Brewer Bookstore (either new or used  
   Copies are available), or online through Amazon.com or other sites.

2. GOVT 105 Reading Packet (all readings listed in the course schedule not in DS are in this packet)  
   Reading packets can be purchased for $15.00 (cash only) from Patty Ashlaw in the Government  
   Department office- Hepburn room 102- between the hours of 8:00am-4:00pm, Monday-Friday.

Assignments and Evaluation

The main assignments and evaluative elements of the course are as follows:

1. The two papers of 5-7 pages in length with citations drawn only from course readings. The first paper  
   will be due on February 24th and the second paper due on April 14th.
2. For the final, students have a choice between taking an essay-based final exam OR writing a 5-7 page final paper. For either option, you final must be completed by 4:30pm on Monday, May 5th, the time assigned by the Registrar for our class final exam. Students will let Dr. McKie know on the last day of class which option they are going to choose, and will not be permitted to change their mind after that date.

3. Before each class meeting, students will compose a QAEs (Question, Answer, Evidence) for each reading assigned for the day submit them in a Word document through the “Drop Box” on Sakai. Late QAE submissions will be accepted, but will only receive half credit.

4. Twice during the semester, you will undertake short collaborative projects where you will be expected to work with other students towards a stated goal. For these, you will be assessed on both overall group product and your individual effort.

5. Finally, I expect everyone to be engaged in class every course meeting, which includes contributing to class discussion, participating in any course activities, etc… Since you can only be engaged in class if you come to class, if you have more than two unexcused absences, your class engagement grade will fall by 1% for each additional absence after your second missed class.

Grading

Your final course grade will be based on the following breakdown:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Collaborative Assignments (2)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Class Engagement</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>QAE submissions</td>
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<td>Final Exam or Paper</td>
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The grading scale I will use to calculate final grades on SLU’s 4.0 scale is as follows:

4.0 = 100-94% (A)          2.25 = 77-76% (C+/C)  
3.75 = 93-90% (A-)         2.0 = 75-73% (C)      
3.5 = 89-88% (B+)          1.75 = 72-70% (C-)     
3.25 = 87-86% (B+/B)       1.5 = 69-68% (D+)      
3.0 = 85-83% (B)           1.25 = 67-66% (D+/D)    
2.75 = 82-80% (B-)         1.0 = 65-63% (D)       
2.5 = 79-78% (C+)          0.75 = 62-60% (D-)     
2.0 = 79-78% (C+)          0.0 = 59% and below (F)  

Communication and Meeting with Professor McKie

Sakai

Please check our course website on Sakai for course documents, announcements, assignments, your personal drop box and other resources. When I send emails to the entire class through Sakai, the message will go to your @stlawu.edu email address. Therefore, please regularly check that email account.
Office Hours and Appointments

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the small size of St. Lawrence courses to get individual guidance on course material and to get to know their professors. Coming to office hours or arranging to meet for lunch or coffee is a good way to do so. During office hours, you can just drop by Hepburn 206, but for appointments at other times please email me to arrange a time.

Laptops in the Classroom

I strongly prefer that students not bring laptops to class, as they present too much of a temptation for distraction (believe me, I know). However, if you must use a laptop for note taking in this class, please use Leechblock (on Firefox), StayFocusd (on Chrome), SelfControl (Macs only), Freedom (http://macfreedom.com/) or another program that blocks you from certain websites for a set time in order to help keep you focused during class.

Writing Assistance

During the weeks that papers are due in the course, I will offer extended office hours to meet with students who wish to talk about the content of their paper.

For assistance in organizing your paper, check out The WORD Studio in ODY Library. It is the main writing and oral communication center at SLU and has staff that can help with every step of paper writing from understanding the assignment and organizing the structure of your argument, to citing sources and polishing a final draft.

St. Lawrence University Policies

In compliance with the St. Lawrence University policy and national civil rights laws, I will gladly comply with any appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities of any nature. Students who are eligible for accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Academic Services for Students with Special Needs to discuss their IEAP with Dr. McKie in order to work out a plan for accommodations in the course.

Academic Integrity:

All of the work that you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another, and must originate solely with you in form and content with all sources fully and specifically cited. Any instances of academic dishonesty will result in a report of your name to the Dean of Academic Affairs and, per my discretion, either a 0 for the entire relevant portion of the final course grade or a referral to an Academic Honor Council hearing.

If you have a question about what constitutes academic dishonesty, what is considered plagiarism or how to cite sources properly, come talk to me, visit The WORD Studio in ODY, or refer to SLU’s info sheets on citations and plagiarism:

www.stlawu.edu/writing/plagiarismfaq.html       www.stlawu.edu/writing/usingsources.doc
Course Schedule

I. HOW IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS STUDIED?

WEEK 1

Question: Why do we study Comparative Politics?

1/24- Introduction: What is Political Science and where does Comparative Politics fit in?
- Review the syllabus for the course

1/24- Understanding Differences in World Political Systems
- Samuels, David- *Comparative Politics* textbook (hereafter referred to as “DS”) - pages 2-8

WEEK 2

Question: What methods can we use to study the differences in politics among countries of the world?

1/29- Comparative Method, Case Selection
- DS- 8-21

1/31- Methodological Approaches- Quantitative vs. Qualitative
- DS- 22-26

II. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

WEEK 3

Question: Why is the world organized into states?

2/5- The State: What is the State?; State Strength
- DS 29-38; 52-54
2/7 - The State: Early vs. Late State Formation

- DS- 38-51; 54-55

WEEK 4

Question: How are democracies organized differently around the world?

2/12 - Democratic Regimes: Defining and Measuring Democracy

- DS- 59-65

2/14 - Democratic Regimes: Executive-Legislative Relations

- DS- 66-79

WEEK 5

Question: How are democracies organized differently around the world?

2/19 - Democratic Regimes: Electoral Systems

- DS- 79-89

2/21 - In-class Simulation: Government Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Systems

- Meet with your party team prior to class to work on assigned preparation for simulation

2/24 - Paper #1 due to the Assignments tab on Sakai and Dr. McKie’s mailbox (Hepburn 102) by 4:00pm
WEEK 6

*Question:* What are the variations in non-democratic regimes?

*2/26- Non-Democratic Regimes: Authoritarian vs. Totalitarian*

- DS- 92-104

*2/28- Non-Democratic Regimes: Institutions and Legitimacy*

- DS- 104-114

WEEK 7

*Question:* What are the causes of regime change?

*3/5- Regime Change: Causes of Regime Change*

- DS- 120-139

*3/7- Regime Change: Outcomes of Regime Change*

- DS- 139-144

Mid-Semester break- 3/8-16

III. CITIZENS, IDENTITIES AND INTERESTS

WEEK 8

*Question:* When does personal identity become politicized?

*3/19- Political Identity- Sources*

- DS- 148-161
3/21- Political Identity: Nationalism, Ethnicity

- DS- 161-170

WEEK 9

Question: How effective are different modes of collective action at representing citizens’ interests?

3/26- Social Movements

- DS: 229-240

3/28- No full class. Work with your group on your social movement assignment.

WEEK 10

Question: How effective are different modes of collective action at representing citizens’ interests?

4/2- Interest Groups

- DS:, 242-246

4/4- Political Parties

- DS- 246-253
WEEK 11

Question: When and why do citizens engage in political violence?

4/9- Political Violence: Civil Wars and Revolutions

- DS 258-275

4/11- Political Violence: Terrorism and Genocide

- DS- 276-282

4/14- Paper #2 due to the Assignments tab on Sakai and Dr. McKie’s mailbox (Hepburn 102) by 4:00pm

IV. POLITICAL ECONOMY

WEEK 12

Question: What factors impact a state’s level of economic development?

4/16- Political Economy of Development: Internal Determinants of Development- Regime Type and Level of State Intervention

- DS- 286-304

4/18- Political Economy of Development: External Determinants of Development- Colonial History, Geography and Foreign Aid

- DS- 304-312
- Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa. Macmillan. p. 44-68
WEEK 13

Question: Why do some wealthy democracies engage in more economic redistribution than others?

4/23- Political Economy of Redistribution: The Welfare State in Comparative Perspective

- DS- 316- 332

4/25- Political Economy of Redistribution: Explaining Variation in Welfare State Spending

- DS- 332- 342

WEEK 14

Question: How has globalization shaped politics and economics in the world’s states?

4/30- Globalization: Political and Cultural Consequences

- DS- 346-354; 366-370

5/2- Globalization: Economic Consequences

- DS- 355-365; 371-372