Course Description

This course is designed to provide an intensive introduction to the methodologies, guiding questions, and assumptions of comparative politics and international relations, as well as to the politics of particular states. The course begins with an introduction to these two subfields, focusing on the central questions and perspectives of each. We will then explore key theories of and perspectives on international regimes, interactions among states, and the world system as a whole. Next, we will consider different ways of classifying and understanding political and economic systems at the nation-state level, including in terms of regime type, institutional structures, and sets of political actors. Finally, we will apply these concepts to the study of two democracies (Germany and Brazil) and two non-democracies (China and Nigeria). For each of these states, we will start with an overview of its political system, then explore a particular theme: regional integration (Germany), inequality (Brazil), environmental politics (China), and postcolonial development (Nigeria). The overriding objective of the course is to develop familiarity with and critical perspectives on the core concepts of and approaches to comparative politics and international relations, both at a broad theoretical level and through more concrete, empirical application.

Objectives

Throughout the course, we will focus on building awareness not just of politics per se, but of Political Science as a discipline. Assignments are structured to foster critical reading and thinking, and to allow you to practice developing and testing hypotheses, analyzing political institutions and decisions through different theoretical lenses, and being a more savvy consumer of geopolitical information. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:
• explain and compare dominant theoretical approaches to the study of international relations,
• examine patterns of interstate relations in light of prevailing theories,
• describe and categorize political regimes and institutions,
• analyze patterns of political change, and
• understand and apply the rudiments of research methods in comparative politics and international relations.

These objectives are clearly ambitious. Should you decide to stay in this course, you will be expected to WORK HARD. If you are not prepared to do so, you should not take this class. DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY THE 100-LEVEL COURSE NUMBER!! To do well in the course you must:

• attend all lectures and sections,
• complete all assigned readings carefully and on time,
• complete all assignments thoughtfully and on time,
• and actually learn the material, so you do well on the midterm and final.

If you do all that, you will do well in the class!

Evaluation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class/section participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 short writing assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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Review the rubrics for evaluating participation and written assignments posted on Blackboard to be sure you understand what is expected of you. (All enrolled students have access to the Blackboard site—and the site includes links to online tutorials and a help desk, should you need assistance.)

You are expected to complete all readings, attend all classes, and participate meaningfully in class discussions. Do not let yourself fall behind in the readings. Participation will be evaluated based on whether you voluntarily pose and respond to questions in lectures and section, demonstrate that you have read and thought through the assigned reading, and listen respectfully to what your peers say. Participation in online discussion forums (on Blackboard) counts, as well. If you do not understand something in the reading, ask! Chances are good that you are not the only one who needs clarification. Active participation can boost your grade significantly, not only since participation counts toward your grade, but also because joining in class discussions will help you learn and understand the information better, which will help your performance on the midterm and final exams.

You must complete an initial assignment on Blackboard by Monday, January 26. Find the link “Assignment 1” on Blackboard, either under the Assignments tab or on the course homepage and follow the directions. This assignment will not only help your TAs and professor get to know
you, but will also introduce you to (or give you more practice with) several Blackboard tools that we will be using during the semester.

**Attendance is mandatory.** Attendance will not be taken in every lecture session, but may be taken anytime (including by way of pop quizzes). If you are not in class on time, you will be marked absent. **After one unexcused absence from section or two unexcused absences from lecture, your final grade will drop by five points (i.e., 85 to 80) for each additional absence.** Absences will only be excused for religious observance (and then only if cleared with me at the start of the semester) or documented medical or family emergency. Traffic jams, oversleeping, papers due for other classes, and stress do not constitute legitimate excuses. You will still be responsible for the material covered in any class session you miss, including material presented in lectures that is not covered in the assigned readings.

**Map and pop quizzes**
Americans are frequently derided for their lack of geographical awareness. You will not leave this class vulnerable to that challenge! Five map quizzes—on Africa, Asia & the Middle East, Europe, North America & Latin America—will be given over weeks two through five of the semester (as indicated in the syllabus). The maps used will be those before chapter 1 in the Mingst text. Pop quizzes may be given at any time during the class, usually at least one per week, either in lecture or section. These quizzes will test whether you have completed the reading (or have paid attention to the lecture), can summarize the arguments in the reading, and have thought about the implications of what you have read. Quizzes will consist mostly of short-answer questions. Each should take around 10 minutes. Pop quizzes may not be made up. Your two lowest (or missed) pop quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

**Short writing assignments**
Short writing assignments allow you both to reflect on what you have read and to demonstrate your mastery of the material, in a less pressured format than quizzes and exams. Topics will be in the form of a proposition you will argue for or against, or a hypothesis you will test with evidence from readings and lectures. Each short paper should be 4 pages long. Topics are listed in the syllabus on the dates papers are due: February 13, March 20, and April 22. You must hand a hard copy to your TA at the start of class on the day it is due and also submit an electronic copy before class via the Assignments dropbox on Blackboard. Late papers will incur a non-negotiable penalty of one letter grade for each day late.

To receive full credit for your ideas, be sure to write clearly and well. At a minimum, you should offer a well-stated thesis and clear organization, argumentation that effectively supports that thesis while addressing possible counter-arguments, and evidence that you have completed the assigned readings and thought critically about the readings and class discussions.

**Midterm and final exam**
Both the midterm and final will be cumulative, in-class examinations. Each will comprise both short-answer and essay questions. Make-ups will be available only to students with documentation signed by a doctor of a medical emergency (i.e., not a cold, dentist appointment, etc.).

Lastly, inasmuch as a primary goal of this class is to help you make sense of global politics, it is essential that you make an effort to keep up with what is actually happening in the world. To that
end, you are expected to keep up with the news—to read at least the front page and key international stories in a major newspaper (i.e., The New York Times rather than the Albany Times-Union) every day. A wide range of high-quality domestic and international newspapers are available online, free of charge.

**General guidelines**

If you feel you have been graded incorrectly on a paper or exam, *first* contact your TA to review your assignment and grade. If you are still dissatisfied, *only then* should you contact me. Bring the exam or paper, together with a written statement describing the problem. I will then regrade the entire assignment (not just the section/question in dispute). Be advised that your grade could go up or down—and that grade will be final.

Class communications will be through Blackboard. As part of your first assignment, you will update your Blackboard account so all class-related emails are forwarded automatically to your primary email account. You are responsible for checking both your email account and the class Blackboard site regularly.

All typed assignments must be double-spaced, with 1-1.25” margins, in Times New Roman font. Handwritten assignments (i.e., quizzes and exams) must be written neatly; if your TA or I cannot read your response, it is wrong. You are strongly encouraged to visit the Writing Center (Humanities Building 140, [http://www.albany.edu/writing/](http://www.albany.edu/writing/)) *early in the semester* if intensive, critical writing is likely to be pose special challenges for you.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are inexcusable under any circumstances and will be dealt with severely. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the university’s guidelines on academic integrity (in the Undergraduate Bulletin or online at [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)). The site suggests resources to bring you up to speed on precisely what is acceptable. Ignorance is NOT an excuse. There will be *no* leniency in this course: **in case of academic dishonesty, you will fail the course and be turned over to the Office of Student Conduct.** Please be forewarned that all papers are subject to online scanning for plagiarism. To ensure you are well-informed, you will complete **Plagiarism 101**, the University at Albany online tutorial on plagiarism, as part of your first assignment. Should you need to refer back to the tutorial, it is available on Blackboard or at [http://library.albany.edu/usered/ncplaga/index.html](http://library.albany.edu/usered/ncplaga/index.html).

Reasonable accommodation will be made for students with any documented physical, learning, or other disabilities. To ensure equitable and fair treatment of all students, such matters should be brought to my attention at the *start* of the semester. If you believe you have such a disability, you are encouraged to register with the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, [http://www.albany.edu/disability/DRC/](http://www.albany.edu/disability/DRC/)); they will provide you with a letter for your professors, confirming documentation of your need for the academic accommodations requested. I will accept these letters in the *first two weeks of the semester*.

**Required Readings**

The reading load for the class averages around **100-120 pages** per week, though its level of difficulty (and hence, its length) will vary. The readings are *usually*, but not always, distributed relatively evenly through the week. Please budget your time accordingly; you are expected to do all the reading, every week. **Readings are due on the date under which they are listed.**
The following required texts are available for purchase from either the UAlbany bookstore or Mary Jane Books. Copies of each will also be on reserve at the main library.


All additional readings, as well as any supplemental materials, will be available online on the class’s Blackboard site. You are responsible for both textbook and online readings; if you do not have adequate internet access from home, you can readily download the readings on campus in advance. (Please note: you must have RealPlayer loaded on your computer to watch online films.)

Reading assignments may change over the course of the quarter. You are responsible for knowing what is assigned and for completing the reading.

**COURSE OUTLINE** (readings are due on the date under which they are listed)

**Week 1**  
**Wednesday, 21 January**  
No reading  
Introduction, overview of Blackboard site  
• Complete Assignment 1 (under the “Assignments” tab) on Blackboard by Monday 1/26  

**Friday, 23 January**  
**Introduction & overview**  
Online film (watch before class): *Bowling for Columbine*  
• as you watch, think about how Moore develops and tests hypotheses

**Week 2**  
**Monday, 26 January**  
**Social science explanations and arguments**  
*Assignment 1 due (online)*  
Booth et al, chap. 7-10 and pp. 285-8  
• Chapters 3-6 in particular also recommended

**Wednesday, 28 January**  
**Approaches to international relations**  
*Map quiz: Africa*  
Mingst, chap. 1

**Friday, 30 January**  
**The historical context of international relations**  
Mingst, chap. 2
Week 3
Monday, 2 February  Contending perspectives on international relations
Mingst, chap. 3

[Note: 3 Feb. is last day to drop class without a “W”]

Wednesday, 4 February  The international system
*Map quiz: Asia & the Middle East*
Mingst, chap. 4

Friday, 6 February  States & individuals
Mingst, chap. 5-6

Week 4
Monday, 9 February  International organizations, NGOs, and international law
*Map quiz: Europe*
Mingst, chap. 7

Wednesday, 11 February  War and strife
Mingst, chap. 8

Friday, 13 February  Clash of civilizations?
*First paper due: Which theory best explains the Iraq war?* (present rival theories, then explain which you find most convincing)

16-20 February  Winter Break – No class

Week 5
Monday, 23 February  The discourse of defense
*Map quiz: North America & Latin America*

Wednesday, 25 February  Globalizing issues
Mingst, chap. 10
Friday, 27 February
Midterm review
No reading

Week 6
Monday, 2 March
Midterm exam (in class)

Wednesday, 4 March
Introduction to comparative politics
No reading

Friday, 6 March
Comparative political analysis
Sodaro, chap. 3

Week 7
Monday, 9 March
Power and the state
Sodaro, chap. 4-5

Wednesday, 11 March
Nations and nationalism
Sodaro, chap. 6

Friday, 13 March
Defining democracy
Sodaro, chap. 7-8

Week 8
Monday, 16 March
Making democracy work
Sodaro, chap. 9-10

Wednesday, 18 March
Autocracy & complex transitions

Friday, 20 March
Political participation
*Second paper due: Is democracy possible in Iraq?* (make and support a clear argument, with evidence from the readings)
Sodaro, chap. 11
Katha Pollitt, “For Whom the Ball Rolls,” *The Nation* 262:9 (15 April 1996), p. 9

**Week 9**

**Monday, 23 March**
**Political culture & ideology**
Sodaro, chap. 12-13

**Wednesday, 25 March**
**Political economy**
Martin Staniland, *What Is Political Economy?*, ch. 1
Sodaro, chap. 14

**Friday, 27 March**
**Globalization**
Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, “Political Regimes and Economic Growth,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 7:3 (Summer 1993), pp. 51-69

**Week 10**

**Monday, 30 March**
**The politics of development**
Sodaro, chap. 15

**Wednesday, 1 April**
**Germany: Introduction**
Sodaro, ch. 18

**Friday, 3 April**
**Germany: Regional integration**
Read online: [http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/index_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/index_en.htm) (“Europe in 12 Lessons”)

**Week 11**

**Monday, 6 April**
**Brazil: Introduction**
Sodaro, pp. 733-58

**8-13 April**
**Spring Break – No class**

**Wednesday, 15 April**
**Brazil: Inequality**

Friday, 17 April  
**China: Introduction**  
Sodaro, chap. 21

**Week 12**  
Monday, 20 April  
**China: Environmental politics**  

Wednesday, 22 April  
**In-class exercise**  
*Third paper due: Why has Brazil democratized while China has not?* (present and test competing hypotheses)  

Friday, 24 April  
**Nigeria: Introduction**  
Sodaro, pp. 762-82

**Week 13**  
Monday, 27 April  
**Nigeria: Postcolonial development**  
Crawford Young, “The Impossible Necessity of Nigeria” (review article), *Foreign Affairs* 75:6 (Nov./Dec. 1996), pp. 139-44.  

Wednesday, 29 April  
**The End of History?**  

Friday, 1 May  
**Wrap-up and review**

**Week 14**  
Monday, 4 May  
**Final exam (in class)**