

**SOSC 1300: World of Politics
Fall 2014**

Lectures: Mon./Wed./Fri., 9:30-10:20am, Room 2502 (via Lifts 25-26)

Professor:

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Office hours:

Wednesdays and Fridays. 11:00am-12:00(noon)

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Office hours:

Monday 9:30am-11:30am

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the key concepts, theories, and methods in political science. Prompted by real-world events and puzzles, comparative politics answers broad theoretical questions such as: How and why do countries democratize (or not)? What are different ways that states organize politics, i.e., how do they differ in terms of party systems, electoral rules, presidential powers, etc.? What is the relationship between the economy and the political system?

During this term, we will spend about half of the semester studying theoretical concepts that may seem quite removed from the “real world” at first, and the final half studying five countries in some detail in order to make the application of political science more concrete and accessible. The five countries that we will study in depth are Russia, China, South Africa, Mexico, and UK. These represent many regions of the world and range from authoritarian and communist regimes to newly democratic states to long-established democracies.

Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Learn about some basic theoretical and methodological problems in the study of politics (concepts, theories, issues, and methods).
- Learn about the “real” world and how to explain it.
- Learn to identify interesting questions about politics in different countries.
- Learn to understand and compare different forms of democratic and non-democratic rules.
- Become familiar with the language of political science.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the key concepts and theories in the study of politics
- Organize and justify their arguments in regard to specific political issues in the real world
- Separate the normative and positive inquiries in political science

Requirements:

- Regular attendance and careful attention during lectures, including detailed note-taking.
- Read the required readings before the class and participate into class discussion.
- A group project and two exams.

Grading:

Class attendance: 10%

Midterm exam (Oct.8): 25%

Group project: 30%

Final exam: 35% (open-book)

A few important notes (*please read very carefully*):

- You should make a habit (if you have not already) of reading at least one newspaper or periodical with substantial international coverage, such as *The New York Times*, *South China Morning Post*, *The Financial Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Economist*.
- Anything covered in lecture, or required readings is fair game for the exams. So just doing the reading on the last night before the exam means an almost certain failing grade. Come to class, and do your readings carefully and on time. *Note that even readings that have not been explicitly addressed in lecture may be covered in the exams!*
- Please be sure that it says “SOSC1300” in the subject header when you contact me via email (otherwise, your email may be discarded as spam). Also be advised that it may take several days for me to get back to your email, given the large number of students I am teaching this term.
- If you know that you will be absent from class for religious or other reasons that can be known in advance, tell your TA BEFORE class. You want to make sure teaching staffs know you are missing class for legitimate reasons.
- I will not provide detailed lecture or other class notes. Actively taking notes during class time is an important skill and learning tool. To facilitate your note-taking, however, I will upload a reduced version of lecture slides to our course website on the night before the relevant class meeting. This reduced version of lecture slides will allow you to anticipate the topics discussed, and to “fill in” the information provided in the lecture. Please note, however, that the lecture outlines are very basic and will not in any way be a substitute for you attending lecture. If you don’t come to class, you will be missing important information that will be required knowledge on the exams and assignments.
- Please do not film or record the lecture without my permission.
- The midterm exam date is set. Clear your schedules now. There will be no make-up examinations unless you can provide proper documentation that your absence is due to 1) a genuine family emergency, 2) illness or injury, or 3) travel away from Hong Kong for university related (!) obligations. If an exam is missed for a valid reason, you will be able to do a substitute assignment. *This will be an essay of 10 pages based on the material covered in the exam and will be due two days after the date of the missed exam. In order to qualify for the make-up assignment, you must notify me by the time the exam starts.*
- My policy on re-evaluating grades is the following (please read very carefully!):
 - Please wait for 48 hours after the assignment has been returned before issuing any complaints.

- You will contact your TA with a request to re-evaluate your grade. They will take the case to me. I will not respond to a request that comes directly from you.
- You have to draft a 1-2 page double-spaced memo outlining why you deserve a better grade. Please note that this memo has to be based entirely on the merit of your own work, i.e., it cannot be based on comparisons with the grades of other students.
- Your grade will be fully re-evaluated. This means that I may revise the grade downward as well as upward.
- Students needing special accommodations to ensure full participation in this course should contact me as early as possible. All information will remain confidential.
- *Cheating* is a very serious offense that will get you in great trouble. You will receive a failing grade for the class.
- In writing your essays, cite properly when you refer to other authors' findings or comments. Otherwise, it is *plagiarism*! Please go to <http://tl.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html> to find out relevant school policies and how to avoid plagiarism.

Course readings

The following books have been ordered at the University Bookstore. They are also available at the Reserve Section of the library. These books are referred to in the syllabus as either textbook or casebook, as noted in brackets below.

O'Neil, Patrick. *Essentials of Comparative Politics, 4th edition* (2013, W.W. Norton and Co.) [Textbook]

O'Neil, Patrick, Karl Fields, and Don Share, *Cases in Comparative Politics, 4th edition* (2013, W.W. Norton and Co.) [Casebook]

An e-book version of the textbook and casebook is available on the publisher's website <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/978-0-393-91278-4/>

In addition to these books, there are some assigned short articles and supplementary readings that you can get access to through library links.

Class Schedule and Required Readings

September 1: Introduction

No readings

September 3: What is Comparative Politics?

Textbook: ch.1, pp.5-21.

September 5, 8: State, Nation and Society

Textbook: ch.2, pp.27-32, 40-53.

Robert Putnam. 1995. "Bowling Alone," *Journal of Democracy*, 6:1, 65-78.

September 10, 12: Democracy

Textbook: ch.5, pp.126-131, 136-159.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. 2010. "Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field," *Journal of Democracy*, 21:1, 57-68.

September 15: Non-democratic Regimes

Textbook: ch.6, pp.174-187.

Textbook: ch.5, pp.131-136 (on democratization).

September 17: Political Violence

Textbook: ch.7, pp.195-205.

September 19, 22: Political Economy

Textbook: ch.4, pp.90-123.

September 24: Advanced Democracies

Textbook: ch.8, pp.226-227, 234-244.

September 26: Less-developed and Newly Industrializing Countries

Textbook: ch.10, pp.291-302, 308-310, 318-319.

September 29: Communism and Post-communism

Textbook: ch.9, pp.259-260, 263-268, 273-282, 286-287.

October 3: In-class Midterm (Room TBA)

October 6, 8: Research Methods

http://www.ted.com/talks/nate_silver_on_race_and_politics

Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts. 2014. "Reverse-engineering Censorship in China: Randomized Experimentation and Participant Observation," *Science* 345:6199, 1-10.

October 10: Introduction to International Relations: Interest, Interaction, Institutions

Frieden, Lake, and Schultz. *World Politics*. Introduction, pp.1-11.

October 13, 15: Bargaining and War

Frieden, Lake, and Schultz. *World Politics*. ch.3, pp.86-115.

October 17, 20: Trade

Frieden, Lake, and Schultz. *World Politics*. ch.6, pp.220-248.

October 22, 24: Russia

October 27: In-class Film: *Soviet Disunion: Ten Years that Shook the World*

Casebook, ch.7, Russia, pp.314-351.

October 29, 31: China

Casebook, ch.8 China, pp.365-399, 406-411.

Documentary: *China from the Inside, Episode: "Power and the People"*

November 3, 5: South Africa

Casebook, ch.13 South Africa, pp.628-668.

November 7: In-class Film: *Long Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Search for Truth and Reconciliation*

November 10, 12: Mexico

Casebook, ch.11 Mexico, pp.522-563.

November 14: In-class Film: *Cause for Murder: Fighting Corruption in Mexico*

November 17, 19: UK

Casebook, ch.2 UK, pp.39-81.

November 21: In-class Documentary: *Margaret Thatcher: The Woman Who Changed Britain*

November 24, 26, 28: Concluding Lecture, Group Presentations and Review Session

Final Exam (TBA)

Group Project

Students will work in a team of 4-5 to finish one of the following two group assignments:

1. Analysis of News Reports
2. Field Research

Descriptions:

For either group assignment, each group will turn in written reports and do a slide presentation of findings.

Group project 1: Analysis of News Reports

Find a current event that connects a concept or theory from class with one of the five countries cases (Russia, China, South Africa, Mexico, UK), choose three English language newspapers or magazines in any country (e.g. *New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The Guardian of London*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *South China Morning Post*, *The Wall St. Journal*), and analyze how and why their reports on the same current event differ.

Group project 2: Field Research

Find a NGO or a politician and use interviews or other research methods discussed in the class to answer a question that is connected to the concept or theory from class.

Due dates and grading for the group project:

- October 15: Current event / Research question (.5-1 page; 2.5 points)
- November 14: Preliminary Finding and Status Report (1-2 pages; 2.5 points)
- November 24, 26, 28: In-class presentation (10 points)
- December 8, 5pm: Final Report Due (7-8 pages, double-spaced; 15 points)
- Part of your grade for your group project will depend on a peer review, where members of your group will evaluate your participation and contribution to the group project. If you do not participate in the group project, you will receive an F for the project portion of your grade.