Political Science 106: Politics of the World’s Nations  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 a.m.  
Lubar S 151  
Spring 2014  

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Final exam: Thursday, May 15, 2014, 10:00-12:00 noon.

Course Description  
This introductory course will compare and contrast the political and socio-economic systems of several states—industrialized and developing, democratic and authoritarian. We begin with a theoretical introduction and consider central issues such as political culture, institutions, political crises and discontinuity (i.e. revolution and dictatorship), and economic development. We then examine the following six case studies: two Western European democracies (Britain and France), a former communist regime (Russia), a reformed communist regime (China), a developing state (Mexico), and finally our own presidential democracy (the United States).

Grades  
Grades will be based on two midterms (25% each), one final exam (30%), and attendance (10%) and participation (10%). No make-up exams will be given without a medical excuse or an excused University absence. Students must also produce the appropriate documentation stating why they were not able to be in class at the exact time of the exam. If you have a problem or miss an exam, get in touch with me immediately (beforehand if possible). If you miss an exam without giving me prior notice, you MUST contact me within 24 hours of that exam or you will not be allowed to take a make-up exam under any circumstances.

Class attendance and participation are required and will affect your grade. Attendance will be taken during each lecture. Be sure to sign the attendance sheet each time that class meets. Students may not miss more than two lectures without it negatively affecting their grade. Participation grades will be based on the best five (of six) participation essays/notes and in-class participation during discussion. The participation discussion questions will be posted on D2L the week before they are due and will be collected at the beginning of class on the day of the scheduled discussion, as noted on the syllabus. The discussion notes will be graded as follows: check+ = A; check = B; check- = C. Anything below a check- will not count towards the participation grade.

Assuming that there are no changes in the schedule, the midterms will be given on Tuesday of the 7th week (March 4, 2014) and Thursday of the 11th week (April 10, 2014). The final exam will be cumulative and is on Thursday, May 15, 2014, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon.
If you are a student that needs accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this class, please contact me during the first two weeks of class.

For additional information about UWM University policies see the Secretary of the University Web site at: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf. This web site contains a list of University policies regarding such issues as incompletes, grade appeal procedures, and University policy governing academic misconduct, among other things.

Readings
The required textbook is available in the bookstore:


It is also possible to rent a textbook from the publisher. See the following link for information: http://www.coursesmart.com/020510911X. I have also placed a copy of the textbook on two-hour reserve in the UWM library.

Other, shorter readings listed below are on the course D2L site (under “content”).

Course Schedule:
I. Introduction and Structural/Functional Theoretical Framework

   Required reading: Comparative Politics Today: A World View, chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.

   Required reading: Comparative Politics Today: A World View, chapters 5, 6, and 7 (interest groups, interest aggregation and political parties, government and policymaking, and public policy).

II. Britain
Weeks 3 and 4 (2/4, 2/6, 2/11, & 2/13): Britain

2/13 (Thursday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.

   Recommended film: “The Queen.” This film offers a depiction of Tony Blair’s interaction with the Royal Family in the wake of Princess Diana’s death. Helen Mirren won an Academy Award in 2006 for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth. The film captures the British Monarchy as a tradition-bound institution. This film is on media reserve in the West Wing of the UWM Golda Meir West Library.
   Also Recommended: “The King’s Speech.” This 2010 film depicts King George VI’s effort to overcome a speech impediment and his rise to the throne after his brother (Edward VIII) abdicated. This film won four Academy Awards in 2010, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor (Colin Firth), and Best Original Screenplay.

III. France
Weeks 5 and 6 (2/18, 2/20, 2/25, & 2/27): France

2/27 (Thursday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.
Recommended film: “Charles De Gaulle, 1890-1970.” This documentary offers some background on the first president of the French Fifth Republic, Charles de Gaulle. This film is on reserve in the West Wing of the UWM Golda Meir Library.

First Midterm: Tuesday, March 4, 2014.

IV. Russia
Weeks 7, 8, and 9 (3/6, 3/11, 3/13, & 3/25): Russia
(March 16-23 UWM Spring Recess)

3/25 (Tuesday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.

Recommended film: “Mikhail Gorbachev and the Fall of the Soviet Union.” The film offers a summary of Gorbachev’s rise within the Soviet Communist Party and discusses his role in the fall of the Soviet Union. The film is on media reserve in the West Wing of the UWM Golda Meir Library.

V. China
Weeks 9, 10, and 11 (3/27, 4/1, 4/3, & 4/8): China

4/8 (Tuesday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.

Recommended films: “China: Through Mao’s Eye’s. 1958-1969: Not a Dinner Party—the Cultural Revolution.” This 61-minute film is the third part of a four-part series based on Philip Short’s book Mao: A Life. The film incorporates film and video footage from the Cultural Revolution that was kept secret for decades. The film also presents interviews with the last surviving members of Mao’s inner circle.
Also recommended: “To Live.” The film chronicles one Chinese family’s forty-year experience of political turmoil from the founding of the Chinese Communist state, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the early years of capitalist market reform. This film is on media reserve in the West Wing of the UWM Golda Meier Library.

Second Midterm: Thursday, April 10, 2014.
VI. Mexico


Also required readings: Rubio, Luis and Davidow, Jeffery. (2006) “Mexico’s Disputed Election.” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October), 85:5 pp.75-85. D2L.


4/24 (Thursday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.

Recommended film: *Frontline’s “The Meth Epidemic: A National Epidemic.”* The fourth chapter of this video discusses how the Mexican drug cartels moved meth operations to Mexico and shows the estimated 1000 meth labs located in just one Mexican border town. This video is available online at pbs.org.


VII. The United States
Weeks 14 and 15 (4/29, 5/1, 5/6, & 5/8): The United States: A Nation of Immigrants


5/8 (Thursday): Participation discussion notes due at the beginning of class.

Final Exam: Thursday, May 15, 2014, 10:00-12:00 noon.