Overview

Political Science 106: Politics Around the World

Course Description

This course is an introduction to Comparative Politics, one of the four sub-fields in Political Science, which involves the comparative analysis of political institutions, processes, and outcomes at the national level.

During this term, you will learn how to usefully compare politics in a variety of countries. We will make comparisons explicit and systematic in order to determine how governments work, how power is organized and contested at the national level, and how regular people can participate and pursue their interests in different political settings.

One of the primary goals of the class will be to introduce you to the study of Comparative Politics, including its key concepts, theories, methods, issues, and language. Some of these may seem quite removed from the "real world" at first, which is why we will look at six countries in some detail in order to make the application of Comparative Politics more concrete and accessible. The group of countries we cover in this class consists of the United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa, Russia, China, and Mexico.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Learning Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Learn about some basic theoretical and methodological problems in the study of politics (concepts, theories, issues).
- Learn about the "real world" and how to explain it.
- Learn to identify interesting questions about politics in different countries.
- Learn to identify differences and similarities, and what both tell us about what we are studying.
- Learn to understand and compare different forms of democratic and non-democratic rule.
- Become familiar with the language of political science.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to apply the concepts of political science to analyze (and evaluate) political events in a variety of settings.
Instructor Information

Nils Ringe, Professor

**Department:** Political Science  

**Email:** ringe@wisc.edu

I am a Professor of Political Science, Jean Monnet Chair, and Director of the Center for European Studies and the Jean Monnet European Union Center of Excellence at UW-Madison. My research focuses on the European Union (in particular the institutions of the EU), comparative legislatures, social networks, elections, and political parties.

Aside from “Politics Around the World,” I teach undergraduate classes on the European Union, comparative regional integration, European domestic politics, and German politics. I also teach graduate seminars on comparative political institutions, Europe, and European integration.

I grew up in Germany but have been living in the US for 19 years. I attended college at Brandeis University, outside of Boston, and got my Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh. I came to Madison in 2006. My wife and I have a four year old son named Max and a dog named Scrappy (you will learn more about him soon). I like to travel, hike, play the piano, and read crime and spy novels. I am also a huge soccer fan and closely follow the German Bundesliga, in particular, but also the Champions League, the Premier League, and La Liga. I have been a fan of Werder Bremen since I was a little kid, and I care more than perhaps I should (also something that will come up again soon).

Ning Leng, Teaching Assistant

**Department:** Political Science  

**Email:** ning.leng@wisc.edu

Ning is a PhD candidate in the Political Science Department. She studies political economy, with an area interest in China and India. Her dissertation investigates how political institutions in China shape state business relations in public service sectors. She has served as a teaching assistant for a variety of Political Science classes in the past, including Politics Around the World, Politics in China, China in the World, and research methods.
Grades

Weekly Grade Breakdown

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<th>Week</th>
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<th>Study Group</th>
<th>Discussion Activity</th>
<th>Weekly Quiz</th>
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A Note on Grades:

You will notice that each individual graded item is worth what seems like a rather small number of points. Missing or skipping a graded assignment will, however, have a substantial impact on your final grade in this class. For example, each quiz is worth about two full letter grades, the case activities and study groups add up to one letter grade each, and each discussion activity counts for half a letter grade. So, don’t let the seemingly small numbers of points fool you and be sure to complete all assignments.

Also, please note that I am deducting the equivalent of one letter grade for every 24 hour period a graded assignment is late. So, when an assignment is due on Tuesday at 11:59pm, assignments submitted between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Wednesday will be downgraded one letter grade, assignments submitted between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Thursday two letter grades, etc. For some assignments, these deductions will be automatic if you don’t complete them on time. For others, we will retrospectively deduct points.

Quizzes

There is an exam every two weeks. Each of the four exams consists of exactly two essay questions that you will have a total of 90 minutes to answer. More information is available under Assignments [https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/46787/pages](https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/46787/pages)
Discussion Activity

There are usually between 1-3 “tasks” for each discussion exercise (e.g., write your own post and respond to one post from somebody else). Each task is worth the relevant fraction of the total 4 points (i.e., 1/3 of the 4 points if there are three tasks, 1/2 if there are two tasks, etc.).

There is also extra credit to be gained. Extra credit is awarded either because somebody’s post was selected as the best by most of the other students (who “vote” by responding to it) or because the TA selects it as the best, or both. Each instance of extra credit is worth 0.5 points.

Case Activity

Each online exercise is worth 1.5 points total, which you only receive if you have successfully completed the final knowledge check for each exercise. There is no partial credit, so you want to make sure you don't just start the activity, but that you actually finish it by correctly answering all knowledge check questions.

Grade Scale:

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<td>0 – 59%</td>
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Note: The grading scale may be shifted slightly downward if class mean scores are low, but it will not be shifted upwards.
Textbook & Readings

Textbooks:

The textbook chapters for this class are drawn from the following two books:


Three Purchase Options

You may access or get a hold of the assigned chapters in one of three ways.

Option 1:

Pay for access to the chapters that are integrated into our Learn@UW course website. Option 1 is easiest and cheapest, but it has two disadvantages:

- You lose access to the materials after 180 days.
- You must be online to read the materials; there is no way for you to read offline.

To purchase access and use the books as described above, follow the link for each book below. The links will take you to the W.W. Norton website and offer you purchase options.

- Essentials of Comparative Politics - [https://digital.wwnorton.com/esscompol5?_ebook](https://digital.wwnorton.com/esscompol5?_ebook)
- Cases in Comparative Politics - [https://digital.wwnorton.com/casescompol5?_ebook](https://digital.wwnorton.com/casescompol5?_ebook)

Option 2:

Purchase access to the two downloadable Ebooks on [www.vitalsource.com](http://www.vitalsource.com). The books will be more expensive, but you can read offline and you won’t lose access after 180 days. Note that you have to purchase the 5th edition of each book (see above for details); earlier editions are not identical to the assigned readings.

Follow the link to [www.vitalsource.com](http://www.vitalsource.com) and search for the books using the ISBN #.

- Cases in Comparative Politics - ISBN: 978-0-393-93754-1

Option 3:

Purchase hard copies of the two books, either new or used. Again, note that you must purchase the correct editions (details above).

Other Readings
Other required readings are available in PDF form throughout the Learn@UW course site.

**Internationally-aware News Source**

I also urge you to read an internationally-aware news source, such as the [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/). Other sources of good international news are the [Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com), the [Wall Street Journal](http://online.wsj.com/home-page), the [Financial Times](http://www.ft.com/home/us), the [Economist](http://www.economist.com), and the [BBC](http://www.bbc.com/news).

You can get a subscription to the mobile and online version of the New York Times for fairly little money (only $1 a week or so) [here](http://nytimes.com/college31).

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Assignments

Readings

Your readings are available either in your textbook (see “Textbook Information”) or as PDFs on our course website. Note that some weeks are more reading intensive than others, so please be prepared for that.

Case activity

At the start of each week (except in Week 2), you will complete a case activity that provides foundational information on the materials we are covering that week. For the country cases, much of this is focused on history and the development of political institutions. The materials for these exercises include short texts, primary documents, and videos, and the like. You will be asked to engage with those materials (by reading, watching, or listening) and to then answer a series of knowledge check questions.

When the activity consists of more than one item or segment, you will only be able to move on after having correctly answered every question on the preceding knowledge check. You are awarded the points that count toward your final grade only after you have completed the last knowledge check, so you want to make sure you actually finish each case activity.

Finishing each case activity with a perfect score on the last knowledge check is particularly important because you will not be able to access any of the other course materials for that week (lectures, discussion activity, etc.) if you did not fully finish the case activity. [Please note that this setup is not my preference, but there isn’t a better way to do it in the Canvas system.] In other words, you must finish the case activity first before you move on to any other materials for a given week (except for Week 2, when there is no case activity).

For the sake of full disclosure, you should know that we have access to a wide range of information about your participation in various online activities. We can, for example, tell if your “strategy” for these case activities is to quickly open up the content and to then complete the quizzes by trial and error, as opposed to carefully engaging with the materials and completing the quizzes based on your newly acquired substantive knowledge. Also remember that the contents of the online activities may be relevant for the exams, so it really is in your interest to carefully work your way through the materials.

Lectures

Each week includes a series of video lectures, of varying lengths, which you are required to watch in their entirety and take notes on – as if you were in a regular classroom.

Discussion Activity

The weekly discussion activities involve an original post and a response to your peers. Extra credit will generally be available for those of you who perform particularly well (see the instructions for each week for details).

The idea behind these discussion exercises is that you reflect on the ideas of your classmates and meaningfully engage with them. Again, note that we can tell if you do that, or if you only look at and respond to a single one of your peers’ posts, for example.

Study Groups

Each week you are going to be part of a virtual “study group,” which will allow you to engage with your peers about the course materials. The basic purpose of the study group is for you to receive help from your peers and for you to help them as you are preparing for your graded assignments. If something in the readings, lectures, or in the other course materials is unclear to
you, this is the place to ask questions and for you to help answer the questions your classmates post. To the extent possible, you want you to be answering each others questions, so that at the end of each study group period (11:59pm on Thursdays) you are only left with those questions you are unable to answer yourselves or which you would like me to weigh in on. It is your collective responsibility to come up with this final list. I will then address those questions in the response video I post each Friday morning by noon.

I expect each study group to post 2-3 questions per week that are NOT questions you can find easy answers to in the course materials. Note that I may not be able to address every single question in my video response, but I will try to be as exhaustive as I can be in a relatively short period of time. Each week, each study group should delegate the task of posting the questions to one of its members.

Note that I will be monitoring the study group discussions and that I will note who participates. Please don’t let this inhibit you - I just want to make sure I know, for example, if somebody never participates or only ever asks questions and never tries to respond to questions posed by others. The member of each study group will receive the same grade, which reflects the quality of their discussion and the list of questions they end up submitting to me. I will, however, downgrade a student when it is obvious that s/he was merely free-riding on everybody else’s efforts.

**Essay Exams**

Each of the four exams in PS106 consists of exactly two essay questions that you will have a total of 90 minutes to answer. Once you access the exam, the clock starts and you are unable to interrupt and re-start.

At the beginning of each study period (on Thursday during weeks 1, 3, 5, and 7, and on Wednesday during weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8) I will post a list of possible essay questions, two of which will then be on the exam. In other words, the only surprise will be which of the essay questions I select. The selection will be random, so it will be a poor strategy for you to try to guess which essay will end up on the exam; in order to succeed, you have to prepare for each essay. The exams are open book, so you can use your class material and notes. But it is very important for you to understand that our expectations are sufficiently high that you will do poorly on the exams if you do not prepare in advance. 45 minutes are not enough to review all relevant course materials and write a quality response.

Here are some general guidelines for your answers:

- I expect you to draw explicitly on and reference the relevant class materials.
- You are to use your own words unless you are offering a direct quotation (which you should only do sparingly). Even if you cite properly, it is not acceptable to string together other people’s words. It is your voice and ideas we are looking to hear.
- The exams are not strictly cumulative, but note that I do expect you to rely on relevant knowledge of materials from prior weeks. Not every two-week segment is a clean slate, in that sense, even if each exam will of course focus most heavily on the materials covered in the preceding two weeks.
- Note that using examples from countries you know will almost certainly strengthen your argument.
- In preparation for the essay exam, you don’t have to write each essay fully ahead of time (although you can of course do that, if you want). But I would strongly urge you to come up with your thesis statement and to identify and carefully read those class materials that are relevant to the essay question and your thesis statement. Then prepare a detailed outline for each essay. That way you can use the 45 minutes you will have for each essay during the exam time to write what you already know you will say.
- You are expected to cite your sources properly, including all class materials. If you do not know how to cite, check out this resource (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html).
- Finally, I will not tolerate any plagiarism on your exams (or on any other assignment). Even if it concerns “just” a sentence or short section, I will treat it as an act of academic dishonesty. You will fail the class and I will report you to the dean’s office. Before each exam, I urge you to carefully review my notes on plagiarism (https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/46787/pages/plagiarism-statement?module_item_id=360563). Note that ignorance does not protect you from punishment.

**Time Management**
It is imperative that you set aside sufficient time in your weekly schedule to stay on top of and complete your work for this class, which has a workload equivalent to that of a regular 4-credit course. Putting it slightly differently: we are covering in 8 weeks the materials I cover in 15 weeks when I teach PS106 as a regular semester-long class.

Note that the course schedule and due dates for your assignments are identical for each two week segment (see below), so you can (and should) plan ahead for both odd (weeks 1, 3, 5, and 7) and even weeks (weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8). Due dates are slightly different for odd and even weeks; one easy way to think about how they differ (aside from the exams) is that odd weeks start on Sunday, while even weeks start on Saturday (because there is no exam at the end of odd weeks, and because this way you get an extra day to study before each exam).

Each week starts with my weekly intro video. Don’t skip this, as I may provide important information about what’s happening each week.

Each Wednesday, the materials for the next week become available. I caution against working ahead too much, but this gives you the opportunity to get a head start if you know that you will have a busy week coming up.

### Odd Weeks (1,3,5,7) -- 6 Day Progression

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Policies and Help

1. Rules

- Anything covered in lecture, readings, or other materials is fair game for the exams. When writing your essays, you want to rely on all course materials that are relevant to the question at hand.

- I will use the Canvas Announcements feature to share updates and post my response to questions that arise in the weekly study group activities. You can access these by clicking the Announcements link in the navigation bar, but I strongly recommend that you adjust your notification preferences so you will be automatically notified when announcements are posted. Specifically, I recommend that you configure your settings to be immediately notified of new announcements. [Here](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10624) is a resource that will show how to adjust your notification preferences.

- Research shows unambiguously that actively taking notes is an important skill and learning tool. I will therefore not make my PowerPoint slides available. Your best strategy is to listen carefully to the lectures and take selective notes on things mentioned and to then integrate that knowledge into what you learned from other course materials.

- My policy on re-evaluating grades is the following (please read very carefully!):
  - You must wait for 48 hours after the assignment has been returned before issuing any complaints.
  - When you contact me with a request to re-evaluate your grade, you must provide 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.
  - Your grade will be fully re-evaluated. This means that I may revise the grade downward as well as upward.

- The dates for all class activities and assignments are set. If you know that you will be unable to complete an assignment on time for religious, health, or other reasons that I may consider valid, please let me know as soon as possible. There will be no make-up assignments unless you notify me before the assignment starts and provide proper documentation that missed the assignment due to a) a genuine family emergency, b) illness or injury, or c) travel for university-related (!) obligations. If a quiz is missed for a valid reason, you will be able to do a substitute assignment.

- If you have any questions about the class format, assignments, etc., please post them in the "Questions (non-substantive) about the class, assignments, etc." discussion forum (under "Discussions" in the main course menu). If you prefer that I am the only one who sees your question, email me at ringe@wisc.edu.

Cheating is a very serious offense that will get you in great trouble. You will receive a failing grade for the class, and the reason for the grade will be noted in your transcript. This will make it extremely difficult for you to gain entrance to graduate or professional schools and will jeopardize your opportunities with a large number of employers in the future. I again urge you to very carefully my notes on plagiarism [here](https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/46787/pages/plagiarism-statement?module_item_id=360563).

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes to the class as we move along (although this is rather unlikely).

2. Know where to get help.

For technology-related questions:

If you need help to resolve a technology issue:
3. Seek out necessary disability accommodations.

It is recommended that if you need to request disability-related accommodations or have specific accessibility requirements for participating in this online course you become a McBurney Disability Resource Center client and meet with your online course instructor as far in advance of the start of class as possible. Accommodation service plans can be tailored for students taking online courses, and early meetings with faculty can be used to discuss the structure of the course and the delivery of the course content to identify accommodations and accessibility features that you may need.

Web: How to Become a McBurney Client (http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/students/howto.php)
Phone: (608) 263-2741
Email: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu (mailto:mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu)
Text: (608) 225-7956
Fax: (608) 265-2998

4. Be aware of these important University Policies (https://kb.wisc.edu/ei/resources/page.php?id=50255).
Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism is the act of improperly using someone else’s words or ideas as if they were your own. As such, plagiarism is the theft of intellectual property, and this is no less serious than the theft of material property. There are no “degrees” of plagiarism; one little offense, no matter how small it may appear, constitutes academic dishonesty. Whatever form it takes (downloading and reformatting an article, “buying” an essay, taking a “free” paper off the internet, turning in another student's work, “sharing” assignments with others, failing to cite a source, neglecting necessary quotation marks, etc.) there is no excuse for plagiarism, and it will get you in a lot of trouble.

The “I did not know” excuse does not count, in any way. Ignorance of what constitutes academic dishonesty does not entitle you to any leniency. It is much like the real world: not knowing a rule or law does not mean you are not subject to it or protect you from sanction. It is your responsibility to know what academic dishonesty is or to educate yourself. I am providing some explanation in what follows, but I urge you to ask any follow-up questions you might have.

Note that the most common form of plagiarism is failure to cite properly. You must provide a citation, for example (Brown 1999, 57), after writing a sentence or a series of sentences that contain words or ideas taken from another person or publication. If you are quoting directly, you must use quotation marks. If you are unsure about how to cite properly, check out [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html). If anything remains unclear, please ask me.

Also note that changing a couple of words here or there does not mean you are not plagiarizing. Here is an example: a few years ago, the journalist Fareed Zakaria was suspended from his jobs at Time Magazine and CNN for plagiarism. Below is what he wrote and then the source from which he plagiarized. Notice that he did not take from the other source word for word; he did change some words, but it still counts as plagiarism. This is not just because he did not cite the other author; it is because he passed off phrases and ideas as his own that were not.

What Zakaria wrote: "Adam Winkler, a professor of constitutional law at UCLA, documents the actual history in Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America. Guns were regulated in the U.S. from the earliest years of the Republic. Laws that banned the carrying of concealed weapons were passed in Kentucky and Louisiana in 1813. Other states soon followed: Indiana in 1820, Tennessee and Virginia in 1838, Alabama in 1839 and Ohio in 1859. Similar laws were passed in Texas, Florida and Oklahoma. As the governor of Texas (Texas!) explained in 1893, the "mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder. To check it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man."

What the author of the original piece wrote (Jill Lepore in the New Yorker): "As Adam Winkler, a constitutional-law scholar at U.C.L.A., demonstrates in a remarkably nuanced new book, “Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America,” firearms have been regulated in the United States from the start. Laws banning the carrying of concealed weapons were passed in Kentucky and Louisiana in 1813, and other states soon followed: Indiana (1820), Tennessee and Virginia (1838), Alabama (1839), and Ohio (1859). Similar laws were passed in Texas, Florida, and Oklahoma. As the governor of Texas explained in 1893, the "mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder. To check it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man."

So if you paraphrase, make sure you are truly writing in your own words. And make sure to properly cite all your sources, including all class materials.

In a course without in-class assignments, the temptation to take shortcuts and cheat may be greater than in a regular class. You absolutely must resist this temptation, or the consequences will be dire. If you are caught cheating, you will receive a failing grade for the class, I will report you to the Dean’s office, and the reason for the grade will be noted in your transcript. This will make it extremely difficult for you to gain entrance to graduate or professional schools and will jeopardize your opportunities with a large number of employers in the future. If you are repeat offender, you will most likely be expelled from the university. Do not put yourself (and me) into what will be a very uncomfortable situation with very serious consequences.
Technology Preparation

You will be expected to have access to the internet for this course as there are weekly assignments due and regular discussions in which you are expected to participate. Use or reference these resources as they are useful to you.

For technical help, click the "?" button on the menu to the left.

1. Perform a [system check](https://uwmad.courses.wisconsin.edu/d2l/systemCheck) on your computer's settings.

2. Learn about the course-specific tools we will use.

The technology skills required for this course are:

1. Using the learning management system
2. Using email with attachments
3. Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats
4. Copying and pasting

Canvas

Canvas is the course management system for this course. Canvas has a [number of tools](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-4121#jive_content_id_Web_Services) that will facilitate your learning, communication, and activity within this course. Learn about the [accessibility of Canvas](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061). Following is a list of the Canvas tools that will be used in this course:

- [Discussions](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1294)
- [Modules](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3162)
- [Grades](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-1291)
- [People](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3165)
- [Quizzes](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3171)

[Canvas accessibility statement](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061)

[Canvas privacy statement](https://www.canvaslms.com/policies/privacy)

3. Verify your computing system meets minimum technology requirements.

Required Hardware:

- Internet Connection: You should have a high-speed Internet connection via cable, Canvas, or network.
- Computer specs: 1 GHz processor; 2GB RAM
- Computer audio: sound card and speakers
- For more information: See the [list of hardware supported by DoIT](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=245) (Division of Information Technology).

Required Software & Settings:

- Operating System: The newest versions of both Windows and Mac OS are fully supported by the DoIT Help Desk. See the [Windows OS](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=3265), and [Mac OS](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=3264) service descriptions for other DoIT supported versions.
- For Learn@UW: See the [recommended web browsers, settings, and software for use with Learn@UW](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=22475)
4. Secure your computer (http://www.doit.wisc.edu/students/secure-your-computer/).
Activities to Get You Started

1. Update your user profile.

Your user profile is viewable from the classlist, so you'll want it to show your up-to-date information. Access it from the dropdown list under your name, located in the top-right corner. All information included is optional.

2. Forward (or use) Your Campus Email Account.

(Information taken from: Office of the Registrar - Email Address Requirements (http://registrar.wisc.edu/email_address_requirements_student.htm))

All students are responsible for activating their NetID and their email account. The university assigned student email account shall be the university's preferred means of communication with all students attending the UW-Madison. Students are responsible for all information sent to them via their university assigned email account.

Students who choose to have their email forwarded to a private email address outside the official university network address will be doing so at their own risk. The university is not responsible for any difficulties that may occur in the proper or timely transmission or access of email forwarded to any unofficial email address, and any such problems will not absolve students of their responsibility to know and comply with the content of official communications sent to students’ official UW-Madison email address.

Learn how to forward your campus email account (https://kb.wisc.edu/office365/page.php?id=36539).

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