**POL-UA 9500**  
**Introduction to Comparative Politics**

This course will introduce students to the study of comparative politics, which is defined as the study of domestic politics anywhere in the world. As a way of cutting into this vast topic, we specifically focus on the process of democratic transition by analyzing the democratic revolution that has swept the globe during the last thirty-five years. In turn we will explore the causes of democratization, threats to democratization, and factors that may aid in a successful consolidation of democracy. As part of this process, students will be exposed to a wide range of topics in comparative politics, including theories of democratic transitions, the politics of economic reform, voting, parties, and electoral systems, and theories of ethnic conflict.

Please note: this course fulfills the requirement for a “core” course for Politics majors, the first time such a course has been offered at NYU-Florence, and is taught by Professor Tucker, who normally teaches the course in New York. As such, it is to date the only opportunity *anywhere* to take a politics core course in a small class format. As an introductory course, it is also perfectly appropriate for non-politics majors as well.

**Requirements**

The course meets Tuesday mornings from 9:00 AM – 11:45 AM in Villa Ulivi in the S. Gimignano classroom. Grading is based on a final exam (50%), a mid-term (20%), a 5-7 page paper (20%, due December 4), and class participation (10%). Note that the paper does not require outside research, so you can alternatively conceive of it as a take home midterm consisting of one essay question that you have a week to complete. In addition, students will be required to create a country-specific website where they will post information about the political system of that country.

**Office Hours**

Professor Tucker will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 1:00 – 2:30 in his office on the top floor of Villa La Pietra. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of the scheduled office hours, please email Professor Tucker directly.
Readings

This course is *not* taught from a textbook. Students are welcome to purchase a comparative politics textbook if they like, but there is no particular text for this class. Instead, readings will be drawn from 5 books recommended for purchase and a “virtual course pack” that contains a collection of articles and book chapters which can be downloaded individually from the course website on Blackboard. It is also suggested that students read the blog that Professor Tucker co-authors, “The Monkey Cage”, ([www.themonkeycage.org](http://www.themonkeycage.org)) and that you follow Professor Tucker on Twitter (@j_a_tucker).

All students are expected to have completed the relevant reading **before** the class meeting each week. There are approximately 100 – 150 pages of reading a week; some are more and some are less. In particular, the weeks on the moment of transition, economic reform, and social capital have heavy reading requirement, as does the economic voting lecture. Others are shorter. Please plan ahead accordingly!

Please note that “recommended” readings are included only for students who want to know more about the topic; you will *not* be expected to have read these works, nor will you be tested on them.

The following books are recommended for purchase and are not available on Blackboard:

- Jeffrey Sachs, *Poland’s Jump to the Market Economy* (MIT University Press, 1994)

These books can be purchased at:

Feltrinelli International
Via Cavour 12r - 50126 Florence, Italy
Tel.: +39 055 292 196
Fax.: +39 055 282183
E-mail: firenze.international@lafeltrinelli.it

For a few of the reading, I have provided a link as to where you can find the material online. All other readings are posted on Blackboard.
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1. Introduction to Comparative Politics: Sept 4th

Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton, *Comparative Politics Today* (8th Edition), 31-45


Week 2. Regimes: Sept. 11th

*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Ch 1, 3, 4 (p.3-15, 38-65)

*Global Resurgence*: Schmitter and Karl, “What Democracy is…” Ch.4, 49-62


Recommended:

Week 3: The Moment of Transition: Sept 18th

Ash, The Magic Lantern, all

*Global Resurgence*: Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave”, Ch.1, p.3-25

Mapping the Fall of Communism: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7972232.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7972232.stm)


Aday, Sean et al. 2010. “Blogs and Bullets II: New Media and Conflict after the Arab Spring”, United States Institute of Peace.

**Recommended:**

*Global Studies: Russia*, “Central-Eastern Europe: From Dictatorship to Democracy”, p.97-115


*Global Resurgence*, Ch. 8–10, 12 (p.111-149, 154-161)


**Recommended:**

Hamdy, Ashraf. 2011. “Parliamentary versus Presidential Political System: Options for post January 2011 Egypt”. Master’s Thesis submitted at University of Cairo. Read the literature review section (p. 8-17); skim the rest of it to the extent you are interested

**Recommended:**

**Week 5: October 2nd**

**Part I: Electoral Systems**


http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/ (Just poke around the site – I’ll refer to it in class. Useful for impressing your relatives back home.)

**Part II: How to Read Articles with Statistical Analysis**


**Part III: REQUIRED LECTURE ATTENDANCE: Wednesday, October 3rd, 6:00 PM: La Pietra Dialogues: How Americans Elect Their President, or What Exactly is the Electoral College?** (http://www.lapietradialogues.org/dialogues_sch.php?cat=1&id=61)

**Week 6: Tuesday, October 9th**

**Part I: In Class Mid-Term**

**Part II: Documentary on 2010 British Parliamentary Elections**

Note: No readings are assigned for this week.
Week 7: Voting and Elections I: October 16th: Sociological and Rational Approaches to Voting

Sociological Readings:


Rational Readings:


Recommended:

Week 8: Voting and Elections II: October 23rd: Economic and Strategic Voting

Economic Voting articles
NOTE: All of these articles have a lot of statistical analysis. Don’t worry about the details of the statistics – concentrate on the arguments the authors are making and what they report as their findings.


Strategic Voting articles


Recommended:


October 30: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK


**Week 10. Partisan Identification: November 13th**


Dalton 2006, Chapter 9 “Partisanship and Electoral Behavior”, p.177-200.


**Recommended:**


Week 11: Ethnic Conflict: November 20th


To skim:


Week 12: Politics of Economic Reform: November 27th

PAPER ASSIGNED IN CLASS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

Note: These are the last readings assigned for the course. All of them will be helpful for the paper; some of them will be more applicable to Week 13, Part I.

Sachs, Jeffrey, Poland’s Jump to the Market Economy – all


Recommended:


Week 13. December 4th

PAPER DUE AT START OF CLASS, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH

Part I: Economic Reform Case Study: Privatization

Part II: Review and Democratic Consolidation

No Readings Assigned

Week 14: Final Exam: December 11th

No Readings Assigned