

POLS 2890
Weird Democracy: US Politics in a Global Perspective

Fall 2018
12:30-1:20 pm M / W
35 Stout Hall

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Office Hours: 9am-noon & 2-3pm Th,¹
10:30am-12:30pm F,
or by appointment

Course Description

While many Americans think that the US is a typical democracy and a model for others around the world, the reality is that we are actually a weird case with very weird rules. In this course, students will learn some of the main differences in how democracies are run in other parts of the world, and discuss the political, economic, and social outcomes that emerge from these differences.

Required Reading

All of our required readings are posted on the Brightspace page. All readings should be done by class time each week.

Class Expectations

This course is **NOT**...

...easy. Expect to read – and participate! – in discussions and workshops.

...a current events course. This course is about teaching you how the field of comparative politics and comparative democracy. More specifically, you will be contrasting and examining democratic differences. Which means we focus on cause-effect relationships to understand *why* political patterns are the way they are.

...somewhere you get to talk about your feelings. This is a class that teaches you how to make arguments with **evidence**, not opinion or ideology.

I do expect...

...manners. College is a stepping stone to your professional career, and you should conduct yourself as a professional in the classroom. No need for you to wear a suit and tie, but these things will help make the classroom experience more fulfilling for all students:

¹ I am one of the volunteers for the Pete's Pet Posse Therapy Dogs program along with my dog, Cooper. As part of my volunteer activities, Cooper will be present during my Thursday office hours. If you need to meet during this time and would prefer not to have a dog around, just let me know and I will make alternative arrangements.

- No food. Drinks (especially those with caffeine!) are welcome.
- No sleeping in class, and especially, no snoring!
- Cell phones can be distracting to fellow students – please make sure to mute yours and avoid checking your messages during class.
- Keep computer use off games and/or social networks and on academic content.

...regular attendance. While I do not take daily attendance (see “Participation” in the grading section for more details), but you will not do well in this course if you regularly miss lecture.

...assignments to be completed in a timely manner. Workshops assignments are NOT accepted late. For other assignments, any late submissions will be penalized 1 letter grade for every day it is late (beginning at the end of class time). Assignments will not be accepted for grading 1 week after the due date.

...academic integrity. Any work submitted by the student must reflect the student’s own work. Plagiarism is theft of another’s work or ideas, and is a violation both of the student handbook and academic ethics. Not only that, it’s a felony that violates US copyright laws.

In case you are wondering, plagiarism includes:

- 1) Claiming someone else’s work as your own.
- 2) Copying the exact phrase from another source *without giving the author(s) credit*.
- 3) Using data from another source *without giving author(s) credit*.
- 4) Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
- 5) Using an idea or concept from an author *without giving credit to the source*.
- 6) Giving incorrect information about the citation source.
- 7) Changing the words or phrasing of the sentence but still keeping the original meaning *without giving credit to the source*.

From this list, you might notice that most of the time, all it takes to **NOT** plagiarize is to properly cite and give credit to the people from whom you are borrowing information or ideas. When in doubt, cite it!

For more information about academic integrity, see the OSU Syllabus attachment at the end of this syllabus.

Grading

Following university guidelines, our grading scale is:

%	Grade	Explanation
90-100	A	Exceptional & outstanding work
80-89	B	Very good work
70-79	C	Adequate work; superficial grasp on concepts
60-69	D	Very poor work; poor understanding of the material
Below 60	F	Failing; unacceptable work

Remember, "A" is a rare grade reserved for projects that demonstrate outstanding skill and effort.

Our class work includes:

**% of
Grade**

Participation: Each week, I will mark you down if you contribute something of *substance*; one word answers will not net you any points. At the end of the semester, I will look over your weekly participation and also consider the overall *quality* of your participation. Students who regularly attend the course and actively participate will receive full points here...other students, not so much!

30%

I will have this participation sheet with me in class, and you are always welcome to check in with me to make sure I have you down for participating each week.

A Case in Global Democracy (Presentation): Since it is fun to talk about real-world cases and not just the theory, we will have several days throughout the semester where groups will present on one non-US democracy. The countries your group can choose from are the United Kingdom, India, Germany, and South Africa. The assignment sheet is listed later in the syllabus.

30%

Final Paper: Write a 4 pages maximum (Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, with margins no less than 1 inch) paper describing two things you would change and one thing you would keep if you could re-write the US Constitution. Full details on this project can be found at the end of the syllabus.

40%

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (Aug. 20 & 22): Class Introduction

- No readings

Week 2 (Aug. 27 & 29): Telling a “Good” Democracy from a “Bad” One

- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 146-152.
- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 8: Nondemocratic Regimes. pp. 376-377.
- Shuster, Simon. 1 August 2017. Vladimir Putin Doesn’t Understand the Limits of Donald Trump’s Power. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4881972/vladimir-putin-donald-trump-executive-power/>
- *Optional:*
 - Siegel, Joseph T., Michael M. Weinstein, Morton H. Halperin. 2004. Why Democracies Excel. *Foreign Affairs*, 83: 57-71.
 - Jiménez, Mélida. 15 November 2017. Is democracy in a worldwide decline? Nope. Here’s our data. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/11/15/is-democracy-in-a-worldwide-decline-we-measured-it-heres-what-we-found/?utm_term=.61cadd6741f5

No class on Monday, Sept 2 – Labor Day

Week 3 (Sept. 5 & 10): Executive Differences

- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 152-153, 155-161.
- Graham, Benjamin A. T., Michael K. Miller, and Kaare Strom. 15 October 2017. When democracies are under attack, it’s time to rein in executive power. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/10/15/when-democracies-are-under-attack-its-time-to-rein-in-executive-power/?utm_term=.93ae047dad68

Week 4 (Sept. 12 & 17): The Perils of Presidentialism

- Linz, Juan. 1990. The Perils of Presidentialism. *Journal of Democracy*, 1, 1: 51-69. **Exerts only.**
- Kiersz, Andy. 8 November 2016. No matter who wins the election, America could be barreling towards a constitutional crisis. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/juan-linz-and-threats-to-american-democracy-2016-11>

Week 5 (Sept. 19 & 24): Parliamentary Debate as Sport

- Question Time. 2017. Retrieved from the UK Parliament website at <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/business/questions/>
- In class: watch Prime Minister Question time

Week 6 (Sept. 26 & Oct. 1): A Case in Global Democracy (the United Kingdom)

- Be sure to read the associated news reading (posted to the News Discussion board) prior to class

Week 7 (Oct. 3 & 8): Envisioning Representation through Parliamentary Design

- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 153; 161-162
- SoRelle, Mallory E. and Alexis N. Walker. 23 June 2017. Both Democrats and Republicans care about ‘states’ rights’ – when it suits them. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/23/both-democrats-and-republicans-care-about-states-rights-when-it-suits-them/?utm_term=.0b6cea85b0db

Week 8 (Oct. 10 & 15): The Rule of Law

- O’Donnell, Guillermo A. 2004. Why the Rule of Law Matters. *Journal of Democracy*, 15, 4: 32-46.

No class on Friday, Oct 19 – Fall Break

Week 9 (Oct. 17 & 22): Comparing Legal Systems

- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 154-155.
- Ringhand, Lori A. and Paul M. Collins, Jr. March 24, 2017. Should 18 Years be the limit for Supreme Court justices? Retrieved from the *Chicago Tribune* at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-supreme-court-term-limits-18-years-20170324-story.html#>
- *Optional (but highly suggested for those who want to do judicial term limits for your final paper):*
 - Calabresi, Steven G. and James Lindgren. 2006. Term Limits for the Supreme Court: Life Tenure Reconsidered. *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 29, 3: 769-878.

Week 10 (Oct. 24 & 29): Electoral Rules...and Why They Matter

- O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 162-169
- Reynolds, Andrew S. 22 November 2011. Egypt’s Doomed Election. Retrieved from *The New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/23/opinion/egypts-doomed-election.html>

Week 11 (Oct. 31 & Nov. 5): A Case in Global Democracy (Germany)

- Be sure to read the associated news reading (posted to the News Discussion board) prior to class

Week 12 (Nov. 7 & 12): A Case in Global Democracy (Students chose: India or South Africa)

- Be sure to read the associated news reading (posted to the News Discussion board) prior to class

Week 13 (Nov. 14 & 19): No class (Paper "Workday")

I'm away at a conference...and we have Thanksgiving break. Since I know a lot of professors like to have exams or papers due this time of the semester, I'm letting everyone have the week off to focus on other schoolwork. If you want to get ahead in this class, I would highly suggest everyone use this free hour as a chance to get started on an outline for their final paper!

Week 14 (Nov. 26 & 28): Rights & Liberties

- O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2018. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 6: Democratic Regimes. pp. 172-173.
- Liptak, Adam. February 6, 2012. "We the People' Loses Appeal With People Around the World." Retrieved from the *New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/07/us/we-the-people-loses-appeal-with-people-around-the-world.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

Week 15 (Dec. 3 & 5): The Weirdness of the Electoral College

- Colomer, Josep M. 11 December 2016. The electoral college is a medieval relic. Only the U.S. still has one. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/11/the-electoral-college-is-a-medieval-relic-only-the-u-s-still-has-one/?utm_term=.f9be3c4d34b2

Final Papers Due on Wednesday, December 12th by 11:50 am.

Upload to online and bring a paper copy by my office.

(Group Presentation)
A Case in Global Democracy

You will work as part of a group to present on democracy in a different country. A different group member must present each section, and each presenter has no more than 5 minutes. Each presenter should cover one of the following sections:

- The Path to Democracy: What were the major historical events that shaped this democracy into the system it is today? I would suggest focusing on the following stories:
 - The UK: The slow evolution of democracy and the rise of “parliamentary sovereignty” (aka, how the parliament came to dominate UK politics)
 - Germany: The failure of their first attempt at democracy (the Weimar Republic), and how they changed post-WWII to prevent this from happening again
 - India: The independence movement and the challenge of building democracy in one of the poorest and most multicultural societies in the world
 - South Africa: The legacy of Apartheid and the transition under Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC) and challenges since.
- The Electoral System: How do they elect their members of parliament?
- The Party System: How many (major) political parties, who are their leaders, and what main policies do they advocate?
- The Basics of the Executive System: Parliamentary, Presidential, or Something Else? Also, be sure to describe the current executive leadership, including who they are and how they came to power.
- For groups with more than 4 members: One other democratic institution you find interesting about this country (your team’s choice).

To help prepare each group for their presentation, I will send each group a copy of a chapter on your country from a comparative politics textbook.

Your groups should also create a PowerPoint to accompany your presentation and send it to me **before class time that day**.

Your group will also find ONE current event highlighting a modern political challenge facing your country. This news story must come from a respected news source (e.g. *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, BBC News, *The Economist*) and must be posted to the News Discussion Board **the Friday before** your presentation is scheduled.

The breakdown for your grade will be as follows:

- 100 points: the grade for the section you presented
- 100 points: the average grade for the other sections of the presentation (aka, what everyone else presented)
- 50 points: the overall quality of the PowerPoint
- 50 points: for finding and posting ONE news story that everyone else can read and discuss in class

(Final Paper)
Revising the US Constitution

At the end of the semester, you will write a 4 pages maximum (Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, with margins no less than 1 inch) paper describing two things you would change and one thing you would keep if you could re-write the US Constitution. Be sure to list not only your changes, but include references to academic sources to establish what the likely consequences of these changes would be.

The format of the paper should follow the following outline (be sure to use subheadings to help organize your paper):

1. **Introduction:** Include a clear thesis statement of the three institutional changes you would suggest changing/keeping.
2. **Suggested Reforms:** List of 2 changes you would make to the constitution, making references to the academic literature to help justify your choices. This section is the main body of your paper, and should take up most of the page length.
3. **An Institution to Maintain:** List the 1 institution that you think would be necessary to keep if we were to reform the constitution, again referencing the academic literature to help justify your choice. This section will also function as the conclusion of your paper, so no need to add a separate conclusion section!
4. **References:** References should include at least 2 sources from our syllabus. All citations should be in APSA or Chicago style, with in-text parenthetical citations and a reference list at the end of the paper. *The reference list does **NOT** count towards your 4-page limit.*

This paper will be completed in place of a final exam. To turn this assignment in, upload a copy to our Brightspace assignment dropbox and bring a paper copy to my office by the end of the scheduled exam period.