

POSC 125: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2013

Instructor: Faramarz Farbod

Room: Zinzendorf 102

Office Hrs.: M:10-11:30 am

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W: 9-10:30 am

In this course we are going to look at the contemporary but contending ways in which peoples and societies have organized themselves to satisfy human needs and relate both to one another near and far and to nature and the environment around them. We will of course study the fundamental ways in which these systems are like and alike and what these mean to the lives of ordinary people. But, that's not all. We will also take time to look at other critical factors. For example, the global capitalist system today is a neoliberal order facing multiple crises. We will spend a considerable amount of time examining what that means. We will also study the many different and evolving challenges and alternatives to the neoliberal model. The German model is one such alternative. The Nordic model of social democracy is another. Many Latin American social movements and several leftist states have also challenged the dominant neoliberal model in the past decade. We will spend a lot of time investigating them and thinking about the nature of these efforts at alternative-building. We will consider, among other issues, whether these challenges represent a clean break from the dominant system, or whether they represent attempts at creating post-neoliberal societies that nevertheless remain capitalist? We will also examine the so-called market socialist model in China and assess the claims of the Chinese state as to its nature. We look at Cuba's attempts to adopt features of Chinese model. Finally we will examine Africa's fate in terms of debts and flows of capital in the context of neoliberalism and colonialism in order to interrogate conventional understandings of "development."

Required Readings: (1) *Geoghegan: Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?* (2) *Hart-Landsberg: China and Socialism* (3) Burbach: *Latin America's Turbulent Transitions* (4) *Boyce: Africa's Odious Debts* (5) Westra: *Confronting Global Neoliberalism*

Grades* :	Participation/Preparation	15%
	Exams (2)	40%
	Research Paper/Presentation	25%
	Quizzes (5)	20%

Notes & Explanations:

- **In-Class Participation:** It refers to regular attendance plus informed participation in both the *Weekly Takeaway Circles* and the more general class discussions. The *Weekly Takeaway Circles:* At the beginning of the semester you will be organized into groups of 4 to 5 students. Each group meets once a week in class for about 15 minutes to discuss the assigned readings. We do this before the class discussions/lectures begin. Plan to come to the Circle with the assigned reading materials AND your takeaways from the readings. Takeaways are made up of two items: (1) *significant understandings* gained from the readings and (2) *questions* raised by you as you read the texts to include any difficulties you may have encountered in understanding the materials.
- **Research Paper/Presentation:** The Paper is worth 20% of the course grade and is due On: Nov. 19. Late Papers will be penalized by a grade. You must hand in a typed single-page Synopsis on Nov. 5 indicating your paper's 1) topic, 2) significant question, 3) why the latter matters, and 4) the list of research sources you've *already* consulted. The Paper should be between 6-8 typed pages (not including the Bibliography, the Endnotes and the Title pages). **Presentations:** (5%) You are required to present your research in class on the above due date. Late papers lose the opportunity to be presented. No make-ups are allowed. Keep your presentation to less than 5 minutes. Use the Synopsis page format with the addition of the segment: 'findings/discussions' regarding your paper's significant question. And present your *updated* research resources during the presentation.
- **EXAMS: Midterm Exam** (20%) on Oct. 8; **Final Exam** (20%) date TBA. The Final Exam is cumulative.
- **Quizzes:** There are 5 quizzes each covering a single book and given at the beginning of a class period.
- **Class Readings** will be assigned on a class-by-class basis. If you miss a class, consult a classmate to find out about assigned readings.
- "Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center."
- **Attendance Policy:** Please arrive on time to every class. Students are encouraged to attend classes regularly. Absence due to illness requires written confirmation from a healthcare provider. Any other absence requires a satisfactory explanation otherwise it will be marked and incorporated into the course grade determination.
- **Academic Honesty Policy:** In cases of cheating or plagiarizing in any way, I will follow the appropriate procedures as they appear in the College Student Handbook.
- **E-Devices:** All electronic devices should be turned *off* before class.

* It is within my purview to apply qualitative judgment in the determination of any and all grades.