

# POLS 2301: Introduction to Comparative Politics, Spring 2016

POLS 2301-02 (CRN 22641), TR 12:30–1:45 p.m., Thomas Hall 104 (WRC1)

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Office Hours: Tu 3:15–5:30 p.m. and Th 1:45–5:30 p.m., Academic Services Building 124 (WRC2).

Also available by appointment in Macon (Jones 314) and Cochran (Wiggs 15).

**Course Overview:** Welcome to the class! This course is a survey of the political systems of several countries around the world, with an emphasis on understanding the differences between how different nation-states are governed. While some historical background and philosophical underpinnings will be explored along the way, along with the cultural context of each nation considered, we will focus on the key features of the contemporary political system in each country studied. In addition to considering the formal political institutions of each government, we will also consider the interaction of government and civil society.

► **Overall Model of the Course:** The approach of this course is largely country-centric; we will discuss general features following a comparative approach, but in the context of specific example countries. The countries being considered, in order, are:

- Great Britain: parliamentary, unitary(ish) constitutional monarchy.
- Germany: parliamentary, federal republic.
- France: premier-presidential, unitary republic.
- Russia: premier-presidential, federal republic.
- Canada: parliamentary, federal republic.
- Mexico: presidential, federal republic.
- Nigeria: presidential, federal republic.
- China (People's Republic): single-party authoritarian state.

► **Prerequisite:** POLS 1101/1101H Introduction to American Government or an equivalent course meeting the U.S. constitution requirement of the USG, or AP/CLEP credit.

► **MGA and USG Core Requirements:** This course fulfills an Area E elective and the Global Perspectives requirement in all 2-year and 4-year majors. It may also meet Area F requirements in certain majors.

► **Expected Learning Outcome:** Students will be expected to achieve the following learning outcome, common to all sections of this course, in order to receive a passing grade (D or above):

*Students will demonstrate knowledge of the key features of the international system and approaches to studying international politics, and the differences between how various countries are governed around the world.*

This outcome will be assessed on the cumulative final examination in the course.

**Required Materials:** There is one book required for this course:

Roskin, Michael G. 2015. *Countries and Concepts: Politics, Geography, Culture*, 13th ed. New York: Pearson. ISBN 978-0-13-396308-3.

It should be available, new and used, at the Middle Georgia State University bookstores; you may also be able to rent or purchase it on-line at a discount. You can also obtain the textbook as an e-book rental online at [http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5341742/9780133951448?\\_\\_hdv=6.8](http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5341742/9780133951448?__hdv=6.8). However, please note that e-book readers and other electronic devices *may not* be used during class.

**Note:** You are required to own, or have access to, a copy of the textbook for the duration of the course (through the final examination).

Additional readings may be assigned at my discretion; I will provide them for you at the library reserve desk, on the course's Brightspace site, or as handouts in class.

**Technology Requirements:** You are required to have access to Brightspace for the duration of the course. You will also need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone that can read Portable Document Format (Adobe PDF)

files and supports HTML5 technologies for browsing the Internet.

**Grades:** Your final grade in this course will be based on the following elements, weighted as follows:

Midterm Exam	25%	Final Exam	25%
Participation	5%	Reading/Lecture Quizzes	15%
Short Paper	15%	Group Presentation	15%

The overall average posted in Brightspace throughout the semester will also be weighted as above. *Your grade is not simply based on “adding up points” as it may be in some of your other courses.* You can review your current grades at any time in D2L.

The final grade in the course reported to the registrar will be converted based on this scale:

Final Weighted Average	Grade	Grade Points	Catalog Description
90.0 or above	A	4.0	Excellent work
80.0–89.9	B	3.0	Good work
70.0–79.9	C	2.0	Satisfactory work
60.0–69.9	D	1.0	Passing work
59.9 or below	F	0.0	Failing work

Numeric grades will only be reported for students in dual enrollment programs. At the college level, only the final letter grade in the course is part of your permanent record.

Although a “D” is the minimum passing grade in undergraduate courses, any grades below a “C” may jeopardize your continued eligibility for federal and state financial aid. Please refer to the “Satisfactory Academic Progress” policy on the Financial Aid website for details.

► **Midterm Grades:** Per university policy, a midterm grade will be posted to SWORDS for all students in this course one week before the withdrawal deadline. The midterm grade is strictly advisory and will not be part of your permanent student record. The grade posted in this course will reflect your current course average as posted in the Brightspace gradebook according to the grading scale found elsewhere on this syllabus. You should be aware that midterm grades do not guarantee a particular final grade in the course, as future assignments will also affect the final course grade you earn.

► **Grading Philosophy:** Your grades will be earned based my judgment of your performance in meeting the learning objectives of the course, and not on the basis of good intentions, whether or not you agree with my political or ideological views (you probably don’t), or how much effort you put in to the course. To judge your performance comprehensively, my grading may include both objective and subjective assessments; sometimes there is a clear “right” answer, sometimes there is no one “right” answer, and sometimes there are a number of potential responses that vary in completeness and correctness, and so my approach to grading differs based on that reality. My commitment to you is that I will assign fair and appropriate grades, in a reasonably timely manner,<sup>1</sup> according to this philosophy, based on the work that is presented for grading. If at any time you believe I have not met that standard, see the section on “Grade Appeals” below.

► **Midterm and Final Exams:** There will be two examinations in this course, a midterm exam and a final exam. Questions on the exams may include items relating to the textbook, lectures, and other class activities. The exams may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions.

During the exams, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be **switched off and stored away**.

► **Reading/Lecture Quizzes:** Approximately once a week, there will be an quiz covering material from the assigned readings and lectures on a particular country. These quizzes may include items testing your familiarity with the

<sup>1</sup>Some assignments, such as the reading quizzes online, are automatically graded, so you can expect fairly quick feedback on those. You should expect the grading of written work to generally take between 5 and 10 business days.

geographic features of that country, as well as items that test factual knowledge or deeper conceptual understanding.

*Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped from your quiz average.* Together, the quizzes will count as 20% of your final grade. Most quizzes will be administered online via Brightspace.

- ▶ **Exam and Quiz Content:** Questions on examinations and quizzes may be drawn from the textbook, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the professor as announced in class or in Brightspace.
- ▶ **Term Paper:** Students will write a paper of between five and eight pages in length comparing *three* or more of the assigned countries on a particular dimension of government. You will be assigned a dimension to investigate; however, you may choose which three (or more) countries to compare on that dimension. The paper should make use of relevant primary and secondary source materials, including (but not limited to) the assigned textbook and readings. This paper should be your own, individual work for this course.

More details on this assignment will be provided in class early in the semester.

- ▶ **Group Presentation:** Students will be assigned to a group of around 3–5 students to give a 20-minute in-class presentation on the politics and government of an assigned country, which will be a country that we are not covering in class this semester. Members of the group will be expected to make use of relevant primary and secondary source materials, including (but not limited to) the assigned textbook and readings; working with the campus librarians to find relevant and reputable sources for this assignment is *highly* encouraged.

This presentation will count as 15% of your final class grade.

- ▶ **Participation:** This portion of your final grade will be based on your level of participation in class. Your class attendance is a factor in determining this grade; see below for details.

**Contacting the Professor:** My regularly-scheduled office hours are listed at the beginning of the syllabus. During those times, I generally do not schedule appointments; rather, meetings are “first come, first serve.” When I am not busy with a student in-person, I will also be available “virtually” at these times by phone or web chat. If you wish to make a confirmed appointment to see me *outside* my scheduled hours, please do so at least two business days in advance.

If you do contact me outside my office hours, please bear in mind that my other work and personal obligations may be on a different schedule than what is convenient for you; for example, I may be in class, in the midst of research, or at a meeting. Except under extraordinary circumstances, if your email includes a question or otherwise requires a response, I will always get back to you within one business day, and frequently sooner; messages that merely inform me of a class absence may not be acknowledged.

If you call my office outside my office hours, please avoid leaving voice mail or messages with university staff; it is an incredibly unproductive and inefficient means of communication. You will usually receive a much quicker response by email.

To protect the privacy of your educational records, all discussion regarding grades or other confidential information must be conducted in person, via Brightspace, or via your official *mga.edu* email address; I will not discuss confidential information over the phone or via any non-school email address. If you have not yet activated your official university email address, please see <http://www.mga.edu/technology/email.aspx>.

**When contacting me outside of class, please be sure to specify both the course and section you are in, as it will allow me to respond more quickly to you.**

Finally, while you may find me in various guises on various social media sites, I won’t “friend” current or past students who are still enrolled as undergraduates; please do not take this personally.

**Class Policies:** The primary expectations of all Middle Georgia State University students are integrity and civility. Each student should approach his/her academic endeavors, relationships and personal responsibilities with a strong commitment to personal integrity and interpersonal civility.

I believe that for our class to be successful, we must establish a supportive and respectful environment in the classroom and related settings (such as the class website on Brightspace). Accordingly, disruptive behaviors such as repeated tardiness, side conversations, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student

newspaper), or use of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) will adversely affect your grade; repeated or egregious disruptive behavior may result in you being asked to leave class for the day, which will reduce your participation grade by one letter grade.

► **Electronic devices:** In the past I have found that while a few students are able to use laptops and tablets effectively as note-taking aids in the classroom, the vast majority find it difficult to avoid distractions from email, Facebook, and other sources online. Ordinarily this wouldn't cause much of a problem, but in the classroom setting this creates what social scientists refer to as "negative externalities"; specifically, when you're watching that funny YouTube video of the monkey washing a cat, everyone around you is also going to see it and be distracted too. Accordingly, you should mute or switch off your cell phones and any alarms during class, and refrain completely from using laptops, tablets, e-readers, "smart" or "dumb" phones, and other portable electronic devices during class.

There may be times in class when I *specifically* ask you to use your cell phone or a laptop or tablet (for example, to participate in a web-based activity); on these occasions, of course, it would be OK to do so.

► **Extra credit:** To be fair to all students, I do not offer individualized extra-credit opportunities. If you believe you might benefit from extra credit, I strongly advise you take advantage of any opportunities offered to the whole class as they are announced over the term.

► **Notes:** I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. If you miss class, you will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or its study guide, if applicable. (Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with me and the MGA Disability Services Office to arrange notetaking assistance.)

You may make audio recordings of in-class lectures; recordings are for your own, personal use, and may not be shared with students who are not enrolled in this course.

► **Revisions to the syllabus:** While I will make every effort to follow the syllabus as-written, if unforeseen circumstances arise during the semester I reserve the right to amend any policy in this syllabus.

► **Attendance and absence policy:** To encourage regular attendance and participation in class, I will take daily attendance. Your attendance an important factor considered when evaluating your participation grades; however, perfect attendance does not guarantee a perfect participation grade, and it is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that you could receive a perfect participation grade if you have missed a class meeting. Unlike in some of your other courses, "attendance" is not directly computed in your grade and there is no grade penalty for an absence.

Arriving late, leaving early, or unexplained/frequent trips outside of the room during class time for non-medical reasons will adversely affect your participation grade.

► **Make-ups:** Make-up examinations must be scheduled in advance in the case of an unavoidable planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or other emergency that is properly documented, after the fact. To be fair to all students, make-up exams must be completed within two weeks of the originally scheduled exam date; also, make-up exams may be administered in a different format than the original exam offered to the rest of the class, at my sole discretion.

Make-up quizzes will not be arranged under any circumstances. There are also no make-ups for missed classes; however, students with an excused absence will receive credit for attending any classes missed with a valid excuse (such as student illness or participation in class-related or sponsored activities), and any missed in-class quiz will be dropped from the grade.

To be fair to all students in the class, students are responsible for *all assignments*, regardless of their date of initial enrollment in the course.

**Late Assignments:** A late penalty of 10 percentage points per day will apply to work turned in after the deadline for the assignment to be completed. Notwithstanding this policy, any work received more than 48 hours after the scheduled final examination may not be graded, resulting in a zero (0) on any assignments outstanding at that point in the semester. (Please refer to the university policy on incomplete grades, discussed below, for

exceptions.)

► **Grade Appeals:** Like everyone else, I am fallible and sometimes make mistakes. If I simply misrecorded a grade (for example, if I enter “70” in the gradebook when you earned an “80”) or made an arithmetic error, please bring me the returned assignment, and I will immediately correct the error.

If you believe you received an *unjust* grade, I am happy to discuss the grading of the assignment with you, in-person during regular office hours or at a scheduled appointment; please bring the graded assignment with you so we can have a productive conversation. If you remain unsatisfied with my explanation of the grade, to give us both ample time to consider the dispute, you will need to type a brief (one-page) explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment was originally returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook and Catalog for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

► **Academic Misconduct:** You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the Student Code of Conduct; this is included in the current edition of the Student Handbook, which is available online at [http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA\\_Student\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.mga.edu/student-affairs/docs/MGA_Student_Handbook.pdf).

I take academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams and plagiarism of written work) very seriously. So does Middle Georgia State University. In this course the *minimum* penalty for academic misconduct is a grade of zero (0) on the assignment in question, with no opportunity to repeat the assignment, along with referral to the testing center to complete an examination on plagiarism, cheating, and the Student Code of Conduct. Second or subsequent violations, or egregious misconduct (for example, an organized effort to cheat involving multiple students, or academic misconduct that causes harm to other students), will automatically be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for a university-level resolution which may include a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, and/or academic suspension.

I offer some free advice, drawn from past experience as both a student and a professor: do not turn in plagiarized work because you have run out of time and feel as if you need to turn in *something*—taking the late penalty is better than the sanctions for academic misconduct. Similarly, if you forgot to study, it’s better to get a low grade on the exam than the zero you’ll get if you cheat.

One of the early computer programmers, Admiral Grace Hopper, is reported to have said that “[i]t’s easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission.” That advice *does not* apply in this situation. If you have the slightest doubt about whether something is academic misconduct, *ask me before handing in the assignment for grading*.

A plagiarism prevention service is used in evaluation of written work submitted for this course. As directed by the professor, students are expected to submit or have their assignments submitted through the service in order to meet requirements for this course. The papers will be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions.

► **Tutoring:** Middle Georgia State University provides free tutoring services for political science courses. In Warner Robins, tutoring is available from the Student Success Center in Oak Hall; on other campuses, visit your campus Student Success Center. Hours when political science tutors are available are posted at the SSC website, <http://www.mga.edu/ssc>. Tutoring services are not a substitute for regular class attendance. All students are encouraged to take advantage of these *free* services.

► **Disability Accommodations:** While you are welcome to discuss any special needs with me in private, to be fair to all students, accommodations are only provided when supported by appropriate documentation from MGA Disability Services (478-471-2985 or 478-934-3023; Student Life Building, Room 266 (Macon) or Sanford Hall (Cochran); <http://www.mga.edu/ds>).

► **Campus Emergencies:** In the event of a closure or delayed opening of the university due to inclement weather or other emergency, you should monitor the Knight Alert system for updates; sign up for these alerts at <http://www.mga.edu/police/alert.aspx>. You should expect communication via email and/or Brightspace regarding any assignments to be completed or revisions to the schedule while we are unable to meet.

► **End of Course Evaluations:** Student evaluations of faculty are administered online at the end of each term for all

courses with five or more students. Students will receive an email containing a unique link to a survey for each course in which they are enrolled. All responses are anonymous and completion of evaluations are voluntary.

**Withdrawal Deadlines:** The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Thursday, January 14. Students may withdraw from the course and earn a grade of “W” up to and including the midterm date, on Wednesday, March 16. After this point, students who withdraw will receive a grade of “WF,” which is calculated in the GPA as an “F.” The MGA Withdrawal Form is available online or from the Office of the Registrar.

**“No-Shows” and Informal Withdrawals:** Students who have not attended any classes as of the reporting period (generally, during the second week of classes) may be reported as a “no-show” and may lose financial aid as a result. In addition, if you stop coming to class without withdrawing, it may jeopardize your eligibility for financial aid in future terms.

**Course Outline:** Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Brightspace. We will not necessarily read chapters in the order they appear in the textbook; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance of* the designated class dates. While I may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is ultimately **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

In the schedule below, *Roskin* refers to chapters from the main text.

Date(s)	Topic	Reading(s)
Jan 12, 14	Introduction to the course	Roskin 1
Jan 19, 21, 26, 28	Great Britain	Roskin 2
Feb 2, 4, 9	Germany	Roskin 4
Feb 11	<b>No Class: APSA TLC Conference</b>	
Feb 16, 18, 23	France	Roskin 3
Feb 25	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
Mar 1, 3	Russia	Roskin 6
Mar 8, 10	<b>No Class: Spring Break</b>	
Mar 15	Russia (cont'd)	Roskin 6
Mar 17, 22	Canada	<i>How Canadians Govern Themselves</i> (online)
Mar 24, 29, 31	Mexico	Roskin 9
Apr 5, 7, 12	Nigeria	Roskin 11
Apr 14, 19, 21	China	Roskin 7
Apr 26, 28	Class Presentations	

**Final Examination:** Tuesday, May 3, 1:00–3:00 p.m.