

POLS 373 FOUNDATIONS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS
Introduction to Method, Theory and Issues in Comparative Politics

FALL 2006

Instructor:	Timothy C. Lim	Days/Time:	T 6:10-10:00
E-mail:	tclim@calstatela.edu	Classroom:	KH-B3018
Telephone:	(323) 343-2242	Office:	E&T 513
Office Hours: Tues. 2:00-4:30, Thurs. 2:00-3:30 • To schedule an appointment online , please go to my Yahoo!Groups page at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Lim_csla			
Instructional Web Site: http://instructional1.calstatela.edu/tclim			

Course Overview

The primary aim of this class is to make you a “good comparativist” – i.e., someone who is able to use various intellectual or conceptual tools in the field of comparative politics to better analyze, understand and/or explain significant events and processes in various countries and societies throughout the world. These significant or “big” events and processes include democratization, state-building, ethnic and/or domestic conflict (including “terrorism”), national poverty and capitalist development. The utility of comparative politics, however, is not limited to

analyzing big events or processes; indeed, a good comparativist will be able to apply his or her knowledge and skills to a wide range of problems and issues, both big and small and at all levels—from the local, to the national, to the global. Being a good comparativist, in this regard, means knowing how to think about and analyze issues in a systematic and “scientific” manner.

IMPORTANT. READ ME! This course deals with unfamiliar, abstract, and difficult-to-grasp concepts, principles, methods, and theories. Of course, this is true for many if not most university courses. Still, if you expect to do well in this course—if you expect to master the material—you must allot sufficient time to *carefully* read, review and *reflect* upon the required assignments. You must attend *all* class sessions, listen attentively, participate in discussions, and ask questions (especially if you are confused or lost). Above all, you must practice “thinking comparatively” and “thinking theoretically” on an everyday basis. The more you practice “doing comparative politics,” in short, the more the material covered in class will make sense, and the stronger your understanding will be. Understand, too, this course is meant to be challenging and demanding. So be prepared to do your best and to work hard, very hard.

Does being a good comparativist also require knowing a lot about different countries, societies, and peoples? On one level, the answer is clearly “yes.” Certainly, most academic comparativists are “experts” or specialists on particular countries, societies, and/or regions; more importantly, it is from this in-depth knowledge of particular places that the raw material, or empirical evidence, of much comparative analysis comes (although, for the purposes of this course, it is important to

understand that prior knowledge of a specific place is not a prerequisite to doing well). Indeed, simply *knowing about* places is not enough; one must also know *how* country-specific

knowledge can be used comparatively to gain a better understanding of the world around us. This will be a main focus of our class.

This said, in the first part of our course, we begin with an examination of several basic, but extremely important (methodological) questions: Why compare? How should we compare? And what can or should we compare? We also spend some time examining the major strategies of comparative analysis—the case study, two-unit comparisons, multiple-unit comparisons, and “mixed” designs. Next, we will examine three major theoretical traditions in comparative politics, which can be roughly divided into *rationalist*, *cultural* and *structural* approaches. *You will be expected to “apply” one or more of the comparative strategies and theoretical approaches in various assignments.*

In the second part of our course, we’ll explore several central questions in comparative politics explicitly using the same methods and approaches studied in part one. These questions include, among others: Why are poor countries poor? Why is East Asia rich? What makes a democracy? The examination of these questions will be tightly structured and designed to help you gain a deeper and more substantial understanding of comparative political analysis.

POLICY ON CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES. Prior to the beginning of class (1) turn off your cell phones, PDAs and similar devices, and (2) remove all such devices from your desktops. If you are expecting an urgent call, let me know in advance (before class begin). Laptops computers are permissible for note taking, but you may not use them during quizzes or for any other activities during class. *Abuse of this policy may result in a complete ban on any laptop use in class for all students.*

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on several major requirements, as follows:

Quizzes. For each class *session*, there will be a short quiz usually composed of 3 to 6 fill-in-the blank, multiple choice and/or short answer questions. The quizzes will be based on the assigned readings and previous lecture(s). Some questions will be very easy, others may be a bit more challenging. In general, though, the questions are not meant to be difficult for students who have done the readings, taken careful notes, and spent time reviewing their notes before class. Each quiz will be worth 10 points and, on a cumulative basis, **30 percent** of your overall grade. **Be forewarned: There will be no make-up quizzes** (I will, however, drop your lowest score, or two lowest scores, when calculating the overall quiz score at the end of the quarter). In general, you will receive 3~5 points simply for writing your name on the quiz (that is, even if you are not prepared, you can receive some credit by coming to class *on time*). All quizzes will be **OPEN NOTE** but you may NOT use your textbook.

Special Note on Attendance and Participation. I expect you to come to class consistently and on time. I also expect you to be *prepared* for all class sessions. Indeed, for the large majority of students, consistent attendance and preparation—combined with a willingness to stay actively engaged in class lectures/discussions—is essential to doing well. You will not, however, be graded directly on attendance. Instead, attendance will be assessed indirectly

through the in-class quizzes. It is largely for this reason that I do not allow make-ups—that is, because I use the quizzes as a way to encourage attendance and preparation, missing a class means you have failed to fulfill the primary objectives of the quiz. **It is for this reason, too, that I do not record quiz scores for students who leave class shortly after taking a quiz.** To reiterate: Regardless of your score, you will receive 0.0 points on the quiz for that day if you do not attend the bulk of the class *and* if you do not inform me beforehand that you need to leave early**—e.g., if you leave class immediately or shortly after taking the quiz, your score will be tossed out. ** *Leaving early without penalty will only be excused one or two times, depending on the circumstances.*

Mini-test. The mini-test will cover class readings and discussions on **comparative methodology** or **comparative analysis**. Some questions will be drawn from the quizzes, but most will be original. The mini-test will be CLOSED NOTE and CLOSED book, and will be worth **10 percent** of your course grade. NOTE: The mini-test is *tentatively* scheduled for **October 17** at the beginning of the class. I anticipate providing 30-45 minutes for the test, after which a regular lecture/discussion will follow.

Mini-essay. During the quarter, you will be required to complete a two page, single-spaced mini-essay, which will ask you to respond to a basic question dealing with the course material covered in chapters 1-5 (the focus will be on chapters 4 and 5). The mini-essay will be worth **10 percent** of your course grade.

Final Examination. The final examination will be comprised of **two parts**, one in-class and the other take home. The first in-class part will be a larger version of the mini-test. As with the mini-test, it will be composed of previously asked fill-in-the blank, multiple choice and/or short answer questions from the daily quizzes *plus* original questions. The in-class final exam will be cumulative (that is, material from the first day of class to the last day of class will be included). Students will be allowed to bring in ONE PAGE of notes, single-sided on regular letter paper (i.e., no legal sized paper). The second, take-home part of the final exam will consist of two mini-essays. These essays will be due on the day of the final examination. Part I of the final exam will be worth **30 percent** of your course grade, and part II will be worth **20 percent** of your course grade (overall, the final exam will be worth **50 percent** of your course grade). NOTE: *I reserve the option to make the mini-essay component of the final examination in-class as opposed to take-home.*

GRADING. Grading will be *strictly* determined by a *weighted average* of the scores you receive on the four requirements. The scale is as follows:

A: 90 percent and above	B-: 76~79 percent	D+: 63~65
A-: 87~89 percent	C+: 73~75 percent	D: 60~62
B+: 84~86 percent	C: 70~72 percent	D-: 55~59
B: 80~83 percent	C-: 66~69 percent	F: 54 and below

Students on the “borderline” of two grades (e.g., a score of 86.7 percent, which is between a B+ and A-) *may* be awarded the higher grade if they have demonstrated a strong and consistent commitment to learning the course material (this would be reflected in preparation, in-class

participation, attendance, and so on). Alternatively (or in addition), scores may be adjusted upward depending on the overall distribution of scores in the class.

Course Text

The following book is **REQUIRED** for the course:

- Timothy Lim, *Doing Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Approaches and Issues* (Boulder: Lynner Rienner Publishers, 2006)
- Additional required readings will be available on electronic reserve at the JFK Library or through an alternative source.

READING SCHEDULE (**Subject to change!)

1. Sept. 26	<p>Introduction to Course In our first meeting, we will conduct a thorough review of the syllabus and of the requirements of the course. During this class, we will also view a 40-minute excerpt from the film, <i>Bowling for Columbine</i>, directed by Michael Moore. A discussion will follow. Students who miss this class must view the film on their own time (a copy is available in the library). <i>Material from this class will be included on the first quiz.</i></p>
2. Oct. 3	<p>A Primer on Comparative Politics and Introduction to the Comparative Method <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 1 and ch. 2, pp. 31-34</p>
3. Oct. 10	<p>The Comparative Method: Logic, Strategies, and Practice <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 2, pp. 35-63; and MUELLER, “The Banality of Ethnic War” (on CD-course pack)</p>
4. Oct. 17	<p>Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 3, pp. 65-79</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mini-test tentatively scheduled for today!</i></p>
5. Oct. 24	<p>Theory in Comparative Politics (con’t) <u>Reading:</u> Lim, ch. 3, pp. 79-93 • Make sure to review the first part of chapter 3 as well (quiz questions will cover <i>entire</i> chapter)</p>
6. Oct. 31	<p><i>The Questions: Why are Poor Countries Poor?</i> <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 4</p>
7. Nov. 7	<p><i>The Question: Why is East Asia Rich?</i> <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 5, pp. 100-113; in today’s class, we will also watch an excerpt from the documentary video, “Asia Rising”</p>
8. Nov. 14	<p><i>The Questions: What Makes a Democracy?</i> <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch 6; in today’s class we will also watch the CBS news documentary, “Democracy Crushed: Tiananmen Square”</p>

9. Nov. 21	<i>The Questions: What Makes a Terrorist?</i> <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch 7
10. Nov. 28	Globalization and the Study of Comparative Politics <u>Reading:</u> LIM, ch. 9
11. Dec. 5	Final Examination <i>Scheduled for 7:30 to 10:00 p.m.</i>