Course Description: This course will examine the basic concepts of comparative government through the study of selected political systems, democratic and authoritarian, currently in operation around the world.

Americans generally understand little enough about how their own government works let alone how foreign governments operate. Different people govern themselves in different ways. In a world that is growing increasingly smaller, more globalized and increasingly dangerous, it is important to understand and recognize how other governments function and relate to each other. Today, a decision made in Germany or China can affect the economic well being of Americans on short notice. A decision made in North Korea or Iran can affect the security of Americans and the world economic and security system on even shorter notice. Civil wars, such as the one currently in progress in Syria can have huge (refugees, rise of ISIS) second and third order effects around the world. The threat of terrorism affects all governments. In addition to major parliamentary systems as they exist in Europe and authoritarian governments, primarily in Asia and the Middle East, we will discuss the governments of other countries currently in the news. As this class begins. The countries in the news include Israel, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, and North Korea and most recently - Spain. At the end of this course we will gain a greater appreciation for how other governments operate and make decisions that affect not only their own people but, increasingly, all of us around the world.

Course Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites.

Course Procedures: Lectures will supplement required readings in the text. It is important to read the assigned readings prior to class. How many times have you heard this before? I’m not kidding. Read the assignment. Also, read the international or world section of a major newspaper like the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, the Wall Street Journal, or the Washington Times - regularly. Read the commentary and opinion (op-ed) editorials concerning international events in addition to the news stories. We will discuss current world events as they relate to the countries we are studying in every class. Our classes will be interactive. I will ask students questions about text assignments and major events covered in newspapers. Be prepared to participate. Participation can increase your final course grade.

Class Participation: Participation in class is encouraged and expected. Be prepared to participate as individuals and in group discussions. It is important to come to class. How many times have you heard this before? Again, I am not kidding. Come to class. You will hear things in class and in the lecture that you will not read about in the text or in the newspapers. Much of
what you hear will be incorporated into test questions that you will have difficulty answering - if you are not here in class to learn them. Participation accounts for 15% of your overall grade.

Attendance and Lateness: Poor attendance affects a student’s ability to participate and take exams. If you miss class it can affect your grade on the midterm or final. Keep absences to a minimum. If you are not going to be here, I expect to be informed by email. If I am not going to be here, I will do my best to inform you by email. I expect the same courtesy in return. It is important to be on time. Coming into a class late is disruptive for your fellow students and the instructor. I understand that sometimes students will be late. However, try not make a habit of being late. Remember - come to class.

Preparation: Students should be prepared for class. However, sometimes “life” gets in the way of adequate preparation. If you are occasionally unprepared for class please bear in mind that I have a higher regard for the occasional unprepared student than for no student at all. Come to class.

Examinations: There will be two examinations during the semester, a midterm and a final. The midterm will be worth 30% of your grade and the final will be worth 35% of your grade. Exams will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, true-false, and short answer questions. Any student that does not achieve a “C” or better on the midterm examination is required to make an appointment with me to discuss his or her work and what we can do to improve it.

Class paper/analysis: Students, as part of their final grade, are required to select a country that we do not study in class. This can be Italy, Greece, Egypt, Spain, Singapore, or dozens of other countries. In each of the countries that we do study, Great Britain for example, students will note that the textbook is formatted in a way that discusses a country’s past, its key institutions, political culture, and problems. In essence, you are being asked to write a condensed version of a country chapter in your text that corresponds to the country you select to report on. So, pick a country that interests you and - go for it. Your paper should be six double-spaced pages. I will go into more detail on the project and provide additional guidance in class. The class paper is worth 20% of your final grade. Country selections are due in writing to me by 4 October. Write a paragraph describing the country you have selected, why you selected it, and how you plan to research it. The completed project is due on 8 November.

Required Reading: The required text is Countries and Concepts: Politics, Geography, Culture, by Michael G. Roskin. You are encouraged to visit Roskin’s website for additional insights into the assigned readings. In addition to assigned readings in Roskin, each student is expected to stay up to date in current world affairs by reading a major newspaper on a regular basis.

Office Hours: Generally, I will be available to speak with students and answer questions during class breaks and at the end of each class. Students are encouraged to contact me with questions or concerns by e-mail. Otherwise, any student can schedule an office meeting with me by speaking with me during a break or by e-mail to arrange a mutually convenient time. It is also fine for you to contact the GTA, Mr. Cohen, with questions or for assistance.
Honor System: George Mason University students are subject to the school’s honor code. Students must do their own work on written assignments and examinations. Students who elect to cheat on examinations or engage in plagiarism in their written work will earn themselves a failing grade as well as any other penalties the school chooses to impose regarding "honor violations." Read your GMU handbook and understand the ramifications.

Special Needs/Accommodation: Students with such needs should make me aware of them. You can talk to me in person or send me an Email. Ten seconds before the beginning of the midterm exam is not an ideal time to initially discuss this with me.

Grading:

Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B</td>
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Recap of point weights assigned to each category:

1. Midterm Exam  30%
2. Final Exam     35%
3. Book Report/Analysis  20%
4. Class Participation 15%

Total: 100%

Lectures, Assignments, and Exams:

30 August: Orientation and introduction to the course. Chapter 1, text. Assignment due: Read chapter 1 prior to the midterm exam.

6 September: Great Britain, its past, key institutions, and political culture. For most of the 20th century and thus far into the 21st century, Britain has been America’s most reliable ally. Assignment due: Chapter 2, pp. 25-49 and appropriate news articles.

13 September: Great Britain, its politics, parties, interest groups, and what Britains quarrel about. Assignment due: Chapter 2, pp. 50-73 and appropriate news articles.

20 September: French democracy evolved differently than democracy evolved in Britain. We will begin our study of France with a look at its past, its key institutions, and its political culture. Assignment due: Chapter 3, pp. 47-101 and appropriate news articles.

4 October: Germany, its past, key institutions, and political culture. If France can be said to be the nation that shook the world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, then surely Germany is the nation that shook the world in the latter 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Today Germany is a democracy and an influential global player with the fourth largest economy in the world. Assignment due: Chapter 4, pp. 127-151 and appropriate news articles. Country selections due today. Review for Midterm Exam.

11 October: Midterm Examination. You will be brilliant. For those who are somewhat less than brilliant, well, good luck! The more you study, the luckier you will be.

18 October: German political culture, geography, voting, and what Germans quarrel about. Assignment due: Chapter 4, pp. 152-181 and appropriate news articles.

25 October: Japan is a democracy with the 3rd most powerful economy in the world. We will discuss its past, geography, history of industrialization, political culture, personalities, and educational system. Assignment due: Chapter 5, pp. 182-202 and appropriate news articles.

1 November: Japan. Political culture, problems with China, North Korea, democracy, elites and what Japanese quarrel about. Assignment due: Chapter 5, pp. 201-219 and appropriate news articles.

8 November: Russia, the impact of the past, key institutions, and political culture. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, within two years of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, is perhaps the most significant political event of the late 20th century. Today’s Russia is a country undergoing a difficult, and perhaps unattainable, transition to a true democracy and free market economy. Assignment due: Chapter 6, pp. 220-250 and appropriate news articles. Papers are due today.

16 November: Russia, personalities, geography, patterns of interaction and what Russians quarrel about. Assignment due: Chapter 6, pp. 252-270 and appropriate news articles.

23 November: No class. Enjoy America's Thanksgiving Holiday. Do you know what president made it a holiday? Maybe a good "extra credit" question for the final?

29 November: We will discuss China or have a guest speaker. Assignment to be determined.

6 December: Review for final exam and student evaluations.

13 December: Final Exam. Good luck. The exam will be in our usual classroom beginning at 4:30 p.m. and concluding at 7:30 p.m.