

ONE-HOUR COURSE

CLASS: Comparative Country Profiles Professor: Michael Morris

Political Science 305, Sec. 7

Fall semester 2009

Classroom: TBA

Office: Brackett 232 D

Office hours: Mon.: 1:30-5pm;

TU: 1:30-5:00 pm, Weds.: 1:30-

5:00 pm; Fri: 2:30-5 pm;

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COURSE SYLLABUS

Overview

This course is part of the Undergraduate Research Initiative (“Creative Enquiry”) of the Provost. In consultation with the professor, undergraduates are encouraged to undertake sustained research about a country they choose. With permission, the course may be taken in any semester for more than one hour and be repeated in subsequent semesters.

Course description

The course objective is to encourage undergraduate research in international relations by having students focus on single countries complemented by comparison of findings of all students in the course. Also if several students are interested in the same country, they can combine as a team. Countries selected will be from different regions at different stages of development, say, France, India, and Mexico.

In the first semester, undergraduate researchers will track current news and short news articles about their selected country, and on this basis will identify key economic, political and military trends. In optional successive semesters, undergraduates will build on research by making sustained country comparisons and formulating policy recommendations. *A student may pursue a country comparison individually or jointly.*

Advantages for undergraduates

There are a number of advantages for undergraduates of such an approach. First, generation of a country profile through undergraduate research is considerably easier, though as significant, as generation of a profile of a global issue. That is, a student tracking events in Mexico can lead to interesting conclusions through analysis of a discrete, defined literature, while a counterpart study about human rights, for example, would face a much more amorphous issue and literature. Second, a country profile is by its very nature multidisciplinary, so this encourages participation by students from a variety of majors. Third, generation of a country profile emphasizes ongoing discussions

within and across student groups. The lesson inculcated through such an approach is that research including at the undergraduate level is dynamic in nature and requires group approaches and discussions as a check in identifying complex trends. Fourth, the approach lends itself to comparison of countries with different kinds of political systems and located in different regions. Different contrasting pairs include a developing and a developed country as well as countries in different geographical regions. This approach also complements existing international courses in History, Political Science and other disciplines, which generally survey single geographical regions or examine global issues without focusing in a sustained way on challenges facing individual countries. Fifth, recruitment of students with foreign language expertise can add another dimension to undergraduate research through reliance on “authentic” materials (materials written in a foreign language targeted for native speakers). I have been developing this approach in recent years through two news courses for undergraduates cross-listed in Political Science and Languages with reliance, respectively, on French- and Spanish-language materials (French Language News, POSC/FR 383 and Spanish Language News, POSC/SP 382).

Optional follow-up semesters to this one-hour course

In successive semesters, undergraduates can build on research about their selected country from previous semesters (relying on the one-hour format with an option to increase credit depending on extent of the project). Follow-up courses will build on identification and analysis of key characteristics of the country in the early portion of the project toward determination and support of policy recommendations about the country for U.S. foreign policy in the latter portion of the project.

Evaluation will be based each semester on *digital portfolios* tailored to the particular phase of the cumulative research project (see below for more details on evaluation).

Course materials

Students will generate their own readings in consultation with the professor. The internet will be relied on heavily as a source.

Class meetings

Each student will meet fairly regularly with the professor, and there will be a few joint meetings between all country teams to compare tentative research results. Coordination between individuals, teams, and the instructor will occur over the internet. The e-mail address of the instructor is indicated above. All students should consult their e-mail regularly to check for communications from the instructor or from their undergraduate research colleagues.

Evaluation

STUDENTS MAY HAVE AN INDIVIDUAL PROJECT OR A TEAM PROJECT, AND THE EVALUATION WILL VARY ACCORDINGLY.

1. for a team:

50% of the course grade will be based on individual journals. Each member of a country team will prepare an annotated journal of all bibliographical materials consulted for the project. Each journal entry should briefly summarize the content of the source and indicate what contribution the source makes to the project.

50% of the course grade will be based on a paper written jointly by the various members of each country team. This *paper should not be over fifteen (15) pages double-spaced (if this is a joint journal) or about five (5) pages if an individual project*, and should indicate the following:

--how do the various journals of the individual team members complement one another?

For example, three team members might focus separately on economic, political and military trends of the target country. In this case, address how individual inputs about economic, political and military aspects of the target country interact.

--on the basis of the materials assembled, in what ways is the selected country distinctive and in what ways does it resemble other countries?

--identify and support tentative conclusions about the target country

2. an individual project:

100% of the grade will be based on the journal including annotated entries and a final conclusion. The conclusion should be not over about five (5) pages if an individual project.

PRESENTATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP JOURNAL:

Submit a mid-term journal (HARD COPY PLUS ELECTRONIC COPY) to which the instructor will respond with suggestions. Include this mid-term journal when you hand in the end-of-semester journal, and keep the two separated with a tab. Make clear the division between annotated entries and your conclusions.