

## Doug Clark – Political Science / History

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### PS204 Syllabus

*Intro to Comparative Politics, Winter, '17*

*Doug Clark*

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*"The only antidote to decades of ruinous rule by a small handful of elites is a bold infusion of popular will. On every major issue affecting this country, the people are right and the governing elite are wrong"*  
*Donald Trump, April, 2016*

*"But in the end, there is no substitute for enlightened leadership, the kind that, instead of pandering to people's worst instincts, appeals to their better angels"*

*Fareed Zakaria, 2016*

**Course Description:** Essentially, *comparative politics* is the study of politics and political issues across the globe. In comparison to *international relations* which concentrates on the interaction between states, we are concerned primarily with politics *within countries* and of course the similarities and differences and their consequences in comparison to each other. This year, we will be particularly interested in the *circumstances* that have generated great concern about the condition and viability of *democratic institutions and practices* among the societies of Europe and the United States----the fear that we are losing our democracies. Our focus is on the rise of so-called *illiberal democracy* and *populist movements* in reaction to globalization, technology, demographics, and debt and its impact on liberal democracy. Thus our comparative analysis is directed at examining if and why the West is in trouble; why now; and with what impact on our democratic societies.

*"As with any 'ism,' definitions are crucial. A useful one goes like this: populism is an ideology that separates society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and that holds that politics should be an expression of 'the general will' of the people."*  
*Cas Mudde, 2016*

Why *comparative* politics? Generally, we compare in order to gain an empirical and a moral perspective on politics. *Empirically*, comparison encourages us to broaden our knowledge of political alternatives and possibilities; it allows us to recognize diversity; and, it serves as a remedy for ethnocentrism. *Morally*, we compare in order to find out what is best and in the process we learn about how to critically evaluate the performance of political systems using universal standards and relative standards. Ultimately though, we compare because it is the most effective method for *understanding ourselves* in light of the fascinating variety of political experiences on planet earth.

**Texts:** *CAN THE WELFARE STATE SURVIVE?* by Andrew Gamble  
*THE POPULIST EXPLOSION*, by John Judis  
*THE NEW MINORITY* by Justin Gest

**Additional Sources and Resources:** *We will use many on-line articles and news items during our study. Some are required, some are suggested. Consult the [Readings and Assignments](#) page for specific assignments.*

**Methods of Instruction and Evaluation:** We will approach the course as a lecture/seminar. For my part, I will provide historical and conceptual foundations, perspective, and analyses as well as coaching and cheer leading. For your part, come to class.....always.....and do the assigned reading and viewing and listening that will give you the ingredients for joining the dialogue.

**Grades** will be calculated as follows:

4 Quizzes @ 10 points each = 40 points

4 Discussion papers @ 20 points each = 80 points

3 Research Dialogues @ 40 points each = 120 points

1 Country Status Report = 100 points

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340 total possible points      A = 90%, B = 80%, C = 70%

**Assignments and Late Assignments:** All written assignments are take-homes. They should be turned in on time. I will not accept papers that are more than three (3) class meetings late. Within this time frame, papers will **lose 20% of their value** for each class meeting they are late. I will try to return on-time papers within three class meetings. For late papers, I make no promises. If your attendance is good and your papers on time, you can re-write papers to improve your grade but all re-writes must be completed no later than the end of the **8th week**. Of course there may be circumstances beyond your control that interfere with the completion of your assignments. In these cases, no penalty will be enforced for late papers.

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***"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men--true nobility is being superior to your former self."*** anonymous

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