

POLS 227 A
Comparison essay

In this essay, you will compare the manifestations of the phenomenon that you have examined in your presentation in the African country on which you focused in the presentation and in a non-African country of your choice. Feel free to consult me about the choice of your second country case. You will need to justify your case selection in the essay. You will also need to demonstrate your understanding of the phenomenon under consideration and compare the causes and effects of its manifestations in the two countries.

The paper should follow the usual university essay format: with an introduction—and, crucially, a thesis statement—main body, and conclusion.

In developing your argument, you should draw on syllabus readings focused on the phenomenon of interest and research that you have already conducted on your presentation country case as well as develop familiarity with the second country case, but the best papers will also demonstrate your engagement with the work of scholars who have specifically investigated the phenomenon's manifestations in the two country cases. You should use at least three scholarly sources, two of which must be from the syllabus, in the paper, in addition to sources on your country case, which may be scholarly or non-scholarly; again, the best papers will be based on consultation with a larger—likely considerably so—number of sources.

The paper should be four pages long. Like all written assignments in the course, it should be double-spaced with one-inch margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. All citations should follow the Chicago author-date style. (This is the style used in the syllabus.) The lists of sources, which you must submit with every written assignment, do not count towards the specified assignment length. If you choose to include a cover page, it also does not count towards the assignment length.

The primary purposes of the essay are to measure your understanding of the phenomenon of interest and help you develop the research skills that you need to engage in comparative political analysis.

Rubric

	Failure	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Thesis statement and argument outline	The paper does not address the question and provide a thesis statement, or the thesis statement is not comprehensible; the scope of the argument is unclear; key concepts are not defined.	The paper seems to respond to the question, but the thesis and argument outline are unclear; the scope of the argument may be unclear; definitions of key concepts are provided, but may not be clear	The paper responds to the question, but the thesis and argument outline are not compelling; the scope of the argument is addressed, but may not be clear; definitions of key concepts are provided, but may not be clear.	The thesis answers the question and is focused, but could be stated better and in a more focused way; an outline of a reasonably compelling argument is developed; the paper defines the scope of the argument and key concepts	The thesis is focused, clear, and directly answers the question; an outline of a compelling argument is developed; the paper defines the scope of the argument and key concepts
Understanding of the phenomenon	No demonstrated understanding of the phenomenon	Limited understanding of the phenomenon, based on superficial engagement with relevant course readings and/or factual errors concerning the phenomenon	Some understanding of the phenomenon, based on evident effort to engage with relevant course readings, with some gaps in understanding and/or some factual errors	Solid understanding of the phenomenon, based on evident engagement with relevant course readings, and no or very minor factual error	Excellent understanding of the phenomenon, based on evident engagement with relevant course readings and consultation of outside scholarly material
Understanding of the country cases	No demonstrated understanding of the countries and their development trajectories	Limited understanding of the countries and their development trajectories, derived from non-scholarly sources found through unmethodical search; in some cases a large number of factual errors	Some understanding of the countries and their development trajectories, derived from and non-scholarly and, in some cases, scholarly sources that nonetheless do not provide sufficient information about the countries; in some cases a small number of factual errors	Good understanding of the countries and their development trajectories, derived from both scholarly and non-scholarly sources found through systematic literature search; in some cases a very small number of factual errors	Evident familiarity with the countries and their development trajectories, derived from both scholarly and non-scholarly sources found through systematic literature search

Explanation of case selection	No explanation of case selection	Unconvincing explanation of case selection	Reasonable, but not fully developed explanation of case selection	Compelling explanation of case selection	Unusually sophisticated explanation of the country cases' suitability
Cogency of the argument and effectiveness of the comparison of the causes and effects of the phenomenon's manifestations in the two countries	No discernable argument	The argument is poorly developed and, in some cases, simplistic; analysis indicates little understanding of the topic and no originality of thought	The paper provides a mostly coherent argument, but not fully developed, argument based on some understanding of the phenomenon and the country cases; the paper is somewhat developed, but may not have a clear focus and be logically constructed and internally coherent; analysis displays some understanding of the topic, but little originality of thought	The paper provides a coherent assessment, but in some cases not fully developed, argument based on solid understanding of phenomenon and the country cases; the argument has a clear focus; it is logically constructed and internally coherent, but not fully developed or deficient in some other way; analysis displays a solid grasp of the topic and some originality of thought	The paper provides a cogent assessment that is based on excellent understanding of phenomenon and the country cases and offers valuable insights on the subject; the argument has a clear focus; it is logically constructed and internally coherent; analysis displays a solid grasp of the topic and originality of thought
Organization, writing style, spelling, and grammar	No organization; random expression of ideas; thoughts are expressed in a disjointed or incomprehensible way; writing style, spelling, and grammar need major improvement; the paper is too short or too long	Weak organization; the argument is difficult to follow; the paper follows the length / page count instructions	The paper needs better transition and flow between ideas; some awkward and confusing passages may detract from a thorough understanding of the paper; the paper follows the length / page count instructions	Mostly logical progression of ideas, but the writer must do more to make connections; a few distracting errors or awkward phrasing; the paper follows the length / page count instructions	Good flow or progression of ideas and good presentation of how the points made fit into a broader argument; eloquent expression of ideas with no distracting or obvious grammatical or mechanical errors; the paper follows the length / page count instructions

Citations, quotations, and bibliography	Missing or inadequate citations, insufficient number of sources	Referencing does not follow a recognized citation style; in some cases excessive use of quotations; sufficient number of sources	Mostly correct referencing, with a few minor errors; sufficient number of sources	Correct referencing; number of sources which at the very least meets but likely exceeds the requirements	Correct referencing; the number of sources exceeds the requirements
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