

POLS 229: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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Texas A&M University
Spring 2018

Course Information

Number: POLS 229/501

Term: Spring 2018

Class Time: M/W, 4:45 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Place: Allen Building 1015

Instructor Information

Web: <http://people.tamu.edu/~nsthiago/>

Email: nsthiago@tamu.edu

Office: Allen Building 2122

Office Hours: M/W, 3:40 p.m. - 4:40 p.m.

Course Summary: This course is the introductory seminar for the field of comparative politics in the political science undergraduate program. It introduces the main questions, theories, and empirical research in comparative politics. Comparative politics researchers focus on comparing internal political structures (e.g., parliaments and executives), actors' behavior (voters, parties, social movements, and interest groups), and processes (policy- and executive-making processes, socialization, diffusion, and political cultures), across and within countries, regions, and even supra-national systems (e.g., the European Union). As such, comparative politics is a vast field of research in political science. The substantive topics covered in this course include, among other topics, state formation, political regimes, systems of government, electoral systems, political parties, party systems, and institutional veto players. The course's primary goal is to prepare students to better understand the world through the analytical lens of a comparative approach.

Course Requirements:

All students are required to have completed the required readings before each class, and everyone should be prepared to discuss the required readings during class.

- *Quizzes (20%).* I expect you to provide evidence that you have done the required readings in a thoughtful and careful manner. To help this process along, students must periodically answer a short quiz that will be provided by the instructor in the first 10 minutes of class. If you did the reading for the class you should have no trouble answering the quiz. There is a total of 10 quizzes. The instructor retains the right to determine which day(s) the class will or will not have the quiz.

- *Discussion Leadership (15%)*. Students will be divided into groups of five (5), and required to lead the discussion for a pre-assigned class period. Student groups will be given advance notice of which class discussion they have been assigned, and must prepare a one-page (maximum of 400 words) document to guide the class discussion of the day. The document should contain one or more paragraphs which outline the group's own questions or original arguments, based on the required reading for the class (with appropriate page references).

A couple of things to keep in mind as you attempt to maximize the quality of your document:

1. Criticism is often the starting point of thoughts about readings. This is fine, but criticisms without constructive suggestions for improvements are of little value.
2. Asking questions is also a reasonable place to start, but you should try to suggest answers.
3. Documents will be scored on two dimensions: (i) Insight and innovation; (ii) Writing. Each dimension worth up to 5 points for a possible total of 10 points where: 5 is excellent, 4 is good, 3 is adequate, 2 is fair, and 1 is poor.

Each group must choose one member to be responsible for sending the completed document from his/her TAMU email to the instructor's TAMU email (nsthiago@tamu.edu), 24 hours before their class discussion. The group must submit the document as a .pdf. The .pdf file name should follow this format: "Group [number] - Discussion for Week [number].pdf". In the header of the document, all group members' names should be listed. [Ex. "Smith, John"; "Doe, Jane."]

Points will be deducted for documents in excess of 400 words, and for documents turned in past the deadline.

- *Exams (65%)*. There will be three (3) exams in this course. In each exam, the student will be asked to answer two (2) out of a possible three (3) questions based on material from both the lectures and the required readings. You will need a blank piece of paper to work out your calculations for each of the exams. The grades for each of the exams are distributed as follows:

First exam: 20%

Second exam: 20%

Third exam: 25%

There is no final exam in this course.

Grading Policy: The grading scale is the standard ten-point scale:

90 – 100, *A*; 80 – 89, *B*; 70 – 79, *C*; 60 – 69, *D*; 59 ↓, *F*.

Required Book: Students are required to obtain copies of the following textbook:

- Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press. [3rd Edition.]

Complementary Books: The following textbooks are suggested as complementary material:

- Powell Jr., G. Bingham, Russell J. Dalton, and Kaare Strøm, eds. 2015. *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*. New York: Pearson. [11th Edition.]

- Caramani, Daniele, ed. 2017. *Comparative Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. [4th Edition.]

Course Policies

Make-up Exams/Excused Absences: We abide by Texas A&M Student Rules 7 (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>). To be eligible for a make-up exam, a student must have an excused absence that corresponds with those in Rule 7.1. Students also must follow the procedures outlined in the Student Rules for notifying the instructor of an excused absence and providing documentation.

Student Rule 7.3 states:

To be excused the student must notify his or her instructor in writing [acknowledged TAMU e-mail message is acceptable] prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible [e.g. accident or emergency] the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence [the missed exam]. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. [...] [The student must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence, that is satisfactory to the instructor, within one week of the last date of the absence.

Per this rule, the student has until the end of the *second business day* after the missed exam to contact the instructor; this is not from the last day of the illness.

However, as this same rule states, students have *one week* from the last date of the absence to provide the instructor an acceptable documentation.

Per Student Rules 7.1.6.2 and 7.1.6.3, for injuries or illnesses, students must provide written confirmation of a visit to a health care professional from the professional. It must specify: 1) the date and time of the visit, 2) that the medical service was for an acute injury or illness that made it necessary for the student to be absent from the exam, and 3) the dates of the illness.

Please note that emails, notes, and phone calls from parents or guardians will not suffice as acceptable documentation. In addition, I will *not* accept the “Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class” form as sufficient written documentation of an excused absence.

Note that Rule 7.2 states: “The associate dean for undergraduate programs, or the dean’s designee, of the student’s college may provide a letter for the student to take to the instructor stating that the dean has verified the student’s absence as excused.” Although it states a “letter,” emailed correspondence will suffice.

A student who is absent from a scheduled make up exam must follow Rule 7.3 to schedule and take a make up exam. An exam proctored outside of the normal exam time may be of a different format than the original exam.

Attendance Policy, Attendance Survey, and Classroom Behavior: Attendance of class lectures is your responsibility. You should attend all lectures, but I will not police your attendance. If you need to miss a lecture, make sure you get the notes from another student. Because the course material revolves around lectures, your attendance is crucial in understanding the material. I will not make my notes or the slides available.

At the beginning of the semester, Texas A&M University requires professors to verify attendance in their courses. Therefore, there will be an attendance survey on *eCampus* in which you will need to vouch that you have attended at least one lecture. Note that this survey does not affect your grade in this course, but it can affect your financial aid with the university. The professor will announce in class and on *eCampus* the timing and deadline for this survey.

In such a large group, it is important to be mindful of others. If you attend lecture, you should behave appropriately in the classroom. After the lecture begins, this means, among other things, not conversing with other students, not using your cellphone (either for calls or texting), not using your computer for anything other than taking notes on the lecture, and not sleeping. Your fellow students and the professor regard these as disruptive behaviors discussed in Student Rule 21:

<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21>.

Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, and Cheating:

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

Students are bound by the Aggie Honor Code. Additionally, students should be aware that academic dishonesty involves acts other than plagiarism. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Aggie Honor System Office website <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu> or the latest version of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section “Scholastic Dishonesty.”

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on West Campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Diversity Statement: The Department of Political Science supports the Texas A&M University commitment to diversity, and welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality. In the spirit of this vital commitment, in this course each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students and the instructor, and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. For more information, visit <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>.

Course Outline

Week 1:

- **Wednesday, January 17**

Lecture 1. Introduction: What is Science?

- Read over the syllabus and course expectations closely.
- Please ask any questions you have about the course logistics or the course in general.
- Students assigned to groups (for the Discussion Leadership assignments).
- *Complementary reading:*
Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2017. [Henceforth CGG 2017.] *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press. **Chapter 2** [“What is Science?”] **Pages: 15–34.**

Week 2:

- **Monday, January 22**

Lecture 2. What is Politics? Part 1.

- Required reading:
CGG 2017. **Chapter 3** [“What is Politics?”] **Pages: 48–65.**

- **Wednesday, January 24**

Lecture 2. What is Politics? Part 2.

- Required reading:
CGG 2017. **Chapter 3** [“What is Politics?”] **Pages: 65–78.**

Week 3:

- **Monday, January 29**

Lecture 3. Where Do States Come From?

- Required reading:
CGG 2017. **Chapter 4** [“The Origins of the Modern State?”] **Pages: 89–120.**

- **Wednesday, January 31**

Lecture 4. Political Regimes: Dictatorship and Democracy.

- *Required reading:*
CGG 2017. **Chapter 5** [“Democracy and Dictatorship: Conceptualization and Measurement.”] **Pages: 145–169.**

Week 4:**• Monday, February 5**

Lecture 5. The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 6** [“The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 175–198.**

• Wednesday, February 7

Lecture 5. The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 6** [“The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 198–219.**

Week 5:**• Monday, February 12**

Lecture 6. The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 7** [“The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 223–237.**

• Wednesday, February 14

Lecture 6. The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 7** [“The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 237–261.**

Week 6:**• Monday, February 19**

Catch up and review. The instructor will not structure an exam review. The students should use this class time to ask questions to the instructor on the material (lectures and readings) covered in previous classes.

• Wednesday, February 21

First Exam.

Week 7:**• Monday, February 26**

Lecture 7. From Dictatorship to Democracy. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 8** [“Democratic Transitions.”] **Pages: 269–285.**

• Wednesday, February 28

Lecture 7. From Dictatorship to Democracy. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 8** [“Democratic Transitions.”] **Pages: 285–312.**

Week 8:**• Monday, March 5**

Lecture 8. Political Regimes: Do They Make a Difference?

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 9** [“Democracy and Dictatorship: Does It Make a Difference.”] **Pages: 329–350.**

• Wednesday, March 7

Lecture 9. Varieties of Dictatorship. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 10** [“Varieties of Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 353–376.**

Week 9:**• Monday, March 12**

No class. Spring Break.

• Wednesday, March 14

No class. Spring Break.

Week 10:**• Monday, March 19**

Lecture 9. Varieties of Dictatorship. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 10** [“Varieties of Dictatorship.”] **Pages: 376–400.**

• Wednesday, March 21

Lecture 10. Group Decision-Making.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 11** [“Problems with Group Decision Making.”] **Pages: 409–444.**

Week 11:**• Monday, March 26**

Catch up and review. The instructor will not structure an exam review. The students should use this class time to ask questions to the instructor on the material (lectures and readings) covered in previous classes.

• Wednesday, March 28

Second Exam.

Week 12:**• Monday, April 2**

Lecture 11. Systems of Government. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 12** [“Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies.”] **Pages: 453–487.**

• Wednesday, April 4

Lecture 11. Systems of Government. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 12** [“Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies.”] **Pages: 487–511.**

Week 13:**• Monday, April 9**

Lecture 12: Electoral Systems. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 13** [“Elections and Electoral Systems.”] **Pages: 521–549.**

• Wednesday, April 11

Lecture 12: Electoral Systems. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 13** [“Elections and Electoral Systems.”] **Pages: 549–577.**

Week 14:**• Monday, April 16**

Lecture 13: Party Systems. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 14** [“Social Cleavages and Party Systems.”] **Pages: 585–621.**

• Wednesday, April 18

Lecture 13: Party Systems. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 14** [“Social Cleavages and Party Systems.”] **Pages: 621–640.**

Week 15:**• Monday, April 23**

Lecture 14: Veto Players. Part 1.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 15** [“Institutional Veto Players.”] **Pages: 645–670.**

• Wednesday, April 25

Lecture 14: Veto Players. Part 2.

– Required reading:

CGG 2017. **Chapter 15** [“Institutional Veto Players.”] **Pages: 670–689.**

Week 16:**• Monday, April 30**

Catch up and review. The instructor will not structure an exam review. The students should use this class time to ask questions to the instructor on the material (lectures and readings) covered in previous classes.

• Wednesday, May 2

No Class. Reading Day.

Week 17:**• Monday, May 7**

Third Exam. 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.