

PSC 121 Introduction to Comparative Politics

MWF 13:10-14:00 @ Detchon Hall 109

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the comparative approach and issues in political science, focusing on subjects such as economic development, democracy, conflicts, and collective action problems, among others.

We study politics in a comparative context. This is not only about learning about other countries, states, provinces, or institutions, or the same country(ies) or region(s), or entities, over a period of time, but about broadening and deepening our understanding of general socioeconomic and political processes. By examining and comparing similar and different political systems, policies, and processes, we can explain and try to understand outcomes in a more informed manner, and perhaps understand which are more conducive to economic growth, democratic stability, or authoritarian regimes's continued hold to power.

In other words, by learning the comparative method or approach to political science, students will be able to understand their own country by contrasting it with others; understand other countries by examining their past and institutions; and finally arrive to generalizable conclusions on policy, institutions, social cleavages, and governance.

Comparative Political Science is an **approach** based on the **comparative method**. That is, the process of systematically juxtaposing situations, groups, cultures, or whichever issues which having similarities also contain certain identifiable differences. It sounds vague because it *is* vague. But this offers us many tools and flexibility then to work with. In political science, many think of comparative politics as involving research between two or more countries, but we could compare within one country across time, across several countries at a given time, or across population (sub-)groups within a set of countries across time all at the same time. In this course, we will learn to conduct research mostly in a cross-national framework, but will also examine other examples dealing with alternative comparisons.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on five major components. The contribution of these requirements to final course grades is as follows:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Exams	45%
Six Quizzes	25%
Homework - Responses	15%
Perfect attendance extra credit	5% towards exams
Extra credit assignment	up to 5%

Course Materials

Required course materials: All materials will be posted on **Canvas**. You will submit your assignments and quizzes on Canvas, so you will have to have access to a computer, a word processor such as Word or L^AT_EX. Fortunately, the College has computers with these programs available and there are free online tools available as well. If you need help or face particular circumstances, don't hesitate to contact me via email, Canvas, or at my office hours.

Disability-Related and Special Accommodations

Please let me know at the start of the semester by September 4 at the latest whether you require special accommodations. Students with apparent or invisible disabilities are invited to confidentially discuss their situation with the disability coordinator, Heather Thrush, Associate Dean for Student Engagement and Success. If a student wishes to receive an academic accommodation, it is required that his documentation of the disability be on file with Dean Thrush, who can, in confidence, provide information and guidance. Early notification helps us all work together in the most effective ways. Dean Thrush can be reached at her office (Center Hall 112A), by phone (x6347), or by email to thrushh@wabash.edu.

Weekly Course Outline

Week	Date	Discussion Topic
I:	Fundamentals	
1	Jan/20	Syllabus and negotiation, introduction
2	Jan/27	What is Politics, Comparative Politics, Introduction to statistics, game & formal theory, & qualitative analysis.
3	Feb/03	States, Governments, Institutions, History
		Quiz I

II: Political Economy

4	Feb/10	Political and Economic Development part I
5	Feb/17	Political and Economic Development part II
6	Feb/24	Inequality, Political Economy, Capitalism

Quiz II, Midterm I**III: Democracies**

7	Mar/02	Democracy and Authoritarianism, Mass Politics
8	Mar/09	No Class
9	Mar/16	Constitutions, legal, and electoral systems; Quiz III
10	Mar/23	Democratic Stability, Authoritarian Resilience, Electoral Authoritarian Regimes, Revolutions

Quiz IV, Midterm II**IV: Structures of Governance**

11	Mar/30	Institutional change
12	Apr/06	Centralization/Decentralization, Multilevel government
13	Apr/13	Polycentrism

Quiz V**V: Rational Choice and Behavior**

14	Apr/20	Behavioral Politics, Rational Choice, The Commons
15	Apr/27	Political Participation, Ideology, Group interests
16	May/3	Quiz VI, Extra Credit assignment deadline Final Exam

Grading specifics

The components upon which you will be graded in this course are described as follows:

Attendance and participation – 15%.

Since this course is primarily conceptual in focus, most sessions will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of analytical tools, new ideas, and concepts used in the study of comparative politics, and examples of how these tools and concepts have been used drawing from research in the subfield of comparative politics, usually with a political economy perspective and quantitative focus. Students will be asked to apply these tools and skills to a specific area of particular interest to them in class, so daily attendance and active participation are imperative to successfully complete this course.

To get full credit, students must not only attend class, but also read all assigned materials before coming to class, and be ready to participate in class discussions and answer questions on the material. In general, you should plan on attending all class meetings and comply with all classroom policies described below in more detail.

Exceptions to required attendance include anticipated absences due to *religious observations* (please submit these at the start of the semester) or *personal and family emergencies*. In the case of emergencies, you must submit appropriate documentation to the instructor.

Other absences

I know college life gets complicated sometimes. That is why in addition to valid reasons for missing classes (doctor appointments, sickness, attending family events and emergencies, threats to your personal safety or security), you will be allowed up to three days of unexcused absences without it affecting your attendance and participation grade.

Perfect Attendance Extra Credit

Were a student not to miss out on more than what has been outlined heretofore (three unexcused absences, and excused absences that are properly documented), he shall receive a 5% extra credit to any of his exams. However, were the student's absence to surpass these, the extra credit shall be forfeited, and further deductions would be exacted upon the student's grade. The process by which the grading will take into account total absences (minus the allowed absences) divided over all possible attendance days, which then is multiplied by the weight of 15%, which then is added to your grade in a cumulative manner with the other components.

Exams – 45%

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final, preceded by a review session and a short study guide highlighting important topics that will come in the exam. However, the student is expected to review in general all materials provided to better prepare for the exams.

- **Midterm I** (February 28th): This will be in-class examination on lecture topics from the first (introduction, fundamentals), and second part (introduction to political economy).
- **Midterm II** (March 27th or March 30th): This will be in-class examination on lecture topics from the third part (introduction to the study of democracies and dictatorships), and perhaps some topics of the second part (political economy) of the course outline.
- **Final Exam** (May 4th at 13:30): This will be an in-class on lecture topics from the fourth and fifth parts (introduction to governance structures, rational choice, and behavioral politics) of the course outline.

Six quizzes – 25%

The students will complete some six quizzes online on Canvas, to gauge their knowledge on how to apply the skills studied in class. These will examine students' abilities to interpret research articles' arguments, evidence, as well as basic concepts connected to the analysis of institutions, policy, systems, and other relevant information for this course. To calculate the grade, the results of all six quizzes (expected to total 60 points) will be divided over five (50pts), thus allowing students to either skip one of the quizzes, or take a chance at improving their grade with the extra points to be garnered from this.

Quizzes will be announced at least one class before they take place (e.g. if the quiz is on a Wednesday, you should have been notified on Monday; also, since we have online quizzes, I can notify about a quiz on a Wednesday that will be available until a Saturday).

Homework - Responses – 15%

Students will write short responses to some guiding questions that are supposed to aid in the reading process, by identifying key aspects of materials to discuss in class. These could be weekly or daily in nature, and they will be made available a couple days before the deadline. These should not require more than some minutes in answering once you have read the readings, and while they may help highlight particular sections of them, you are expected to read the complete assigned section(s) of the readings.

Extra Credit Assignment – up to 5%

This will be an optional and voluntary assignment, which can take different shapes (e.g., a 5-7 page long paper with proper citation and some 5 or so sources; a review and critique of some research paper; a summary discussion of some out-of-class event; etc.). Therefore, it will have to be pre-approved by me, and must be requested with reasonable time (at least several weeks before the deadline). The deadline for this assignment shall be on 1st May, at noon.

Extra Credit - Coronavirus Special Assignment – 5%

In a few paragraphs and in essay form (introduction+body+conclusion) compare at least two governments' (within the US -states, territories, federal- or between countries) responses or policies regarding the coronavirus crisis (and associated economic crisis). What is causing, in your informed opinion (from what we may have learned so far in class), the differences between these different (similar) approaches? Are different structures/institutions conducive to one type of approach vis-à-vis others? Is it politicians engaging in game theoretic processes to maximize political survival?

You will be graded on how thorough your analysis is and how well you can use analytic tools and concepts we've learned so far (and if you've peeked in the future, good) such as the comparative method and process tracing (or if you ventured, quantitative analysis, which is applicable to arguments on, say, which type of response reduced spread or correlated with less deaths per capita, for instance).

Classroom Policies

The following is not an exhaustive list of all applicable classroom policies. Beyond the stated policies below, this class will be governed by university regulations and expectations regarding academic affairs and academic integrity. If you are not familiar with these requirements, please review the [Gentlemen's Rule](#) and the [Philosophy, Ethics and Code of Conduct](#).

Final grade calculation

Please note that this course is not graded on a curve. Your course grade is entirely up to you depending on your overall performance.

At the end of the semester, the sum of your total number of regular plus any earned extra credit points will determine your final grade as follows (bold denotes a regular letter grade, without plus or minus):

	-	Regular	+
A range	89.5-92.4	92.5-100+	
B range	79.5-82.4	82.5-86.4	86.5-89.4
C range	69.5-72.4	72.5-76.4	76.5-79.4
D range	59.5-62.4	62.5-66.4	66.5-69.4
F range		0-59.4	

For example, if your final cumulative score is 91, you will earn an A-. If you have a cumulative score of 95, you will earn an A. If you have a score of 97 or higher, you will still get an A. The same logic applies to lower grade ranges (except for the B+ to D+ grades, and there is no plus or minus for *F*s).

Late assignment policy

You can elect to take a two-day grace period on any TWO exercises AND ONE major assignment — no questions asked. If, at the end of that period, you are still having trouble completing the assignment, you **MUST** meet with me in person to go over an outline of your ideas and set a schedule for getting the paper done.

Collaboration and Academic Honesty

This class will teach you about techniques and approaches through which professional political scientists conduct research, and some of the main findings of said research. An important component of any research project is academic integrity. Classroom exercises will sometimes involve group activities reflecting the collaborative nature of many research projects. However, you are expected to complete all graded assignments on your own, including examinations. While some amount of collaboration such as group practices outside class time (e.g., study groups) are allowed in that they allow you to master the skills discussed in class, plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. I will respond to acts of academic misconduct according to university policy concerning plagiarism; sanctions for plagiarism will be a grade of 0% for the assignment in question and/or for the course, and must include a report to the Dean. In addition to the explicit rule against plagiarism, this class is governed by university regulations and expectations regarding academic affairs and academic integrity. If you are not familiar with these requirements, please review the **“Rule of Conduct”**.

Incomplete grades

Per University policies, and in the interest of fairness to all students in the course, students who do not complete course requirements will receive an F in this course. If you think you have a situation that warrants an incomplete grade, please let me know with enough time. In particular, please note that I will not consider requests to take an **INC** grade if you realize late in the semester that you will be getting a low grade and want to retake the course in the future to get a higher grade. This grade may be removed by completing the work that has been left as incomplete, and the grade then assigned may be any grade. The grade of *INC* is not computed in the GPA except for calculating the Dean's List where it carries the weight of a "C."

The grade of Incomplete, if not removed by 4:00 PM on the first Monday of classes after Midsemester following the semester for which they were assigned, will be converted to "F" on the student's transcript. There will be no modification of the grade of "F" unless approved by petition through the Curriculum Appeals Committee and Dean of the College. Faculty or the Dean of Students (after consultation with the instructor, if possible) may set any due date that does not extend beyond 4:00 PM on the first Monday of classes after Mid-semester of the following semester.

Cell Phones/Texting/Online Chats

Don't do it.

Course schedule

The course is organized in five major parts which will be explained now in detail once we have finalized our negotiation. Below see a template that will be filled out with the adequate readings and activities on the finalized version of the syllabus at the end of the first week. For now, this will include the readings for the first major part of the course, the introduction of concepts and ideas that we will use throughout the course.

Part I: Fundamentals

We will spend the first weeks on the building blocks of comparative political analysis, introduction to concepts, and methods.

Week 1 -	Introduction and negotiation
1/20-1/22	
<u>Monday 20:</u>	Syllabus negotiation following Kaplan and Renard (2015)
<u>Wednesday 22:</u>	Syllabus negotiation following Kaplan and Renard (2015) , Books I, II, III, and IV of <i>Politics</i> (Aristotle, 323 B.C.).
<u>Friday 24:</u>	No class, <i>Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship and Creative Work</i> at Detchon Center: 100 International Hall from 13:00-17:00

Week 2 - 1/27-1/31 <u>Monday 27:</u>	Comparative Politics as Rationality, culture, structure, Introduction to tools and concepts Continue Politics (Aristotle, 323 B.C.), with skim reading of Books IV-VII, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp.18-34) of Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009).
<u>Wednesday 29:</u>	Chapter 2 (pp.35-71) of Comparative Politics (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009), Political Game Theory (Meirowitz and McCarthy, 2007, ch.5), The question of status in Puerto Rico revisited (Marcano-Rivera, 2014).
<u>Friday 31:</u>	Understanding process tracing (Collier, 2011), How to read simple regression output, and The Basics of Multiple Regression. In addition I will utilize my paper on <i>Racial heterogeneity as a determinant of income inequality in Latin America</i> available as “LatAm” on the course site to illustrate interpretation.
Week 3 - 2/3-2/7 <u>Monday 3:</u>	States, Governments, Institutions, History Chapter 1 (pp.3-20) of Foundations of Comparative Politics (Newton and Van Deth, 2016), A theory of the origin of the state (Carneiro, 1970).
<u>Wednesday 5:</u>	Institutions (North, 1991).
<u>Friday 7:</u>	The Logic of Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009).

Part II: Political Economy

Having introduced the building blocks of comparative political analysis, we examine an approach and set of issues central in contemporary political science as well as economics: political economy. The intersection between politics and economics lends us tools, and allows us to examine issues that have perplexed, shaped, and upended societies for centuries.

Week 4 - 2/10-2/14 <u>Monday 10:</u> <u>Wednesday 12:</u>	Political Economy, Development What is political economy? (Drazen, 2004). What does political economy tell us about economic development – and vice versa? (Keefer, 2004).
<u>Friday 14:</u>	Politician’s Dilemma : Building State Capacity in Latin America, Chapter 1 (Geddes, 1994, pp.1-23).
Week 5 - 2/17-2/21 <u>Monday 17:</u>	Political Economy, Development, continued Varieties of Capitalism (Soskice and Hall, 2001).

<u>Wednesday 19:</u>	Divergence, big time (Pritchett, 1997), discussion of resource curse or the “ <i>Dutch disease</i> ” (in slides).
<u>Friday 21:</u>	How does development happen? (Sen, 2005), in class: Amartya Sen on Development , recommended: Amartya Sen’s Nobel Prize in Economics lecture .
Week 6 - 2/24-2/28	Inequality and Redistribution
<u>Monday 24:</u>	Part II of <i>Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men</i> (Rousseau, 1755), and start Causes and consequences of income inequality: A global perspective (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015).
<u>Wednesday 26:</u>	Continuing Causes and consequences (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015) and Review Session.
<u>Friday 28:</u>	Midterm I.

Part III: Political Regimes

We examine now political regimes, especially the opposites of democracy and dictatorships, the waves of democratization, democratic backsliding, and electoral authoritarian regimes, on the one hand, and the legal, institutional, and practical basis for these systems to validate themselves with the populace.

Week 7 - 3/2-3/6	Democratization, Democracies, Dictatorships
<u>Monday 2:</u>	Chapter 2 of Foundations of Comparative Politics (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009), Patterns of Democracy (Read Lijphart, 2012 , chapters 2 and 3).
<u>Wednesday 4:</u>	Democratization During the Third Wave (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016).
<u>Friday 6:</u>	Democracy and dictatorship revisited (Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland, 2010 , focus on pp.79-90).
Week 9 - 3/16-3/20	Electoral systems, constitutions, legal systems
<u>Monday 16:</u>	Patterns of Democracy (Read Lijphart, 2012 , chapter 8).
<u>Wednesday 18:</u>	Context, Electoral Rules, and Party Systems (Ferree, Powell and Scheiner, 2014), and Chapter 3 of Foundations of Comparative Politics (Newton and Van Deth, 2016).
<u>Friday 20:</u>	Patterns of Democracy (Read Lijphart, 2012 , chapter 12) and Comparative Judicial Politics (Ferejohn, Rosenbluth and Shipan, 2004).

Week 10 - 3/23-3/27	Mass Politics, Democratic Stability, EAR, Revolutions
<u>Monday 23:</u>	Policy makes mass politics (Campbell, 2012), Summary of <i>States and social revolutions</i> (Skocpol, 1979).
<u>Wednesday 25:</u>	Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism (Schedler, 2006).
<u>Friday 27:</u>	On Democratic Backsliding (Bermeo, 2016), How much democratic backsliding? (Mechkova, Lührmann and Lindberg, 2017)
	Midterm II online until Monday 30.

Part IV: Structures of Governance

We examine here something that continues from the regimes themselves we analyzed in the previous section: institutions, levels of centralization and unitarism, the locations where decisions are made.

Week 11 - 3/30-4/3	Institutional Change
<u>Monday 30:</u>	Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics (Thelen, 1999, focusing on pp.384-399).
<u>Wednesday 1:</u>	Institutional change in advanced political economies (Wolfgang and Thelen, 2005).
<u>Friday 3:</u>	Institutional change in varieties of capitalism (Hall and Thelen, 2009).
Week 12 - 4/6-4/10	Centralization, Governance
<u>Monday 6:</u>	Governance (Fukuyama, 2016), Patterns of Democracy (Read Lijphart, 2012, chapter 10).
<u>Wednesday 8:</u>	Chapter 5 of Foundations of Comparative Politics (Newton and Van Deth, 2016), The economic role of political institutions: Market-preserving federalism and economic development (Weingast, 1995).
<u>Friday 10:</u>	Chapters 5 and 8 of Comparative Federalism (Burgess, 2006).
Week 13 - 4/13-4/17	Polycentrism
<u>Monday 13:</u>	Self-governance, polycentrism, and federalism: recurring themes in Vincent Ostrom's scholarly oeuvre (Wagner, 2005).
<u>Wednesday 15:</u>	Ostrom's Nobel Prize Lecture and Beyond Markets and States: polycentric governance of complex economic systems (Ostrom, 2010).
<u>Friday 17:</u>	Tragedy of the Commons (Ostrom, 2008) and Coping with tragedies of the commons (Ostrom, 1999).

Part V: Rationality and rational choice, ideology, group interests

We end this survey of some of the many issues and approaches of comparative politics with a turn towards the aspects of rationality and behavioral aspects of politics, the logic of political participation, political ideology, and group interests in politics.

Week 14 - 4/20-4/24	A turn to rationality and its discontents
<u>Monday 20:</u>	Reconsiderations of Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis (Levi, 2009, pp.117-133).
<u>Wednesday 22:</u>	Bounded Rationality and Cognitive Limits in Political Decision Making (Shannon, McGee and Jones, 2019).
<u>Friday 24:</u>	Chapter 8 of Foundations (Newton and Van Deth, 2016).
Weeks 15 & 16 - 4/27-5/4	Political participation, ideology, group interests
<u>Monday 27:</u>	Chapter 12 of Foundations (Newton and Van Deth, 2016).
<u>Wednesday 29:</u>	Chapter 4 of Comparative Federalism (Burgess, 2006).
<u>Friday 1:</u>	Chapter 9 of Foundations (Newton and Van Deth, 2016) and Review. Start of the Final Exam online. Extra Credit assignment due
<u>Monday 4:</u>	Final Exam due.

Important dates

To prevent any misunderstanding about deadlines, here is a summary of important dates in chronological order:

<u>Required task</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Midterm I	February 28 th
Special COVID-19 Assignment	March 23 rd
Midterm II	March 27 th -30 th
Requests for Extra Credit Assignment	April 10 th
Extra Credit Assignment	May 1 st
Final Exam	May 1 st -4 th

References

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