

Introduction to Comparative Politics	University of Houston
POLS 3311	Fall 2018
Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:20 p.m.	Francisco Cantú
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Comparative politics is a field that analyzes differences among the political institutions, political behavior, and public policies of the countries. This is an upper-level course that introduces students to the principal concepts and theories in the field and provides the basic tools for political inquiry. There are two goals in this course. First, students will learn new analytical tools and concepts applicable to any other upper division political science course. Second, students will practice and polish their writing skills.

Format

We will meet twice a week for the duration of the semester. There are assigned readings for each lecture, and students are expected to come to each class having read all the required material. The material reviewed in class will complement the reading material, so lectures are not a substitute for the readings or vice versa. You are responsible for any work that you miss, and missing class is no excuse for not turning in an assignment.

Expectations

Similar to speaking a foreign language, riding a bike for first time, or learning to play a musical instrument, exposure to new vocabulary and concepts used in comparative politics may prove a challenging task. Therefore, the following are the minimum expectations that both instructor and students need to have in this course.

On the one hand, I will be available for assistance throughout the semester and promptly answer your e-mails. Lectures will begin and end on time. The examinations will be a fair evaluation of the material covered in lectures and assigned readings. Grading standards will be fair and open. Essays and exams will be turned back no later than a week after submitted.

On the other hand, after making an informed choice to join this class, you are ready to learn and not just enrolled to earn a certain grade or requirement. You are responsible for your own learning, and need to come to class prepared having both read the assigned material and ask for feedback on what you need help with. You will attend classes regularly and on time. Finally, you have to be aware of the deadlines of the class and be responsible of submitting assignments on time.

Readings and material for the class

There is an average of 30 pages of text to read before every lecture. Depending on your reading skills, you should complete the assigned readings in no more than three hours. Reading the assigned material before coming to class is a very important part of the work you will be doing. At the beginning of every class, I expect that you understand the basic argument of the readings, gain some familiarity with new concepts, and be aware of the parts of the topic in which you need more attention or assistance.

Book chapters and academic articles are available on Blackboard. Podcasts and articles from *The Economist* and *The New York Times* are available online. Also, we will use a classroom response system that requires you to bring any device with wi-fi and web browser (e.g., laptop, smartphone, or tablet). You need to sign-up to the system following the instructions at https://learningcatalytics.com/users/sign_up. The fee for using this system during the semester is 12 dollars, and this is the only class material you need to pay for this class. Please, let me know ASAP if you are not able to pay the fee or cannot bring any of the electronic devices mentioned above.

A quick note on electronic devices: Besides the moments in class we will use the system mentioned above, I expect that all electronic devices will be put away and not sitting out in view. Using laptops in class has

detrimental effects for students,¹ and they distract others students around and myself. However, please let me know if you feel that your learning will be hampered by not having access to your laptop for note-taking or if you must keep your cell phone on because of an emergency. I reserve the right to deduct all your participation points without notice if you do use electronic devices to engage in distracting behavior during class time.

Course Requirements

Exams: There will be three partial evaluations based on the questions outlined in this syllabus. Each exam includes five multiple choice questions and two essay questions. Each of your two highest-scored exams will count 20% of your final grade, and your exam with the lowest grade will count 15%.

Short essays: Students are required to submit three (3) 750-word essays throughout the length of the semester. Every week, students will have the opportunity to submit, via Blackboard, an essay following the instructions for each of the topics discussed in class. This assignment is designed as an auxiliary tool to recall and organize some of the material for the exams. Additional guidelines for the essay will be provided the first day of class.

Essays are due on Monday at 4 a.m. You should submit one paper for each of the three sections of the course. In other words, you need to submit one essay before September 24, another essay between September 25 and October 29, and the last essay between October 30 and December 2. Students cannot submit more than one essay per section and no extensions are allowed, so plan ahead. Each of your two highest-scored essays will count 10% of your final grade, and your essay with the lowest grade will count 5%. The topics for the weekly essay are listed below.

- Section I

- Week 1 (due on August 27). Describe what makes a good argument and provide relevant examples.
- Week 2 (due on September 5). Describe the main differences between the state of nature and the civil state.
- Week 3 (due on September 10). Explain the main differences between democracy and autocracy.
- Week 4 (due on September 17). Delineate the different types of dictatorships and their potential consequences for survival.
- Week 5 (due on September 24). Explain the relationship between economic development and democratization.

- Section II

- Week 6 (due on October 1). Describe the role of political institutions in the delegative model of democracies.
- Week 7 (due on October 8). Compare the main features of the majoritarian and proportional electoral systems.
- Week 8 (due on October 15). Compare the party systems in the U.K. and France given their number of parties and political alignment.
- Week 9 (due on October 22). Discuss the differences between presidential, parliamentary, and mixed democracies.
- Week 10 (due on October 29). Compare the majoritarian and consensual systems.

- Section III

¹See, for example, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/05/16/why-smart-kids-shouldnt-use-laptops-in-class/> and <http://thechronicleofeducation.com/2017/04/06/using-laptops-class-harms-academic-performance-study-warns/>

- Week 12 (due on November 12). Explain the reasons for why some countries are richer than others.
- Week 13 (due on November 19). Compare the two main approaches about foreign aid to ameliorate poverty.
- Week 14 (due on November 26). Describe the relationship between political institutions and ethnic identity.
- Week 15 (due on December 2). Discuss the problems for achieving collective action.

In-class quizzes: To encourage you to read in advance of the lecture, there will be several in-class quizzes, which dates will not be announced in advance. Each quiz consists of a short question about the main argument or facts of the readings assigned to that day. There will not be trick questions and the answers will be obvious for those who read the material. Quizzes missed due to absences or late arrivals cannot be made up. When estimating your final grade, I will drop out your two lowest quizzes. The average grade of your quizzes will count 15% of your final grade.

Participation: Class participation means that you are fully present during lectures, group presentations and other class activities. This entails offering relevant and informed insights, keeping competing conversations with classmates to a minimum, and refraining from use of electronic devices. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and this can only happen if we respect each other and our differences.

Grading

Partial Evaluations	$2 \times 20\% + 15\% = 55\%$
Essays	$2 \times 10\% + 5\% = 25\%$
In-class quizzes	15%
Participation	5%
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100%

Final letter grades will be calculated in an absolute scale as follows: A (94-100%), A- (90-93.9%), B+ (87-89.9%), B (84-86.9%), B- (80-83.9%), C+ (77-79.9%), C (74-76.9%), C- (70-73.9%), D+ (67-69.9%), D (64-66.9%), D- (60-63.9%), F (0-59.9%).

Deadlines and extensions

Unless very pressing (and fully documented) situations, extensions are not allowed. There are no make-up essays or quizzes.

Disabilities

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, the University of Houston strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them.

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me after you contacted the Center for Students with DisAbilities (CSD).²

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the "Let's Talk" program, a drop-in consultation service at

²<http://www.uh.edu/csd/>

convenient locations and hours around campus.³

Academic Integrity

Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the honor pledge that will be provided the first day of class. There will be a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism in any of the required activities for this course, and any violation will be penalized in the terms cited by the UH's Academic Dishonesty Policy.⁴ Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Feel free to consult with me before submitting your essay if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others.

Office Hours

Wednesday 2:00-4:00 p.m. at 429 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall. If you cannot make it at that time, please send me an e-mail to schedule a meeting outside those hours.

Teaching Assistant

Huseyin Tunc (htunc@uh.edu). Office hours: Monday 1:00-3:00 p.m. at 426 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall.

I. Introduction / Political Development

Week 1. Introduction

- What is the “comparative” in comparative politics?
- What is the scientific method as it relates to studying politics?

August 20

No assigned reading

August 22

Pollock III, P. H. (2016). *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Sage Publications, Ltd: Chapter 3

Week 2. Power and Politics / The State

- What is politics?
- What are the “two faces” of power?
- What is the state?
- What makes a state successful?

August 27

O'Neil, P. (2018). *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. W.W. Norton & Co: 2-29.

August 29

Shepsle, K. A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics*. W.W. Norton & Co: 13-30.

³http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html

⁴http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/_documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf

Week 3. Political Regimes

- What is democracy?
- How to conceptualize and measure democracy?

September 5

Last day to drop a course without a grade

Dahl, R. (1971). *Polyarchy*. Yale University Press: 1-16.

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2017). *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, 3 edition: 154-169.

Week 4. Dictatorships

- What is a dictatorship?
- What are the main challenges of authoritarian rule?
- How can we distinguish the different types of dictatorship?

September 10

Gandhi, J. (2008). *Political Institutions Under Dictatorships*. Cambridge University Press, New York: 1-41.

September 12

Bueno de Mesquita, B. and Smith, A. (2011). *The Dictator's Handbook*. PublicAffairs, New York: 1-20, 49-74.

Week 5. Democratization

- Why do some states become democracies but not others?
- Is economic change fundamental to modern democracy?
- Why do democracies break down?
- Does democracy require a “democratic culture”?

September 17

Lipset, S. M. (2003). Political man: The social bases of politics. In Dahl, R., Shapiro, I., and Cheibub, J. A., editors, *The Democracy Sourcebook*, pages 56–70. MIT Press

Boix, C. (2006). The roots of democracy. *Policy Review*, (135):1–19

September 19

Putnam, R. D. (1994). What makes democracy work? *IPA Review*, 47(1):31–34

Inglehart, R. (2018). *Cultural Evolution*. Cambridge University Press: 36-59

September 24

First Partial Exam

II. Political Institutions

Week 6. Introduction

- How does the delegation structure work in democracies?
- What is the role of political institutions in democracies?

September 26

Taylor, S. L., Shugart, M. S., Lijphart, A., and Grofman, B. (2014). *A Different Democracy. American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. Yale University Press, New Haven: 1-24

Week 7. Electoral Systems

- How to combine individual preferences into a single choice?
- What are electoral systems?
- How different voting methods affect the outcome?

October 1

“Engines of Our Ingenuity (No. 2427): Arrow’s Paradox” (Houston Public Radio) http://www.kuhf.org/programaudio/engines/eng2427_64k.m3u

Riker, W. H. (1982). *Liberalism Against Populism*. Waveland Press: 1-19

October 3

Norris, P. (2004). *Electoral Engineering*. Cambridge University Press: 39-65

Week 8. Parties and Party Systems

- What is a political party?
- What are party systems and how can we classify them?
- How can we explain differences among party systems?

October 8

Colomer, J. M. (2011). *The Science of Politics*. Oxford University Press: 135-146

“Empty vessels?” *The Economist*. Jul 24, 1999: 51-52.

October 10

Dalton, R. J. (2014). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Sage Publications, Ltd: 133-154

Weeks 9 and 10. Systems of Government

- How to distinguish presidential, parliamentary, and mixed democracies?
- How do governments form and survive in each type of democracy?
- Do differences between systems of government matter?

October 15

Cheibub, J. A. (2007). *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press: 26-45

October 17

Shepsle, K. A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics*. W.W. Norton & Co: 503-527

October 22

Linz, J. J. (1992). The perils of presidentialism. In Lijphart, A., editor, *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*. Cambridge University Press: 118-127

Mainwaring, S. and Shugart, M. S. (1997). Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal. *Comparative Politics*, 29(4):449-471 (only read 449-463)

Week 10. Veto Players and Institutional Design

- What are the tradeoffs when choosing political institutions?

October 24

Lijphart, A. (1999). *Patterns of Democracy*. Yale University Press: 2-47

October 29

Second Partial Exam

October 31

Film: Please Vote For Me

November 1

Last day to drop a course or withdraw with a "W"

III. Policy Outcomes

Weeks 12 and 13. Comparative Political Economy I

- What is the relationship between states and markets
- Why do some countries redistribute more than others?
- Why some countries are rich and others poor?
- What best promotes economic development?
- What kinds of policies are required to reduce the magnitude and extent of absolute poverty?

November 5

Samuels, D. (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Pearson Education: 315-344

November 7

Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why Nations Fall?* Crown Business, New York: Ch. 1, p. 7-44

Hidalgo, C. A. and Hausmann, R. (2008). A network view of economic development. *Developing Alternatives*, (5):5-10

November 12

Collier, P. (2007). *The bottom billion*. Oxford University Press: 99-123

Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York: 29-47

Weeks 13 and 14. Ethnicity

- What are the main forms of political identity?
- When does identity become politicized?

November 14

Dickovick, J. T. and Eastwood, J. (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2nd edition: 326-347

November 19

Htun, M. (2004). Is gender like ethnicity? the political representation of identity groups. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3):439-458

"The fear of majority rule," *The Economist*. May 29, 2003.

Week 15. Collective Action

- How do individuals coordinate their separate interest to mobilize collectively?
- Under what conditions do protest succeed?

November 26

Elster, J. (2007). *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press: 388-400.

November 28

Tucker, J. (2007). Enough! Electoral fraud, collective action problems, and post-communist colored revolutions. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(3):535-551

Rosenberg, T. "The Art of Protest," *The New York Times*. November 21, 2016.

December 2

Third Partial Exam