

PSCI 3350: Comparative Politics

Course Information

Course: PSCI 3350.001

Term: Fall 2017

Class Meetings: MW 2:30pm-3:45pm

Location: GR 2.530

Professor Contact Information

Dr. Patrick F. Larue

patrick.larue@utdallas.edu

Office: GR 3.230

Office Hours: MW 11:00am-1:00pm, and by appt.

Course Description

Comparative politics is the study of how countries around the world are similar and dissimilar. In this course, we will examine these major differences in how countries operate, and how those differences affect outcomes and behavior. For instance, are democracies more susceptible to civil war? Why do some countries tend to have two major parties while others have many more? What allows some countries to be stronger deterrents to terrorism versus others? In order to answer any of these questions, we must understand the similarities and differences between countries.

This course will highlight the major theories regarding state development, political regimes, and political institutions, while also empirically examining a set of countries to place these concepts into a real-world context. By the end of this course, you should be able to understand why some countries respond differently to particular phenomena, and what constrains and enables them to respond.

Course Objectives

Upon passage of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the methods of studying comparative politics
- Describe the different theories involved in state development
- Identify and explain the differences between types of regimes
- Develop a knowledge of multiple countries around the world

Required Textbook

Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd edition by Clark et al. ISBN: 9781506318127

This book is available at the campus bookstore, and at other outlets as well. Feel free to find the cheapest used/rental/ebook version. I always am asked about alternate texts, and alternate editions. My answer is always going to be this. You can, but it is not suggested. This book was chosen for its combination of being thorough, but also approachable. You may find that other texts are more thorough, but may be difficult to utilize. Some others may be concise and simplistic, but overly so to your detriment.

Additional materials: There are no other required materials, but consistently referring to global events may give you an advantage in this course. Staying abreast of what is happening in the news on a week-to-week basis will help you understand how things work, and why we see the outcomes we do. This is especially important given the global political climate we are currently in.

Should I have you read or look at additional material, I will have them provided to you either through eLearning or course reserves on the library website.

Grading

There are 4 components of this course that will determine your final grade.

- **Three Exams**, each worth 20% of the final grade. (60% total)
There will be three in-class exams throughout the semester. You can find the dates listed below in the syllabus. Exams will consist of a series of short answer questions (define and identify), and one long essay. Exams will include content from the textbook, and from lecture. You will not need a blackbook, as space to answer the questions will be provided to you. Dates for the exam are **September 18**, **October 16**, and **November 15**
- **Group Project**, worth 20% of the final grade. (20 % total)
The group project will require that you work together with others in the class to build a country profile for a country that has not been discussed in lecture. I will randomly assign groups, and randomly assign countries so that there is no unfair advantage for any group. You will also be able to actively take part in the grading process as well to protect against free-riding. The group project consists of two parts: First, you will be required to give an oral and visual presentation as a group on a day randomly chosen by me at the end of the semester. Second, you will be required to turn in a paper that addresses a number of issues and questions. These details will be given to you later in the semester. All papers and presentations must be turned in by the due date of **November 27**
- **Four Geography Quizzes**, each worth 2.5% of the final grade. (10% total) There will be four geography quizzes for you to complete in class throughout the semester. These quizzes will require that you study and learn where a number of countries around the world are located. You will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz by locating 10 countries. The quizzes are divided between four sets of areas:

Quiz 1: North America and South America (**August 28**)

Quiz 2: Europe and the Middle East (**September 6**)

Quiz 3: Africa (**October 2**)

Quiz 4: Asia (**October 30**)

- **Attendance and Participation**, worth 10% of the final grade.
Attendance will be taken periodically throughout the semester. Your grade will be based off signed attendance sheets. I reserve the right to reward students with exceptional participation.

Final grades will be calculated on the $+/-$ scale, where 97 and above will be an A+, a 93-96 will be an A, and a 90-92 will be an A-, and so on, after rounding to the nearest whole number.

Instructor Policies

- It is a best practice to email me (even right before) if you are coming by office hours, just to make sure I am there. I often find myself running around to various meetings and other responsibilities, so a quick heads up will save you and me some potential headaches. We are both busy.
- I allow the use of laptops in the classroom. However, should they become distracting, then I will ban them for the duration of the semester.
- Do not use your phone in class. You don't need it. If you do need it, come talk to me. I'm happy to accommodate. Otherwise, I reserve the right to ask you to leave if it is distracting to others, or to me.
- Be respectful of others. Given the current political climate, divisive political discussions may result. These are encouraged within a forum that encourages dignity and respect.
- Do not cheat. I will handle this aggressively. If I suspect that you cheat, I will move you (or the victim) into another seat, *at a minimum*.
- If you believe that you were given an inaccurate grade on an exam or quiz, you must email me within one week of that grade being given to you to tell me what you believe is incorrect and why. If needed, I will recheck your grade, but your grade may be adjusted downward if warranted.
- If you miss an exam, you must provide written documentation for your absence within 24 hours of the exam. I retain the right to deny a make-up. Should I grant a make-up, it must be scheduled within one week of the date of the exam. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes.
- If you email me, it must be through your UTD email address. University policy dictates this, and I do not deviate from this. Grades can only be discussed face-to-face. I highly recommend setting an appointment or coming to office hours in order to respect your privacy.
- I do not distribute slides to the class. It is your responsibility to come to class and take notes. The sole exception is if you miss class for a reasonable documented excuse. Best practice is to obtain notes from a classmate as the slides on their own will not be sufficient to understand the material.

Course Outline

This outline is tentative and subject to change.

Section 1: The Basics

Aug 21:	Introduction to the course	
Aug 23:	The Science of Politics	Chapter 2
Aug 28	Comparative Research Methods	Chapter 3
Aug 30:	The State and the Nation	Chapter 4
Sep 4:	NO CLASS - Labor Day	
Sep 6:	Democracies	Chapter 5
Sep 11:	Autocracies	Chapter 10
Sep 13:	Economic and Cultural Determinants	Chapters 6 & 7
Sep 18:	Exam 1	

Section 2: Institutions

Sep 20:	Constitutions	Chapter 15
Sep 25:	NO CLASS - Conference	
Sep 27:	Electoral Systems	Chapter 13
Oct 2:	Executives	Chapter 12
Oct 4:	Legislatures	Chapter 12
Oct 9:	Courts	Chapter 13
Oct 11:	Political Parties	Chapter 14
Oct 16:	Exam 2	

Section 3: Special Topics, Special Countries

Special Topics

Oct 18:	State Capacity
Oct 23:	Civil War
Oct 25:	Terrorism
Oct 30:	Civil Liberties and Human Rights

Country Studies

Nov 1:	The United Kingdom
Nov 6:	Germany
Nov 8:	Brazil
Nov 13:	Russia
Nov 15:	Exam 3

Nov 20-22: **NO CLASS - Thanksgiving Break**

Nov 27-Dec 6 Group Project Presentations

University Policies and Miscellany

- University policies regarding email communication, withdrawals, grievances, incompletes, holidays, and disability accommodations can be found at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.
- This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.