

POLS 3339: Comparative Political Systems

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Course Description

What makes a dictatorship transform to a democracy? Which types of political systems perform better? Is democracy incompatible with certain cultures? These questions are among the important themes that this course will cover. This course will introduce you to the basic concepts, theories, and methods of comparative politics.

Learning Objectives

- Understanding key concepts and issues in comparative politics
- Sharpening critical thinking skills
- Developing research skills
- Improving writing skills
- Enhancing communication skills
- Developing global awareness

Required Texts

- Rod Hague, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick. 2016. *Political Science: A Comparative Introduction*. 8th ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-1-137-60123-0.
 - Available online or at UTEP Bookstore.

Other readings are available through Blackboard.

iClicker

iClicker is an application for in-class interaction between students and the instructor. Throughout the semester, I will use iClicker to give quizzes or take polls. Your participation through iClicker will count 10% in your final score. I will walk you through the setup before I record your grades. Setup instruction is also available [here](#). You are required to get iClicker ready on your devices by the second class meeting.

Course Requirements

Finishing readings before class is key to success in this class because it underlines your success in all the following class components.

1. iClicker participation (10%)

This includes quizzes, polls, etc., and it may take place at any time. **Note that you will lose all your iClicker points for a class if you are absent.**

If you fail to answer iClicker questions during class due to technology problems, you can turn in your answers on paper after that class. **I will not accept paper-based answers for previous classes.** You are responsible to fix tech problems in a timely manner ([UTEP Technology Support is there to help](#)). If you show no efforts to fix the problems, your answers on paper may not be accepted.

2. Reaction Essay (5%)

You are required to write an essay in response to a reading of your own choosing. The readings available for this task is marked with **[Reaction Essay]** in the timetable.

The essay should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margin on all sides, with 12 point Times New Roman font. **The first draft** is due on Blackboard at 1:00 pm the day the reading is covered. I will provide feedback and **the second and final draft** is due exactly one week since I provide the feedback. Missing either deadline will result in a 5% penalty.

In your essay, do not only summarize, but also critique the reading. Do you agree with the author or not? Why? What do you find especially convincing or weak? Does the author provide sufficient support for the arguments? Is the reasoning valid? What do you think the author has missed? What inspires you the most?

I will grade your essay based on the quality of your second draft **as well as how well you have addressed my feedback.**

I do not require specific styles such APA or Chicago, but you must have citations that can be traced back to the original sources. **Copying somebody's words without quoting the speaker is plagiarism. Using others' ideas without citing the writers is plagiarism. Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and will be discovered, and it has severe consequences.**

3. Debate (5%)

You will have a debate on whether democracy is a better governing form than autocracy on **Tuesday, September 24**. Two debaters will be on the pro-side and two on the against-side.

You can volunteer to be a debater on a first-come-first-serve basis. The rest of the class will be audience voters. An instruction of the debate will be posted on Blackboard.

4. Exams (65%)

- Midterm exam (30%)
- Final exam (35%)

5. Group Research Project (15%)

Each student is expected to partner up with three other students to complete a group project. In the project, you shall compare **two** countries' performance on **one** policy area, and propose a broader theory about the relationship between country characteristics and policy performance. You may choose from the following countries: The US, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Great Britain, China, India, and Russia. The available policy areas include voter turnout rates, education, health care, public safety, economic development, economic inequality, and environmental protection. Note that some countries are not comparable in certain areas, so your research question should guide your case selection. Because this student body is generally more familiar with the US and Mexico, I will hold projects comparing these two countries to higher standards.

Each group should make **two presentations (5%)** and submit a **written report (10%)**. Presentations and written reports should draw on data and information from credible sources. The first presentation should focus on introducing the research question, case selection, and descriptions of the two countries' different performance. The second presentation should focus on revealing causal relationships between country characteristics and policy performance. The written report should present the content of the presentations in a more organized and detailed way. The written report should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margin on all sides, with 12 point Times New Roman font. It is due on Blackboard on **Tuesday December 10**. Each student also needs to fill out a survey detailing what each group member has done and how well he or she has done it. **Your grade will be based on the overall quality of the group project as well as your own contribution.**

Your letter grade will be assigned as follows:

| Letter Grade |
|-----------------|
| [90, 100] A |
| [80, 90) B |
| [70, 80) C |
| [60, 70) D |
| [0, 70) F |

Course Policies

Electronic Devices

Computers and tablets are allowed only for class-related activities such as taking notes or accessing readings. Phones are prohibited for the good of your mind and eye.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as one's own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm> for further information.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Please discuss with me in person as soon as possible about any needs you might have. Or you may contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (phone: 5148, Email: cass@utep.edu) at 302 Union East within the first two weeks of classes.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, 8/27: Course Introduction and iClicker Setup

- Hague et al. Ch. 1

Thursday, 8/29: Basics of Research Methods

- Hague et al. Ch. 5
- Sodaro, Michael. 2004. "Critical Thinking about Politics." *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill. 56-75.

Tuesday, 9/3: States I

- Wolff, Jonathan. 1996. *In An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2. [Reaction Essay]

Thursday, 9/5: States II

- Hague et al. Ch. 2
- Heywood, Andrew. 2015. *Political Theory: An Introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave. 67-79 & Ch. 4.

Tuesday, 9/10: Democratic Rule I

- Dahl, Robert. 2005. "What Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?" *Political Science Quarterly*. 120(2): 187-97. [Reaction Essay]

Thursday, 9/12: Democratic Rule II

- Hague et al. Ch. 3.

Tuesday, 9/17: Authoritarian Rule I

- Hauge et al. Ch. 4
- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2.

Thursday, 9/19: Authoritarian Rule II

- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1.

Tuesday, 9/24: In-class Debate on Democracy vs. Authoritarianism

Thursday, 9/26: Lecture on Democracy vs. Authoritarianism

- Wolff, Jonathan. 1996. *In An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 3.
- Dahl, Robert Alan. 1989. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 6. [Reaction Essay]

Tuesday, 10/1: Democratization

- Geddes, Barbara. 2011. "What Causes Democratization" In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 317-339.

Thursday, 10/3: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems I

- Hague et al. Ch. 9.

Tuesday, 10/8: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems II

- Linz, Juan. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy*. 1(1): 51-69. [Reaction Essay]
- Mainwaring, Scott and Matthew Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics*. 29(4):449-71.

Thursday, 10/10: Electoral Systems

- Hague et al. Ch. 16.
- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-six Democracies*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 8.

Tuesday, 10/15: Political Participation I

- Hague et al. Ch. 17.

Thursday, 10/17: Midterm Review

- Declare group members

Tuesday, 10/22: Documentary: The Gate of Heavenly Peace

Thursday, 10/24: Midterm Exam on Blackboard

Tuesday, 10/29: Political Participation II

- Hague et al. Ch. 13.
- Olson, Mancur. 1967. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Action and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 5-16.

Thursday, 10/31: Political Culture I

- Hague et al. Ch. 12.

Tuesday, 11/5: Political Culture II

- Inglehart, Ronald. 2007. "Postmaterialist Values and the Shift from Survival to Self-expression Values." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, edited by Russell Dalton, J. and H. Klingemann. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1):65-78.

Thursday, 11/7: Political Parties

- Hague et al. Ch. 18
- Aldrich, John 2008. "The Case for the Importance of Political Parties." In *American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. edited by Alan Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis. Cengage Learning.

Tuesday, 11/12: Institutions and Development

- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York, NY: Crown Books. Ch. 1-3.

Thursday, 11/14: Politics of Inequality

- Wolff, Jonathan. 1996. In *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch. 5.
- Timmons, Jeffrey F. 2010. "Does Democracy Reduce Economic Inequality?" *British Journal of Political Science* 40:741-757.
- An Interview with Adam Przeworski. [Link](#).

Tuesday, 11/19: Globalization and Immigration

- Abdelal, Rawi and Adam Segal. 2007. "Has Globalization Passed Its Peak?" *Foreign Affairs* 86(1): 103-114.
- Carens, Joseph H. 1987. "Aliens and Citizens: the Case for Open Borders." *The Review of Politics* 49 (2):251-273.

Thursday, 11/21: Presentation I in Class

Tuesday, 11/26; Thursday, 11/28: No Class

Tuesday, 12/3: Presentation II in Class

Thursday, 12/5: Final Exam Review

Tuesday, 12/10: Group Project Written Report Due, no class

Thursday, 12/12: Final Exam on Blackboard