

POLS 3339: Comparative Political Systems

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

Spring 2024

Class Hours: 1:30-2:50 pm T&R
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Class Location: QUIN 203
Office Hours: by appointment
Office: Benedict Hall 305

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
- Developing research skills
- Improving writing skills
- UTEP EDGE skills
 - problem-solving
 - communication
 - global awareness
 - teamwork
 - critical thinking

Required Texts

- John McCormick, Rod Hague, Martin Harrop. 2022. *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. 12th ed. New York: Red Globe Press. ISBN: 978-1-350-93254-8.
 - 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 15% towards your final score. I will walk you through the setup before I record your grades. Setup instruction is also available [here](#). You can use iClicker on your computer or mobile devices, so you do not need to buy a hand-held clicker. You are responsible for getting iClicker ready on your device 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 (15%)

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 at the end of that class. **I will not accept paper-based answers for previous classes.** You are responsible for fixing tech problems in a timely manner. Contact UTEP Technology Support when necessary. If you show no efforts to fix the problems, your answers on paper may not be accepted.

2. Reaction Essay (15%)

You are required to write an essay in response to one reading of your own choosing. The readings available for this task are marked with **[Reaction Essay]** in the timetable. You will be asked to declare your choice in the first weeks of the semester. Once a reading is selected, you should honor your choice. I only allow change of reading in exceptional circumstances.

The essay should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margin on all sides, with 12 point Times New Roman font. I believe that best educational results are achieved through interactive feedback between students and the instructor, so your essay is completed in two phases. First, you should submit **a first draft** on Blackboard by 12:59 pm on the day the reading is scheduled to be covered in class. I will provide feedback and **the second and final draft** is due **one week** after I provide the feedback. Your 2nd draft will be graded partly by how you respond to my comments and suggestions.

In your essay, do more than summarizing. I place more emphasis on how analytical and critical you are. 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 do not require specific styles such as 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 detected and handled as academic misconduct.**

The first and final drafts are worth 5% and 10% of your final grade, respectively.

3. In-class Debate (5%)

A debate will be held during class on April 25, 2024. The specifics of the debate will be announced later in the semester.

4. Exams (50%)

There are a midterm exam (25%) and a final exam (cumulative, 25%). Both are close-book and conducted on Blackboard through the Respondus LockDown Browser.

5. Group Research Project (15%)

You will conduct a group project with 3 or 4 classmates. 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, immigration, 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.

Each group should make **a presentations (5%)** and submit **a written report (10%)**. Presentations and written reports should draw on data and information from credible sources. Your presentation should focus on why you choose your country cases and establish causal relationships for their policy outcomes. The written report should present the content of the presentations in a more organized and detailed way, **plus an appendix detailing the contributions of each group member**. 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 **Thursday, May 2**. **Your grade will be based on the overall quality of the group project as well as your own contributions.**

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

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 <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html> 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, 1/16: Course Introduction

- McCormick et al. Ch. 1

Thursday, 1/18: Basics of Research Methods

- McCormick et al. Ch. 2
- Sodaro, Michael. 2004. "Critical Thinking about Politics." *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill. 56-75.

Tuesday, 1/23: States I

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

Thursday, 1/25: States II

- McCormick et al. Ch. 3
- Heywood, Andrew. 2015. *Political Theory: An Introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave. 67-79 & Ch. 4.

Tuesday, 1/30: Democratic Rule I

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

Thursday, 2/1: Democratic Rule II

- McCormick et al. Ch. 5. 104-110; 119-129.

Tuesday, 2/6: Authoritarian Rule I

- Hauge et al. Ch. 6.
- Svobik, Milan W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2.

Thursday, 2/8: Authoritarian Rule II

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

Tuesday, 2/13: 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]

Thursday, 2/15: Film on Communism

Tuesday, 2/20: Democratization I

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

Thursday, 2/22: Democratization II

- McCormick et al. Ch. 5. 111-119.

Tuesday, 2/27: Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems I

- McCormick et al. Ch. 8.

Thursday, 2/29: 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.

Tuesday, 3/5: Electoral Systems

- McCormick et al. Ch. 14.
- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-six Democracies*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 8.
- Midterm Q&A

Thursday, 3/7: Midterm Exam on Blackboard

- Available from noon to 11:59 pm with a 2-hour limit

3/12, 3/14: Spring Break

Tuesday, 3/19: Political Participation I

- McCormick et al. Ch. 13.

Thursday, 3/21: Political Participation II

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

Tuesday, 3/26: Political Culture I

- McCormick et al. Ch. 4.

Thursday, 3/28: No Class

Tuesday, 4/2: 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. [Reaction Essay]

Thursday, 4/4: Political Parties

- McCormick et al. Ch. 15.
- 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, 4/9: Social Movements

- Koopmans, Ruud. 2007. "Social Movements." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, edited by Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 1-25. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thursday, 4/11: Public Policy

- McCormick et al. Ch. 17.

Tuesday, 4/16: Political Economy

- 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, 4/18: 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.
- Interview with Thomas Sowell, [link](#)

Tuesday, 4/23: 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.
- Live Q&A on Blackboard from 11 am to noon

Thursday, 4/25: Debate

- On Blackboard, topic to be announced
- All students participate online

Tuesday, 4/30: Final Exam Q&A

Thursday, 5/2: Group Project Presentation

- Group project written report due at midnight

Thursday, 5/9: Final Exam on Blackboard

- Available from noon to 11:59 pm with a 2-hour limit