

POLS 5339: Comparative Political Institutions

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Virtual Office Hours: by appointment

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Class Hours: R 6-8:50pm on Blackboard

Course Description

What are political institutions? How do democratic and authoritarian institutions come about, and what are their natures? What are different types of democratic and authoritarian institutions? What different outcomes do they produce? In this graduate seminar, you shall explore these questions through knowing the literature and conducting your own research.

Required Texts

- Arend Lijphart. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-six Countries*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2012
- Milan W. Svobik. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012
- Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. Crown Books, New York, NY, 2012
- Rory Truex. *Making Autocracy Work: Representation and Responsiveness in Modern China*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2016

Other readings are available on Blackboard.

Course Objectives

Successful students will be able to:

1. understand different approaches to the study of political institutions.

2. identify the features of different political institutions and analyze their different consequences.
3. conduct independent empirical research on political institutions.

Course Requirements

1. Reading Assignments and Class Participation

Graduate seminars are different from undergraduate lectures. In a graduate seminar, you are expected to be more active both before and during class. This means that you should complete and digest the readings before class, and that during class, you should ask thoughtful questions, provide intelligent answers, and make informed comments. I will evaluate your participation by both quantity and quality of your participation. Because participation is impossible if you miss a class, you will lose 25 percent of the participation grade for each unexcused absence.

In addition to in-class participation, you are also required to post **at least two** discussion questions on Blackboard by **every Tuesday**. Questions should focus on concepts, theories, methods, data, or other key questions in the literature. Questions comparing or connecting different readings are encouraged. The quality, quantity, and punctuality of your posts will all affect my grading. You are encouraged to respond to posted questions prior to the class meeting. **You should review posted questions and comments before class.**

2. Critical Reviews

In our first class, you shall choose two weeks' readings and write two critical reviews on them. Critical reviews are due on Blackboard at 5:30 pm in the next class day. For example, if you choose to write a critical review of the readings assigned for week 2, your review is due on the Wednesday of week 3 at 5:30 pm. No hard copy is needed.

Critical reviews should cover **all the readings** for the week. A critical review should be more than a summary of the readings, although summarizing is often needed. When grading your reviews, I will pay close attention to whether you have read and comprehended the readings, and whether you have synthesized them and understood the state of the literature. For example, what are the central questions and controversies, and how does each reading approach them? What evidence do the authors provide? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and empirics, and how could the author(s) improve the research?

The reviews should be **3 to 4** pages, typed using Times New Roman 12 pt. font size, double-spaced, paged with one inch margins in all four sides, and all references must be appropriately cited.

Once you choose the dates on which you write reviews, you should respect your deadlines. **You may request change of readings and dates, but such change must be approved by me.** I normally do not consider change requests made at the last minute due to procrastination.

3. Discussion Leader

Each student will be designated as the discussion leader of one class. You will choose when to be a discussion leader after the first class meeting. Your role as a discussion leader will be

graded. **The discussion leader should email me his or her outline of discussion topics and questions on Tuesdays.**

4. Research Paper

You shall write a research paper on political institutions. The paper should contain a research question, a literature review, a theory and hypothesis (or hypotheses), and hypothesis testing with empirical data. Mere descriptive studies or normative discussions do not meet this requirement. **Please talk to me about your research question before you decide on one.**

You must submit a research proposal first. The research proposal should include your research question, literature review, theory and hypothesis, and the methods and data you will use to test your hypothesis. **The research proposal is due on Blackboard at midnight April 8.**

You shall present your completed research during class on May 6. Each presentation should use slides and take about **15 minutes**. Your research paper is due on Blackboard at **midnight on Monday May 10**. Your research paper must be complete and should be between 13 and 25 pages, including notes, tables, figures, and a bibliography.

Both your proposal and research paper should be typed using Times New Roman 12 pt. font size, double-spaced, paged with one inch margins in all four sides. And they should follow the APSA style. An APSA style manual is available on Blackboard.

Grading Policy

Your final grades will be determined as follows:

- 30%: Reading and participation
- 20%: Critical reviews (%10 each)
- 10%: Discussion leader
- 10%: Research proposal
- 5%: Presentation
- 25%: Research paper

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

Week 1, 1/21: Course overview

Week 2, 1/28: Do institutions matter?

- Robert E Goodin. Institutions and their design. In Robert E Goodin, editor, *The Theory of Institutional Design*, pages 1–53. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996
- Robert W. Jackman and Ross A. Miller. A renaissance of political culture? *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3):632–659, 1996
- Jonathan Rodden. Back to the future: Endogenous institutions and comparative politics. In Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, editors, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, pages 333–357. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009
- Acemoglu and Robinson, Chs. 1 and 2

Week 3, 2/4: Democracy and autocracy

- Svoboda, Chs. 1 and 2
- Michael J Abramowitz and Sarah Repucci. Democracy beleaguered. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(2):128–142, 2018
- Larry Diamond. Thinking about hybrid regimes. *Journal of Democracy*, 13:21 – 35, 2002

Week 4, 2/11: Presidential v. parliamentary systems

- Lijphart, Chs. 1-3
- Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S Shugart. Juan linz, presidentialism, and democracy: a critical appraisal. *Comparative Politics*, pages 449–471, 1997
- Jose Antonio Cheibub. Minority governments, deadlock situations, and the survival of presidential democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(3):284–312, 2002

Week 5, 2/18: Centralization and decentralization

- Lijphart, Ch. 10
- Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman. Party aggregation and the number of parties in India and the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 92(2):329–342, 1998
- Erik Wibbels. Madison in baghdad?: Decentralization and federalism in comparative politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9:165–188, 2006
- Chen Cheng, Jiasheng Li, and Chuanchuan Zhang. Variations in governmental responses to and the diffusion of COVID-19: the role of political decentralization. *Working Paper*, 2020

Week 6, 2/25: Electoral systems

- Lijphart, Chs. 5 and 8
- Gary W Cox. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997, pages 3-68
- Kathleen Bawn. Voter responses to electoral complexity: Ticket splitting, rational voters and representation in the federal republic of Germany. *British Journal of Political Science*, 29(3):487–505, 1999

Week 7, 3/4: Legislatures

- Lijphart, Chs. 6, 7 and 11
- Kaare Strom. Minority governments in parliamentary democracies: The rationality of non-winning cabinet solutions. *Comparative Political Studies*, 17(2):199–227, 1984

Week 8, 3/11: Policy and political consequences

- Lijphart, Chs. 13-17

Week 9: No class. Enjoy your spring break!

Week 10, 3/25: Theories of authoritarian politics I

- Svobik, Chs 3 and 4
- Acemoglu and Robinson, Ch. 11

Week 11, 4/1: Theories of authoritarian politics II

- Svobik, Chs 5-7
- Acemoglu and Robinson, Ch. 12

Week 12, 4/8: Submit proposal, no readings

Week 13 4/15: Legislatures in authoritarian countries I

- Truex, Chs 1-4

Week 14, 4/22: Legislatures in authoritarian countries II

- Truex, Chs 5-8

Week 15, 4/29: No class

Week 16, 5/6: Student presentations

Research paper due at midnight, Monday 5/10