

POL 2700: Comparative Political Systems

University of Missouri
Fall 2023

M W F, 2:00 - 2:50 PM, Middlebush Hall, Room 211

Professor Heather M. Kopp, Ph.D. Candidate

Email: hmk439@mail.missouri.edu

Office: E004 Locust Street Building (basement)

Office Hours: M 3:00 - 4:00 PM, W 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM, or by appointment

Overview

This course introduces students to some of the basic concepts and issues encountered in the comparative study of politics. Comparative politics is more than the act of comparing countries, but of using different countries to attempt to understand broader political phenomena. As such, it is an analytic, and not merely descriptive, enterprise. In this course, we will cover key concepts related to political development, regime type, institutional structure, and policymaking by studying a variety of countries that serve as illustrative cases. The countries discussed in class are representative of developed countries and developing nations. Thus, many lessons drawn from these cases can be directly applied to other cases not covered in class.

Notably, the course is not organized around a country-by-country study. Instead, the course's organization is intended to help students develop conceptual tools to compare these countries and generalize to other cases because comparative politics is not simply the description of other countries. Rather, comparative politics is the study of multiple countries to understand why particular political outcomes occur. After this class, students will achieve learning objectives including:

- Students will understand how comparative politics is a science
- Students will be able to explain major concepts and themes in comparative politics
- Students will be able to evaluate and critique seminal theories and empirical findings
- Students will be able to apply political science theories to country cases

While this class references historic and current events, this is not a history course. As political scientists, we will focus on the factors and theories that drive political behavior. As comparativists, we will use these theories as tools to study countries comparatively.

We will start the semester with an overview of political science as a discipline along with the social scientific study of comparative politics. We will then examine definitions and measurements of democracy and dictatorship and discuss economic and cultural determinants of democracy. In the subsequent module on democratic institutions, we will discuss decision-making theories and different governmental systems. We will conclude the class with an examination of outcomes and consequences of democracy including elections, party systems, and veto players.

There are a number of ways for how students can receive assistance, get feedback, or contact me in case of emergency:

- Email me (see in syllabus heading)
- Attend office hours
- Post a question on the "Ask Your Instructor" discussion board on Canvas
- Send me a message in Canvas

Grading

Final grades will be calculated from the following:

- Exam 1 (**September 15**) (20%)
- Exam 2 (**October 11**) (20%)
- Exam 3 (**November 8**) (20%)
- Exam 4 (**December 12**) (20%)
- Discussion Activities (13 total) (20%)

Students should **not** utilize the final grade column(s) automatically created by Canvas to assess their final grade. Rather, students should calculate their own final grade (with estimated or actual grades from various assignments) or contact me via email. When all assignments are graded, I will produce a “FINAL GRADE” column in Canvas. To calculate final grades, students should use the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} FinalGrade = & (Exam1\% \times 20\%) + \\ & (Exam2\% \times 20\%) + \\ & (Exam3\% \times 20\%) + \\ & (Exam4\% \times 20\%) + \\ & (TotalDiscussionActivities\% \times 20\%) \end{aligned}$$

Grading Scale

Final grades will be calculated with the following grading scale:

A+ = 97.0 - 100	C = 73.0 - 76.99
A = 93.0 - 96.99	C- = 70.0 - 72.99
A- = 90.0 - 92.99	D+ = 67.0 - 69.99
B+ = 87.0 - 89.99	D = 63.0 - 66.99
B = 83.0 - 86.99	D- = 60.0 - 62.99
B- = 80.0 - 82.99	F = 0 - 59.99
C+ = 77.0 - 79.99	

Exams (80%)

There will be four exams each worth 20% of the overall grade. Exams may consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, and short answer questions about topics from the preceding lectures and assigned readings (the exams are not cumulative). Exams will cover information from the lectures, class discussion, and reading materials. All exams will be closed-book, closed-note, and in-person.

Discussion Activities (20%)

Following coverage of most topics, we will have a discussion day. While I encourage and desire discussion from students in all class periods, discussion days are days dedicated to student-led discussion. On these days, students will follow discussion activity instructions and **submit at the end of class a reflection of the activity**. Discussion activities will change in structure, but they all entail students reflecting on the material taught in the preceding class(es), working with other students, and engaging in bigger class conversations. These activities will ultimately enable students to ask thought-provoking discussion questions, learn from other students, synthesize material, evaluate and critique theories, research cases, and develop a deeper understanding of the course’s topics.

There are 13 discussion periods in this class, so there are 13 discussion activity assignments. For calculation of the final course grade, students’ total discussion activity percentage will be used.

Readings

There will not always be perfect unity between the course lectures and assigned readings. As such, students should attend all lectures and read the assigned materials in order to be exposed to all of the material covered in the course.

There is one assigned textbook for this course (see below). The text is available at local bookstores and through online sources. Any edition will be sufficient.

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. 2018. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Canvas

We will use Canvas to display grades, post additional readings, and for announcements. Each student should ensure that they have access to all materials on Canvas and are able to receive notifications via their student account. **Please note that I am unable to accept or respond to any emails that come from non-University of Missouri addresses.**

Late Work, Absences, and Make-up Exams

Late work will be deducted 5% for each day late. **I strongly encourage students to turn in assignments late rather than not at all.** A grade of 0 can be fatal to the final grade.

If you know you will miss a deadline due to a university related event, send written documentation **before** the day you are absent. If you miss a deadline due to illness or emergency, send me an email as soon as feasible. I will only excuse late work, provide extensions, and schedule make-up exams on a case-by-case basis. If you are granted a make-up exam, it must be completed within one week of the original exam date.

Decreasing the Risk of COVID-19

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been identified as someone who needs to quarantine, do not attend class in person until the mandated period for isolation or quarantine has passed. Your instructor will work with you on arrangements to access class material while you are in isolation or quarantine. Additionally, if you are experiencing any COVID-related symptoms, or are otherwise feeling unwell, do not attend in-person classes and contact your health care provider and/or student health center immediately. COVID symptoms include: fever greater than 100.4 or chills; cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; fatigue; unexplained muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea.

Other Considerations

- Out of respect for fellow students and the instructor, each person will refrain from talking, whispering, making offensive remarks, newspaper reading, and other disruptive behavior during lecture. If electronic devices become a distraction in class, they may no longer be allowed during portions of the class. Inappropriate classroom behavior can result in the student being requested to leave the room.
- Students may not record or redistribute audio or video recordings of statements, comments, or material from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the instructor and of any students whose statements, comments, or material are recorded.

- Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person’s work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor or the Office of Academic Integrity.
 - Students are expected to adhere to this honor pledge on all graded work whether or not they are explicitly asked in advance to do so: “I strive to uphold the University values of respect, responsibility, discovery, and excellence. On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work.”
 - **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student plagiarizing or cheating in any manner will receive an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment.**
 - This course assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by class assignment instructions. As such, **the use of generative AI tools for any part of any assignment will be treated as plagiarism.**
- If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary, establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center (disabilitycenter.missouri.edu) at 573-882-4696. Afterward, notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations.

Student Support

- If you are in need, the MU Counseling Center offers professional mental health care and can help you find the best approach to treatment based on your needs (wellbeing.missouri.edu/how-we-support-your-mental-health). Call to make an individual appointment or a group counseling appointment at 573-882-6601. Any student in crisis or with urgent concerns can also contact the Counseling Center 24/7 at 573-882-6601.
- If you seek information or support on LGBTQ resources on campus, please contact MU’s LGBTQ Resource Center (lgbtq.missouri.edu) at 573-884-7750. In addition to the MU Counseling Center, students in need can use any of the crisis hotlines provided by the LGBTQ Resource Center (lgbtq.missouri.edu/crisis).
- The Writing Center (writingcenter.missouri.edu) offers writing support to all students at the University of Missouri. Although tutors are not editors and therefore will not “fix” a student’s writing, they will provide feedback and revision options for any writing project at any stage of the writing process. To make an appointment, submit your work to the Online Writery via their website. To learn more about the Writing Center, call 573-884-8725 or 573-882-6853.

Course Schedule

See the course schedule on the next page. **I expect that you will have read the assigned readings before the class period for which they are assigned or discussed.** Because I am unable to predict in advance how long each topic will take, the schedule is only a current guideline. Any changes to the course schedule, including readings, will be announced in class and on Canvas.

POL 2700: Fall 2023 Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Day	Topic	Due	Required Reading
Module: What Is Comparative Politics?					
1	8/21 - 8/25	M	Course Overview and Clark, Golder, and Golder Chapter 1		
		W	Chapter 2: What Is Science?		Clark, Golder, and Golder 2
		F	Chapter 2: What Is Science? (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 2
2	8/28 - 9/1	M	Discussion (of Chapter 2)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Chapter 3: What Is Politics?		Clark, Golder, and Golder 3
		F	Chapter 3: What Is Politics? (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 3
3	9/4 - 9/8	M	No Class		
		W	Discussion (of Chapter 3)	Discussion Activity	
		F	Chapter 4: Origins of the Modern State		Clark, Golder, and Golder 4
4	9/11 - 9/15	M	Chapter 4: Origins of the Modern State (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 4
		W	Discussion (of Chapter 4)	Discussion Activity	
		F	Exam 1	Exam 1	
Module: What Is Democracy?					
5	9/18 - 9/22	M	Chapter 5: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Democracy		Clark, Golder, and Golder 5
		W	Chapter 5: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Democracy (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 5
		F	Discussion (of Chapter 5)	Discussion Activity	
6	9/25 - 9/29	M	Chapter 6: Economic Determinants		Clark, Golder, and Golder 6
		W	Chapter 6: Economic Determinants (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 6
		F	Chapter 7: Cultural Determinants		Clark, Golder, and Golder 7
7	10/2 - 10/6	M	Discussion (of Chapters 6-7)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Chapter 8: Democratic Transitions		Clark, Golder, and Golder 8
		F	Chapter 8: Democratic Transitions (continued)		
8	10/9 - 10/13	M	Discussion (of Chapter 8)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Exam 2	Exam 2	
		Module: Democratic Institutions			
9	10/16 - 10/20	F	Chapter 9: Democracy vs Dictatorship		Clark, Golder, and Golder 9
		M	Chapter 9: Democracy vs Dictatorship (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 9
		W	Discussion (of Chapter 9)	Discussion Activity	
10	10/23 - 10/27	F	Chapter 10: Varieties of Dictatorship		Clark, Golder, and Golder 10
		M	Discussion (of Chapter 10)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Chapter 11: Group Decision-Making		Clark, Golder, and Golder 11
11	10/30 - 11/3	F	Chapter 11: Group Decision-Making (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 11
		M	Discussion (of Chapter 11)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Chapter 12: Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Systems		Clark, Golder, and Golder 12
12	11/6 - 11/10	F	Chapter 12: Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Systems (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 12
		M	Discussion (of Chapter 12)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Exam 3	Exam 3	
Module: Consequences of Democracy					
13	11/13 - 11/17	F	Chapter 13: Elections and Electoral Systems		Clark, Golder, and Golder 13
		M	Chapter 13: Elections and Electoral Systems (continued)		Clark, Golder, and Golder 13
		W	Discussion (of Chapter 13)	Discussion Activity	
14	11/20 - 11/24	F	No Class		
15	11/27 - 12/1	M	No Class (Thanksgiving)		
		W	Chapter 14: Social Cleavages and Party Systems		Clark, Golder, and Golder 14
		F	Chapter 15: Institutional Veto Players		Clark, Golder, and Golder 15
16	12/4 - 12/8	M	Discussion (of Chapters 14-15)	Discussion Activity	
		W	Chapter 16: Consequences of Democratic Institutions		Clark, Golder, and Golder 16
		F	Discussion (of Chapter 16)	Discussion Activity	
17	12/12	Tuesday	No Class (Reading Day)		
			Exam 4 at 7:30 - 9:30 AM	Exam 4	