



Poli 5: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Time: MW 11:00AM-12:15PM

Location: Carnegie 107

Instructor: Brian Engelsma

Email: Brian.Engelsma@pomona.edu

Course Website: <https://pomona.instructure.com/>

Office Hours: Tues. 11:00AM-1:00PM, or by appointment.

This syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes through email.

Course Description: Why do some countries become rich while others remain poor? When and why do we see the outbreak of political violence or even revolution? Where do nation-states come from and why do some states become democracies? Speaking of democracies, are they threatened by rising levels of nationalism and populism globally? This class introduces major analytical approaches in the field of comparative politics in order to better understand how and why political systems, and their problems, vary across the globe.

Class Texts: There are no required textbooks. All class readings will be made available through Canvas. Please complete all assigned readings before the class in which they are assigned. There will be regular reading quizzes throughout the semester, described in more detail below. You are not responsible for readings labeled optional, and they will not be included on any quizzes or exams.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the interplay of political culture and institutions.
2. Be familiar with leading debates and topics of inquiry in comparative politics.
3. Be familiar with the political systems of several important global states.
4. Be able to consider the potential political consequences of different events.
5. Have experience applying abstract theoretical concepts to empirical cases.
6. Be able form arguments on political issues backed by logical reasoning and appropriate evidence.
7. Be able to research, analyze, and synthesize political issues.

Grading:

Final Grades will be calculated with the following weights:

Participation	5%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Persuasive Essays	30%
Midterm Exam	25%
Research Project	
Final Presentation	5%
Final Paper	25%

Note: No extra credit will be offered in this course.

Letter Grade Distribution:

≥ 94.00	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 93.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	60.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	≤ 59.99	F
77.00 - 79.99	C+		

Course Policies:

• General

- Exams are closed book, closed notes.
- Late assignments will not be accepted without a legitimate, documented excuse. Please inform me as soon as possible if you anticipate needing any accommodations.
- **No makeup quizzes or exams will be given.**

• Assignments and Evaluations

- Participation: I expect students to regularly contribute to our in-class discussions with thoughtful questions and comments that engage with course materials. Participation grades will be based on both the quantity and quality of contributions. A high-volume of low-effort contributions will not guarantee a good participation score, nor will occasional high-quality contributions.
- Reading Quizzes: Regular reading quizzes will be given throughout the course. Quizzes will be a mixture of multiple choice and true false, and will not be cumulative. Quizzes will be done through Canvas.
- Persuasive Essays: There will be two persuasive essays throughout the semester. I will provide a list of potential prompts for your essay. You should select one prompt, and respond by making an argument with the appropriate use of evidence. I will evaluate essays primarily on the strength of their arguments and their use of appropriate evidence to support any claims. Essays should be roughly five double-spaced pages in length. You will have two weeks to complete your essays.

- Mid-term Exam: There will be a mid-term exam on March 11th. It will be a closed book exam conducted on Canvas. The exam will consist of multiple choice questions, definitions, and short answers. Additional details will be provided in-class.
- Research Project: Students will prepare a research project during the course. You have two options for your project. Regardless of which option you select, I expect students to regularly communicate with me on your proposed projects. We will have one in-class workshop dedicated to final projects, which I will describe in greater detail during class.

The first option is to write a research paper on a topic of your choosing. You will select an appropriate research question, review relevant literature, formulate hypotheses, and evaluate your hypotheses using appropriate evidence. Your analysis could involve the structured comparison of qualitative cases, the use of appropriate summary statistics, or some other approach approved in discussion with me.

The second option is to select a country of your choice, and research the political culture and institutions of your selected country. In doing so, you will provide a descriptive overview of your selected country's political system, and an analysis of how the political system helps us understand some of the most salient political issues in your country of choice.

- * Research Presentation: Students should prepare and present a roughly five minute presentation based on their project, to be delivered during the final week of classes.
- * Final Paper: Students will write a roughly 10 page paper based on their project to be turned in during finals week.

• Grades

- Grades in the **C** range represent performance that **meets expectations**; Grades in the **B** range represent performance that is **substantially better** than expectations; Grades in the **A** range represent work that is **excellent**.
- Grades will be maintained in Canvas. Students are responsible for tracking their progress by referring to the online gradebook.
- If you are dissatisfied with a grade, you may contest your grade by writing a one-page memo within one week of receiving your grade. This memo should describe both what you believe to be the grading error, as well as the grade you feel you deserve. Note that regrade requests should be to correct an error in grading, not to negotiate for a higher grade.

University Resources and Policies:

- **The Writing Center:** The Center for Speaking, Writing, and the Image (formerly The Writing Center) is one of the most widely-used academic resources on campus and is a fantastic, free resource for all students. Writing, Speaking, and Image Partners

meet one-on-one with students to talk about their work and provide feedback at any stage of their preparation process. Trained to think deeply about written, oral, and visual rhetoric and communication, these student peers facilitate conversations about everything from ID1 papers to senior theses, lab reports to creative writing, giving presentations to developing strategies for reading and engaging more deeply and confidently in class discussion. The CSWIM also offers specialized writing and speaking support for multilingual students navigating English as an additional language (email Jenny.Thomas@pomona.edu for more information.) To make an appointment with a Writing, Speaking, or Image Partner, please log onto the Portal and go to Academics Writing Center. They can also pair you with a regular Writing or Speaking Partner for weekly or bi-monthly appointments over the course of the semester. Contact them at writing.center@pomona.edu. They offer both in-person and virtual appointments, and have regular drop-in hours in Smith Campus Center 148.

- **Quantitative Skills Center:** Some students may choose to include the quantitative analysis of data in their research projects. The Quantitative Skills Center (QSC) provides academic support to Pomona College students in courses that feature a large degree of quantitative and/or scientific reasoning through our QSC Partners Program. QSC partners meet one-on-one with students to provide support for a variety of Pomona courses for course specific help. The QSC also offers non-course specific help in general quantitative skills and offers consultations for projects and theses involving quantitative methods. To make an appointment at the QSC, please visit pomona.mywconline.com, or contact us at qsc@pomona.edu. The QSC is located in SCC (Smith Campus Center) 228.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** I expect all students to uphold the principles of academic integrity throughout the course. Lying, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances. You can read more about the college's academic dishonesty policies at <https://catalog.pomona.edu/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=8860>.
- **Accessibility & Accommodations:** Students requiring special accommodations may request them through Accessibility Resources and Services. Please inform me of any accommodations with the proper documentation as soon as possible. More information is available online at <https://www.pomona.edu/accessibility/student-accessibility>.
If at any point in the semester your personal circumstances make it difficult for you to keep up with the course, please let me know as soon as possible so I can make sure to provide you with whatever support and accommodations are appropriate.
- **Inclusion & Basic Needs:** I am committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. To that end, half of all course texts have at least one author from a group underrepresented in academia. Harassment of any form will not be tolerated. Any speech or act that is blatantly or implicitly discriminatory, intimidating, or predatory will be reported to [Student Affairs](#).

Course Outline:

Any changes to this outline will be announced on Canvas.

Class	Content
	Unit 1: Foundations
Class 1: January 21	• Syllabus/Course Overview • Course Introduction • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. Link. Read 682-3, skim rest. 2. Putnam, Robert. 1994. <i>Making Democracy Work</i>. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. Pages 7-12.
Class 2: January 26	• Institutions and Strategic Thinking (Using Games to Think About Politics) • Readings: 1. Engerman, Stanley L. and Kenneth L. Sokoloff. 2008. "Debating the Role of Institutions in Political and Economic Development: Theory, History, and Findings." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>. Link. Pages 120-128. 2. Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. W.W. Norton and Company: New York. Introduction pages vii-x, xxi-xxii. 3. Optional: McManus, James. 2024. <i>Why is Texas hold'em so popular?</i> Youtube. Link.
	Unit 2: Topics in Comparative Politics
Class 3: January 28	• The State • Readings: 1. Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. Link. Pages 567-572. 2. Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." in <i>Bringing the State Back In</i>. edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. 3. Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. <i>States and Power in Africa</i>. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. Chapter 2. 4. Optional: Watch Monty Python. 1979. "What Have the Romans..." <i>Monty Python's Life of Brian</i>. Youtube. Link. 5. Optional: Watch Spaniel, William. 2024. <i>Haiti's Gang Politics Problem Is Not as Weird as It Seems</i>. Youtube. Link.
Class 4: February 2	• Identity • Readings: 1. Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. "What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?" <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>. 2. Laitin, David. 1986. <i>Hegemony and Culture</i>. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL. Chapter 1, pages 6-8 and 11-12, rest optional.
Class 5: February 4	• Political Culture • Readings: 1. Putnam, Robert. 1994. <i>Making Democracy Work</i>. Chs 4 and 5. 2. Mousa, Salma. 2020. "Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq." <i>Science</i>. Link.

Class	Content
Class 6: February 9	• State vs. Society • Readings: 1. Scott, James C. 1998. <i>Seeing Like a State</i>. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT. Pages 1-6. 2. Scott, James C. 2009. <i>The Art of Not Being Governed</i>. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT. Chapter 1. 3. Migdal, Joel S. 2001. <i>State in Society</i>. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. Chapter 2. 4. Optional: Watch Scott, James. 2010. <i>The Art of Not-Being Governed</i>. Youtube. Link. • Persuasive Essay 1 Assigned
Class 7: February 11	• Democracy and Autocracy • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT. Chapters 1 and 4. 2. Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. 2000. <i>Democracy and Development</i>. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. Pages 13-36. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 38.
Class 8: February 16	• Presidents and Parliaments • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapter 7. 2. Samuels, David. 2009. "Separation of Powers." in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics</i> edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
Class 9: February 18	• Policymaking and the Organization of the Legislature • Readings: 1. Cox, Gary W. 2009. "The Organization of Democratic Legislatures." in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy</i> edited by Donald A. Wittman and Barry R. Weingast. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK. Link. 2. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapter 11. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 17.
Class 10: February 23	• Elections, Electoral Systems, and Parties • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapters 5 and 8. 2. Cox, Gary W., and Octavio Amorim Neto. 1997. "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>. Link. Especially 149-156. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 19. 4. Optional: Watch Veritasium. 2024. <i>Why Democracy Is Mathematically Impossible</i>. Youtube. Link. • Persuasive Essay 1 Due
Class 11: February 25	• Making and Breaking Coalitions • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapter 6. 2. Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson and James D. Morrow. 2003. <i>The Logic of Political Survival</i>. MIT University Press: Cambridge, MA. Pages 37-57. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapters 18 and 39. 4. Optional: Watch TLDR News EU. 2021. <i>How Europe Makes Constant Coalition Governments Work</i>. Youtube. Link.

Class	Content
Class 12: March 2	• Federalism and Decentralization • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapter 10. 2. Beramendi, Pablo. 2009. "Federalism." in <i>The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics</i> edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK. 3. Optional: Tiebout, Charles M. 1956. "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures." <i>Journal of Political Economy</i>. Link 4. Optional: Listen to Africa Daily. 2024. <i>Why aren't there more federal governments in Africa?</i>. BBC Sounds. Link
Class 13: March 4	• Voter Behavior • Readings: 1. Downs, Anthony. 1957. <i>An Economy Theory of Democracy</i>. Harper & Row: New York, NY. Chapter 3. 2. Bratton, Michael and Ravi Bhavnani and Tse-Hsin Chen. 2012. "Voting intentions in Africa: ethnic, economic, or partisan?" <i>Commonwealth and Comparative Politics</i>. Link. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapters 12 and 20. 4. Optional: Watch de Haan, Jac. 2012. <i>Why do competitors open their stores next to one another?</i> Youtube. Link.
Class 14: March 9	• Institutional Design Exercise/Mid-Term Review
Class 15: March 11	• Mid-Term Exam
Class 16: March 23	• Civil Wars and Political Violence • Readings: 1. Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and grievance in civil war." <i>Oxford Economic Papers</i>. Link. 2. Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. Link. 3. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 45.
Class 17: March 25	• Order Outside of the State: Norms • Readings: 1. Mackie, Gerry, Francesca Moneti, Holly Shakya and Elaine Denny. 2015. "What are Social Norms? How are They Measured?" <i>UNICEF Report</i>. Sections 1 and 2, Section 3 optional. Link. 2. Mackie, Gerry. 1996. "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account." <i>American Sociological Review</i>. Link.
Class 18: March 30	• Order Outside of the State: Informal Institutions • Readings: 1. Ellickson, Robert C. 1991. <i>Order Without Law</i>. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA. Chapters 1, 3 and 4. 2. Skarbek, David. 2012. "Prison gangs, norms, and organizations." <i>Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization</i>. Link. 3. Optional: Watch Skarbek, David. 2015. <i>How gangs keep inmates safe</i>. Youtube. Link. 4. Optional: Watch American History X.

Class	Content
	Unit 3: Comparing Cases: Taking Theory to Practice
Class 19: April 1	• United Kingdom I: Westminster and the Efficient Secret • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapter 2. 2. Cox, Gary W. 1987. <i>The Efficient Secret</i>. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. Chapters 1, 2, and 6. 3. Optional: Watch Last Week Tonight With John Oliver. 2024. <i>UK Elections</i>. Youtube. Link. • Persuasive Essay 2 Assigned
Class 20: April 6	• United Kingdom II: Whither Westminster? • Readings: 1. Gaines, Brian J. 2009. “Does the United Kingdom Obey Duverger’s Law?” in <i>Duverger’s Law of Plurality Voting</i> edited by Bernard Grofman, André Blais, and Shaun Bowler. Springer: New York, NY. 2. Rhodes, R.A.W., John Wanna, and Patrick Weller. 2009. <i>Comparing Westminster</i>. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK. Chapter 2. 3. Optional: Watch TLDR News. 2019. <i>The Election Results Don’t Match the Voters</i>. Youtube. Link.
Class 21: April 8	• China I: History and Varieties of Autocracy • Readings: 1. Shirk, Susan L. 2018. “China in Xi’s ‘New Era’.” <i>Journal of Democracy</i>.
Class 22: April 13	• China II: State, Society, and Censorship • Readings: 1. King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” <i>American Political Science Review</i>. Link. 2. Roberts, Margaret E. 2020. <i>Censored</i>. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. Pages 1-17, Chapter 3. 3. Optional: Watch Anti, Michael. 2012. <i>Behind the Great Firewall of China</i>. Youtube. Link.
Class 23: April 15	• Russia I: History and Kremlinology • Readings: 1. Check out “History of Russia in 100 Minutes.” <i>Smart Histories</i>. Link. Especially ‘Revolution’, ‘Soviet’, and ‘Federation.’ 2. Kuran, Timur. 1991. “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.” <i>World Politics</i>. Link. 3. Optional: Watch Wall Street Journal. <i>How Russia Has Used Its Legal System as a Political Weapon</i>. Youtube. Link. 4. Optional: Watch Spaniel, William. 2022. <i>Is Putin Actually Popular in Russia?</i> Youtube. Link. 5. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 22. • Persuasive Essay 2 Due
Class 24: April 20	• Russia II: Competitive Authoritarianism • Readings: 1. Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2010. <i>Competitive Authoritarianism</i>. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. Pages 3-32, 183-201. 2. Optional: Humphreys, Macartan. 2017. <i>Political Games</i>. Chapter 43. 3. Optional: Watch National Endowment for Democracy. 2020. <i>Competitive Authoritarianism: A Conversation with Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way</i>. Youtube. Link. 4. Optional: The Economist. 2024. <i>How to rig an election</i>. Youtube. Link.

Class	Content
Class 25: April 22	• Nigeria I: History and Colonialism • Readings: 1. Levan, A. Carl. 2019. <i>Contemporary Nigerian Politics</i>. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. Chapter 2. 2. Optional: Economics Explained. 2024. <i>How Africa's Biggest Economy Lost 50% of Its GDP</i>. Youtube. Link.
Class 26: April 27	• Nigeria II: Consociationalism and Multi-Ethnic Democracy • Readings: 1. Lijphart, Arend. 2012. <i>Patterns of Democracy</i>. Chapters 3 and 15. 2. Lewis, W. Arthur. 1965. <i>Politics in West Africa</i>. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK. Chapter 3. 3. Optional: Watch Vice News. 2018. <i>The Battle Raging in Nigeria Over Control of Oil</i>. Youtube. Link.
Class 27: April 29	• In-Class Workshop on Final Papers
Class 28: May 4	• Final Presentations
Class 29: May 6	• Final Presentations
Final May 13	• Final Paper Due at 5:00 PM