

Introduction to Comparative Politics

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Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. EST, or by appointment: in my office, LNG 273, or by skype ([evgenypolitolog](#))

Course Description

One of the main characteristics of political life around the globe is its diversity. Indeed, it is impossible to find two countries that are exactly the same in every respect: democracies and autocracies alike demonstrate notable differences in political regime characteristics and political behavior of their citizens. In this course we will examine the causes and effects of these differences among countries. The topics that we will cover include political regimes, dictatorships, democracies, political institutions, voting systems, political parties, and political behavior. Some of the questions we will address are as follows. Under what conditions are transitions to democracy most likely to succeed? What makes some states more stable than others? What role political institutions play in shaping policy making?

Scientific method constitutes the core of this course's philosophy: we will be considering various phenomena that are pivotal for political science research agenda (e.g. political protest, democratization, inequality, economic growth) and then analyze various explanations for cross-country differences with respect to these phenomena. For instance, democratic institutions are frequently theorized to be associated with higher economic growth because they incentivize politicians to care about citizens' welfare (otherwise politicians won't be re-elected); autocracies, on the other hand, tend to be poorer because autocrats typically do not have institutionally-driven incentives to care about citizens' welfare.

At the end of the course students should have developed: (1) the ability to evaluate and analyze arguments that apply to politics; (2) a general knowledge of the variety of political systems that exist around the world; and (3) more specific knowledge about politics in some countries.

Textbook

The following textbook is required and should be available for purchase at the bookstore by the beginning of the summer session:

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics, 2nd Edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

The book is also available for purchase from Amazon. Finally, you can rent an electronic version of the book via CourseSmart: [Principles of Comparative Politics, 2nd Edition](#). In addition to the textbook, I will occasionally post readings at the blackboard as well.

Learning Outcomes for General Education Requirements

PLSC113 fulfills two general education requirements - "G" and "N". Below I list learning outcomes for these requirements.

G - Global Interdependencies

Students in G courses will demonstrate knowledge of how two or more distinctive world regions have influenced and interacted with one another and how such interactions have been informed by their respective cultures or civilizations.

N - Social Sciences

Students in N courses will demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of major concepts, models, and issues (and their interrelationships) of at least one of the social sciences: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, or sociology.
2. An understanding of the methods used by social scientists to explore social phenomena, including, when appropriate to the discipline, observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and analysis by mathematics or other interpretive frameworks.

Deadlines

Home Assignments	11:59 p.m. EST of the fifth day of each module
Discussion Post I	11:59 a.m. EST of the second day of each module
Discussion Post II	11:59 a.m. EST of the third day of each module
Responses to Discussion Posts	11:59 a.m. EST of the fifth day of each module
Test	11:59 p.m. EST of the fifth day of each module

Since the course is fast-paced, there will be no make-up assignments, except for the students with disabilities and special circumstances.

Grading

- All assignments will be graded using 100 % scale. At the end of the course, I will convert them into percentages of the final grade in accordance with the weight of each assignment.
- Grading rules are as follows: 93 - 100 = A; 90 - 92 = A-; 87 - 89 = B+; 83 - 86 = B; 80 - 82 = B-; 77 - 79 = C+; 73 - 76 = C; 70 - 72 = C-; 60 - 69 = D; 0 - 59 = F.

Assignment Description

I. Discussion Posts: 300 - 350 words, 2 for each module (30 % of the final grade)

- The main goal of this assignment is critical evaluation of the material. Thereby, simple summary of the readings won't earn you a lot of points.
- Generally speaking, there are two types of posts that can fit into "critical evaluation" description: a) posts that disentangle the argument in detail and provide analysis why the argument is correct/incorrect; b) posts that provide their own view of the phenomenon of interest in the form of theoretical argument and testable propositions. For example, when we will be talking about democratization, you can choose one of existing explanations for the countries' transitions to democracy and analyze it or you can argue that all theories lack an important component (you need to specify what it is) and propose your own explanation. Both approaches are fine.

- You will also need to participate in the discussion of your posts by replying to students who left responses to your post. Participation in the discussion of your post will constitute 20 % of your overall grade for the post.
- Introductory module does not have discussion post requirement.

II. Response posts: 150 - 200 words, 4 for each module (20 % of the final grade)

- The idea is to provide thoughtful critique to the discussion posts of your classmates.
- Best responses either build on the original discussion posts and improve it, or make a counter-argument.
- In general, the best responses should bring something new to the discussion and be thought-provoking.
- Discussion should be conducted in a polite and respectful manner. Feel free to make any argument that you think is valid for the discussion, but make it in a way that is respectful towards the opinion of your classmate.
- Read discussion and response posts of your classmates carefully before posting your own in order to avoid repetitiveness.
- You may submit longer response posts if you chose to do so; however, I encourage you to follow hard word limit of 350 words if you choose to post a response that is longer than 200 words. You can also post more than 4 response posts, but be mindful of repetitiveness and try to discuss something that you classmates did not notice/pointed out before.

III. Home Assignments: 1 for each module (25 % of the final grade)

- Every module I will ask you to do exercises from the textbook.
- You may submit computer-edited assignment (e.g. Word document) or scan of the hand-written assignment. You may use any available photo technology for scanning hand-written assignments, but make sure it is readable before submitting it.
- In order to submit the assignment, you will need to send me e-mail with a theme structured like this: Your surname-Module Dates. Your home assignment should be attached as a file in any readable format to this e-mail.

- Feel free to contact me if you have difficulty with any part of the assignment. I strongly encourage you to start early and avoid postponing assignments to the last day of the module since assignments can be challenging and you will likely need to contact me at some point for consultation.

IV. Tests: 1 for each module (25 % of the final grade)

- Every module you will complete the test based on the current module's material.
- Tests include multiple choice and short-answer questions.
- Time limit for each test is 1 hour. No test can be longer than 20 questions. Each test can include 3 short-answer questions at most.
- The test is open-book: you can use the textbook during the test.
- Test needs to be completed in one sitting, so make sure you feel yourself confident enough before taking it.

Academic Honesty

Students should review university guidelines regarding academic honesty and ensure that the work they complete for this course is theirs and theirs alone. Cases of academic dishonesty will be taken very seriously and may result in a failing grade for the course in addition to any penalty imposed by the university. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or a violation of academic honesty, please consult the university code and/or contact the instructor.

[Information on Plagiarism.](#)

[Tutorials on Academic Honesty.](#)

Any source that you use in preparation of discussions posts and response posts should be cited properly. See [APSA citation manual](#) for details.

Communication

- I will serve as discussion moderator for each module. I will be commenting on your discussion posts and responses in order to facilitate positive and constructive flow of the discussion.

- I will hold office hours three times a week. During office hours, I will be on-line in skype so you can call and talk to me. Outside office hours, you should contact me by e-mail and schedule an appointment.
- Any important course information will be announced at the Blackboard.
- I will contact you personally by e-mail when necessary.
- You are required to check the course page every day and read posts and responses.
- Blackboard tracks time you spent at the course page and whether you read the posts. Make you sure you pay sufficient amount of attention to what is going on at the course page.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to appeal a grade you have received, you must submit a one-page computer-edited (e.g. in Word) statement to the instructor at least 24 hours after receiving the grade. The statement must clearly and thoroughly explain the reasons why your work deserved a higher grade. Your assignment will then be re-graded, taking your statement into consideration. **The revised grade may be higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.**

Disability-Related Equal Access Accommodations

Students wishing to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify the instructor by the second module of the class. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are generally required. Please contact SSD at (607)777-2686 to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. [Their website](#) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines. The office is located in UU-119.

Course Modules

Introduction (05/30 - 05/31)

- Introduce yourself to the instructor and classmates. Here, we don't have any graded assignments, but you will need to post a short information about yourself using the

following guidelines: a) your name and surname, b) where are you from, c) your favorite book and movie, d) politics-related things that you find exciting, and e) any other information about yourself you want to share with me and your classmates.

- Questions regarding course format. I encourage you to read the syllabus and contact me if you find any part of it confusing/requiring clarification.

Scientific Approach to the Study of Politics (06/01 - 06/05)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapters 1 - 3.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 2, questions 1 - 7, 9 & 11; Chapter 3, questions 1 - 3, 5.

Origins of the State and Political Regimes (06/06 - 06/10)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapters 4 - 5.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 4, questions 1 - 3, 5 - 7; Chapter 5, questions 1 - 5, 8 - 10.

Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship (06/11 - 06/15)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapter 6.
- Suggested reading: Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapter 7.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 6, questions 1 - 5.

Democratic Transitions (06/16 - 06/20)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapter 8.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 8, questions 1 - 3.

Problems with Group Decision Making and Electoral Systems (06/21 - 06/25)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapter 11, 13.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 11, questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7; Chapter 13, questions 3, 4.

Institutional Veto Players and Concluding Remarks (06/26 - 06/30)

- Clark, Golder & Golder - Chapter 15.
- Home Assignment: Chapter 15, questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7.