

POLS 150: Introduction to Comparative Politics Spring 2023

Instructor: John Kennedy
Course Number: 46589
Classroom: Malott 2048
Time: TTH 9:30-10:20 am

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Scope and Purpose:

- ✓ Why are some societies ruled by authoritarian leaders and others have democratic systems?
- ✓ Does the political culture (or values) of a particular society influence the type of political system such as an authoritarian or democratic regime? Do social cleavages, such as religious or ethnic divisions, prevent the development of democratic institutions?
- ✓ Do inherited (previous) political institutions influence the democratization process in a particular country? That is, how difficult is the political and social transition from a dictatorship to a democracy?
- ✓ Can citizens be “satisfied” with their government even though they live under an authoritarian regime?

The above questions are some examples of the issues we address in comparative politics. This course will introduce students to a variety of methods and country case studies that comparative political scientists examine to answer these questions. In this class, we will study state institutions, political culture and the societies (including popular opinion) of nine countries: Britain, France, Japan, India, Russia, Mexico, Nigeria, Iran and China. The goal of this course is to introduce students to the comparative method and to better evaluate the international news reports presented in the popular media.

Grading: Grading is based on two mid-terms (multi-choice), discussion section assignments, three map quizzes (naming the border countries), a simulation paper and a final exam (multi-choice). Study guides will be provided for the mid-terms and final. All the questions for the midterms and the final will be taken from the study guides. The final will not be comprehensive.

Sections Attendance	15%	Map Quizzes (3)	5%
Mid-Term #1 (2/21)	15%	Debate Papers (7)	25%
Mid-Term #2 (3/30)	15%	Simulation Paper (5/8)	10%
		Final (5/8)	15%

Readings: In addition to the required reading there will also be assigned articles as well as a few handouts given in discussion section. *Assigned readings should be completed before each class.

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph, Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas, International Edition, 8th Edition (Cengage Learning, 2019) ISBN-10: 1337807087--ISBN-13: 9781337807081

*I also recommend the e-book option and also look on Amazon for used copies of the 2019 8th edition.

Class Participation: This is an in-person class and students are encouraged to ask questions and participate during lectures. Reading assignments should be done before class.

Discussion sections: Discussing the topics raised in lecture is an important part of the learning process. However, this is a large class, and it is difficult to generate an active discussion. Therefore, **attendance in discussion sections is required.**

Section Debates: Most of the sections will have an in-class debates and debate groups. *Each discussion section represents a political party*, and the goal of the debates is to decide on which topic/issue will be part of the party platform for final National Assembly.

The topics are based on the political institutions, such as types of election system proportional representation versus first-past-the-post (plurality) and executive system such as parliamentary versus presidential. Debate topics also include policy positions such as public versus private healthcare, education and social services. The goal is to debate each topic and then decide which position is the strongest and will become part of the section party platform. Together these topics/issues will form the party platform for your section and the final National Assembly simulation.

The in-section debates will consist of two opposing positions for each policy debate such as public versus private healthcare systems. Each subgroup needs to develop a case using evidence to support their position and attempt to convince the opposing position as to why their party (section) should adopt their position. Once each subgroup is prepared, they will debate. In this section debate, the key points for each position are identified. After the debate, each student will write up the section debate following the “written debate assignment” guidelines and choose which position has the strongest evidence/argument. The GTA will grade the debate assignments and count the final votes as well as announce the policy position decision for the section.

****Keep in mind that the positions for each subgroup may not be black/white and there will be a need to compromise.** For example, the public-private healthcare debate the final position might be to decide on a mix of public and private.

Example:

Week 1 Assign subgroups for the following week with students randomly assigned to the pro-parliamentary or pro-presidential position for the Executive Branch debate. Students are encouraged to collect information from lecture, textbook and other reliable sources to prepare for the section debate share with their group members.

Week 2 Executive Branch

Whole class discuss parliamentary versus presidential systems and address any questions (10 minutes)

Subgroup discussion (20 minutes)

Pro parliamentary system subgroup (discuss the strongest and weakest evidence)

Pro presidential system subgroup (discuss the strongest and weakest evidence)

Section debate parliamentary versus presidential (15 minutes)

Each position gets about 2 minutes to make their case (5 minutes)

Members from each team can ask questions (5 minutes)

GTA and all students discuss the key points and evidence/arguments for each position (5 minutes)

Assign subgroups for the following week with students randomly assigned to the pro-bicameral or pro- unicameral position for the Legislative Branch debate. Students are encouraged to collect information from lecture, textbook and other reliable sources to prepare for the section debate share with their group members.

Week 3 Legislative Branch (bicameral versus unicameral)

GTA announces the final Executive Branch decision based on the written assignments. Whole class discuss bicameral versus unicameral systems and address any questions (10 minutes)

Subgroup Discussion (20 minutes)

Pro bicameral system subgroup (discuss the strongest and weakest evidence)

Pro unicameral system subgroup (discuss the strongest and weakest evidence)

Section debate parliamentary versus presidential (15 minutes)

Each position gets about 2 minutes to make their case (5 minutes)

Members from each team can ask questions (5 minutes)

GTA and all students discuss the key points and evidence/arguments for each position (5 minutes)

Assign subgroups for the following week with students randomly assigned to the pro-federal or pro-unitary position for the State's Rights debate.

Debate Written Assignments: There are 8 debate papers, and you are allowed to drop one. This means your final debate paper grade will be based on 7 assignments. The written debate paper is 3 to 4 pages (double spaced/12 pt. font) and divided into 4 sections. The first section is an overview of the issue or policy both positions/sides of the debate and then present your subgroup position. This is about one page. The second section is the subgroup discussion. What are the key points for your group position? Provide evidence to support your position. This is about one page. The third section is the larger section debate. Which position had the strongest argument? What is the strongest and weakest evidence for your group position and what was the strongest and weakest evidence for the other position. This is about one page. The final section is the last paragraph. In your opinion, given the evidence and debate, which position do you support? This does not have to be your subgroup position. *Written debates are due the following week and no debate assignments accepted after the second week.*

Example: Executive Branch Debate (subgroup pro-presidential) Written Assignment
First section is the discussion between presidential and parliamentary systems and then a short introduction to the pro-presidential position (one page).
Second section is the pro-presidential position. Discuss the reasons why presidential is better than parliamentary (Prime Minister) and provide evidence to support this claim (one page).

Third section is an analysis of the larger section debate. Which position had the strongest argument and why? What is the strongest and weakest evidence for your group presidential system position? What was the strongest and weakest evidence for the parliamentary position? (one page)

Final section, given the evidence, what system do you choose for your section party: presidential or parliamentary? You must choose one. Moreover, you can choose either position, not just the one your subgroup represented. This is the last paragraph.

****Important point:** although you must choose a position, sometimes there is a mix and this is also a choice. For example, the election system may be plurality (first-past-the-post) or proportional representation (PR) system, but some countries have a mixed system of both plurality and PR. This mix is also a choice.

State Building Simulation: During the semester, each section will prepare their party platform and general policy positions for the end of the semester constitutional ratification simulation. The simulation is about a fictional developing country where formal dictatorship has collapsed, and new political parties have to establish a government starting with the constitution. Each discussion section will form a new political party and a party position regarding the content of the constitution (i.e. the structure of the political system). The issues include choosing a presidential versus a parliamentary system, social welfare and managing national resources. On May 2nd, the classroom will become a national general assembly. Your party will attempt to ensure that your policy preferences are represented in the constitution, and you may join a coalition to create a majority vote to pass a constitution or you might be in the minority

collation to oppose it. A constitutional ratification simulation handout will be provided in sections.

Map Quizzes: Identifying where these counties are located, and the neighboring countries is an important part of comparative politics. Therefore, we will have three map quizzes. Each quiz will ask questions about border countries. All the map information can be found in the text. The quizzes will take no longer than five minutes and will be timed in class.

Make-up Exams: Students with a valid reason such as illness and documentation that satisfies the instructor can schedule a make up exam. The make-up exam will be different from the one given in class and taken within two weeks of the exam date. No make-up exams or map quizzes will be allowed after the last day of classes (May 4th, 2023).

E-Mail: The GTAs and I will communicate with you through e-mail to answer questions regarding assignments and exams. However, all e-mail will receive a response within 24 hours. Regarding exams, the GTAs and I will *not* give exact answers for possible exam questions, but rather we will provide information to help you find the answers. Finally, professional e-mail communication is an important skill that will last beyond the class and college experience. Keep in mind how you want to present yourself through e-mail. For more information of professional e-mails see <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>.

Canvas: This course will use Canvas (<https://canvas.ku.edu/>). I will post the lecture outlines, study guides and lab assignments on Canvas.

Lectures:

Week 1: Introduction

Lecture 1, January 17: Introduction and General Concepts, No Readings

Lecture 2, January 19: General Concepts and Themes

Chapter 1 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 2-22

Sections: Introduction review concepts and themes

Week 2: Political Systems and Simulation

Lecture 3, January 24: Political Systems

Chapter 1 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 22-37

Lecture 4, January 26: Political Systems and Simulation

Sections: Set up section Political Parties

Introduce discuss the simulation country and county demographics and statistics

Assign Executive Branch debate positions/groups

Week 3: Great Britain (Map Quiz)

Lecture 5, January 31: Great Britain

Chapter 2 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 38-67

Lecture 6, February 2: Great Britain

Chapter 2 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 67-82

Sections: Executive Branch debate

Assign Legislative Branch debate positions/groups

Week 4: France

Lecture 7, February 7: France

Chapter 3 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 84-114

Lecture 8, February 9: France

Chapter 3 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 114-131

Sections: Executive Branch written debate assignment due

Legislative Branch debate

Assign election system debate positions/groups

Week 5: Japan

Lecture 9, February 14: Japan

Chapter 6 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 229-257

Lecture 10: February 16: Japan

Chapter 6 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 257-275

Sections: GTA announces Executive Branch results/position based on written assignment.

Legislative Branch written debate assignment due

Election System Debate

Assign State's Rights position groups

Week 6: India and Mid-Term I

***Mid Term 1 February 21**

Lecture 11, February 23: India

Chapter 7 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 276-303

Sections: GTA announces Legislative Branch results based on written assignment

Election System Debate written debate assignment due

State's Rights (Federal versus Unitary) Debate

Assign Health Care System (private/public) position groups

Week 7: India and Mexico

Lecture 12: February 28: India

Chapter 7 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 303-323

Lecture 13: March 2: Mexico

Chapter 10 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 416-430

Sections: GTA announces Election System results based on written assignment

State's Rights (Federal versus Unitary) Debate written debate assignment due

Health Care (private/public) Debate

Assign Higher Education (public or private/tuition funded) position groups

Week 8: Mexico and Russia (Map Quiz)

Lecture 14: March 7: Mexico

Chapter 10 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 430-460

Lecture 15, March 9: Russia

Chapter 13 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 556-576

Sections: GTA announces State's Rights results based on written assignment

Health Care (private/public) Debate written debate assignment due

Debate Higher Education

Assign Energy and Climate Change position groups

Week 9: Spring Break March 13-19

Week 10: Russia and Iran

Lecture 16: March 21: Russia

Chapter 13 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 576-605

Lecture 17: March 22: Iran

Chapter 14 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 608-629

Sections: GTA announces Health Care results based on written assignment

Higher Education (public vs private tuition funded) written debate assignment due

Debate Energy and Climate Change

Week 11: Iran and Mid-Term II

Lecture 18: March 28: Iran

Chapter 14 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 629-652

***Mid Term II, March 30**

Sections: GTA announces Higher Education/Taxes results based on written assignment
Energy and Climate Change written debate assignment due
Discuss Protection of Rights (women, minorities, migrants...)

Week 12: Nigeria

Lecture 19, April 4: Nigeria

Chapter 12 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 512-539

Lecture 20, April 6: Nigeria

Chapter 8 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 539-553

Sections:

Discussion: What other positions or topics that was not discussed in the semester would you like to address as a section? Given your stated positions, where does your party exist on the ideological spectrum? Left.....Center.....Right? What are your party goals?

Week 13: China

Lecture 21: April 11: China (Map Quiz)

Chapter 15 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 654-682

April 13: No Class Professor—Out of Town for Conference

Sections: GTA announces Energy and Climate Change results based written assignment
Start putting together your complete party platform and align your positions. Based on your party ideology and goals, what segments of the population does your party represent?

Week 14: China

Lecture 22, April 18: China

Chapter 15 in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, pp. 682-698

Lecture 23, April 20: China

Sections: Discuss your party platform and strategy for the National Assembly

Week 15 Somalia State Building and Simulation Prep

Lecture 24, April 25: Somalia and State Building

Readings

Lecture 25, April 27: Start the Simulation

Sections: Discuss your section's Party Strategy

Week 16: National Assembly Simulation

May 2: In Class Constitutional Simulation and National Assembly vote

May 4: Simulation discussion and final review session

Monday, May 8 **Final Exam** in the same room as lecture

Useful Web Pages:

BBC World Service

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/>

New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/>

CIA Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>

World Values Survey

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Human Development Reports

<http://hdr.undp.org/>

World Bank

<http://www.worldbank.org/>

IDEA

Created in 1995, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an intergovernmental organization with member states from all continents, has a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

<https://www.idea.int/>

IDEA

Interactive Overview of Combinations of Electoral Systems & Quota Types

<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/interactive-electoral-systems-quota-types>

The Best Electoral System Test (BEST) allows those involved in the debate on electoral system <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/best-election-system-test>

IDEA: Very good section on Women and Politics

<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>

The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/explore_topic_new

Gender Action

Gender Action to promote women's rights and gender equality in developing countries

<http://www.genderaction.org/index.html>

Comparative Constitutions Project

<https://comparativeconstitutionsproject.org/>