

Introduction to Comparative Politics

POLI 2053-1, Fall 2020

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Office Hours: by appointment

"Politics is the art of the possible," as Otto von Bismarck once put it, but the "possibilities" – cultural, historical, economic, and geographical – are not the same for all nations. Just as this is true for "politics among nations" (the anarchic world of what we call "international relations"), this is also true for "politics within nations." The similarities and differences of behavior and structure from one nation to another – what we call "comparative politics" – are what we will cover in this course.

How and why did the State (the type and form of government, not something like Louisiana or Florida) come to be? How does it end up as democracy or dictatorship, and what influences a change from one to the other? Internally, what are the different structural forms a state may take, and what are the behavioral causes and effects of these forms? What about how the people who fill these structures are elected or appointed? *How and why do we study all of this?*

The answers to these questions and others that you may have learned in your high school Civics or American Politics class do not necessarily hold across all times and places – so pay attention.

Requirements:

This is an "asynchronous" online course. In other words, we are not holding to the strict M/W/F or T/Th "class times" one would expect from an in-person or "synchronous" online course. This does not mean, however, that you can "blow off" the course for weeks and cram the material at the end of the semester. I will be posting relevant material on Moodle weekly (or more often), so you will need to keep up.

Please note: we remain under pandemic conditions and expect to be in this state for the whole semester. Due to the unpredictable nature of the situation, the format of the course and/or requirements may be forced to change. You will be given appropriate notification if such is the case.

Exams (2 x 30%):

A combination of multiple-choice and essay questions, to be submitted via Moodle. The mid-term exam will cover all material taught before the halfway point of the course, while the final exam will cover all material covered after (in other words, the test is not cumulative). More details will be shared closer to the test date.

Final paper (20%):

An 8-10 page essay (double-spaced), properly cited, on a prompt or prompts relevant to anything taught during the semester. More details will be shared closer to the end of the semester.

Formatting:

Papers must be typed in a readable 12-point font (i.e. Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, etc.) with standard one-inch margins. Unless otherwise noted, assignments are to be submitted in Word (.doc, .docx) or PDF formats.

Deadlines and Excuses:

- x Unless noted, deadlines should be interpreted strictly, with grace periods, if any, to be counted in terms of minutes, not days. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have a sufficient Internet connection (in terms of quality and consistency) to access class material and complete all necessary assignments.
- x Extensions may be granted for emergency or other serious situations (especially if known in advance), but documentation may be asked for, and abuse of the professor's generosity will result in serious consequences, possibly including (but not limited to) grade reductions.
- x Unless covered by a PS-22 excused absence or similarly serious situation, late weekly responses and final papers will be docked a letter grade per day late. Missed exams without an advance excuse or sufficient emergency will result in a zero. I reserve the right to make changes to the assignment/exam (material covered, type of question, etc.) for any makeups.
- x **All times given are for the US Central Time Zone (i.e. Baton Rouge time). If you are not in Baton Rouge, please pay attention to time differences and Daylight Saving Time/Summer Time changes in t**

General Policies and Information

How to contact me:

The best way, especially under current circumstances, is by email. I will do my best to respond promptly (generally, within 24 hours during the work week). With the University's social-distancing plan, I cannot guarantee that I will have access to an office this semester, but if you *must* set up a meeting in person, please contact me with enough lead time to arrange a mutually-convenient time and place.

LSU Integrative Learning Core:

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of Social/Behavioral Sciences and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of Global Learning.

Resources for students:

Your health and safety are LSU's top priority. If you are feeling ill or overwhelmed with anxiety, please contact the [LSU Student Health Center](#) for medical advice and mental health support. General health care and mental health support are available for all enrolled students through telehealth appointments.

Students requiring special accommodation:

Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with Disability Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. This onnts reququit le.bl i.al -3 (e)4 s r

www.lsu.edu/saa. It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community.

Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. For undergraduate students, the outcome

Schedule and Topics
(Dates and readings subject to change)

Week of:

8/24 – Syllabus and Policies/What Is Comparative Politics?

- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 1-3)
- x Mandatory: King, Keohane, and Verba (KKV), *Designing Social Inquiry* p. 7-12

10/12 – Varieties of Dictatorship

- x **MIDTERM EXAM – open Tuesday 10/13 at 12:30 p.m. for 48 hours**
- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 10)
- x Mandatory: Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and dictatorship revisited" (*Public Choice* 143, 2010)
- x Optional: Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (pages TBD)
- x Optional: Svobik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Pages TBD)

10/19 – Problems with Group Decision Making

- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 11)
- x Optional: Downs, "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy" (*Journal of Political Economy* 65[2], 1957)

10/26 – Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies

- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 12)
- x Mandatory/Optional: TBD

11/2 – Elections and Electoral Systems

- x 11/6 (Friday): Final date for dropping courses, 4:30 p.m. deadline
- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 13)
- x Mandatory: TBD

11/9 – Social Cleavages and Party Systems

- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 14)
- x Mandatory: Lipset and Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction" (1967)
- x Mandatory: Duverger, "Factors in a Two-Party and Multiparty System" (1972)
- x Optional: Laakso and Taagepera, "'Effective' Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe" (*Comparative Political Studies* 12[1], 1979)
- x Optional: Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist" (*Government and Opposition* 39[4], 2004)
- x

11/23 – Consequences of Democratic Institutions

- x 11/25 (*Wednesday*): *Thanksgiving Holiday begins, 12:30 p.m.*
- x Mandatory: Clark, Golder, and Golder (Chapter 16)
- x Mandatory/Optional: TBD

11/30 – Consequences of Democratic Institutions, continued (if necessary)

12/7 – FINALS WEEK

- x **FINAL EXAM** – open Tuesday 12/8 at 12:30 p.m. for 48 hours
- x **FINAL PAPER** – due Thursday 12/10 at 11:59:59 p.m.