

# POLS 2-01: Introduction to Comparative Politics

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San Jose State University, Fall 2021

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:00 p.m. (Zoom)

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Class Hours: Asynchronous

Class Room: *online*

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## Catalog Course Description

Comparative analysis of different kinds of political systems; their political institutions, processes and policies; the environments in which they occur and their consequences.

## Detailed Course Description

This introductory course to comparative politics will help students to better understand political processes across nations. In my view, college students not only should be aware of the most important questions about the world today, but also need to look beyond the American political system and learn how political institutions succeed or fail elsewhere. Because this is an introductory course, we will survey a wide range of topics including states and political regimes, political mobilization, political culture, political participation, elections and voting, interest groups, political parties, parliaments, executives, economic development, and globalization.

*This is an Online Education course. All assignments and exams will be conducted over the Internet. Students are responsible for their own access to the Internet and computer resources.*

## Expectations and Activities

Success in this class will depend upon your ability to: (1) think critically; (2) read and write University-level English prose; (3) develop an ability to understand and systematically apply the basics of research design; (4) work independently and in group when needed.

I expect students to:

- 1) read this syllabus carefully,
- 2) log on to the class web site a minimum of four times each week,
- 3) read all assigned materials,
- 4) watch lectures,
- 5) submit assignments and exams on time,

DO NOT enroll in an online course if you know that you are going to be away from your Internet access for more than 5 or 6 days during the length of the course. Unless you have an extenuating circumstance, you have to submit all the assignments by the deadline.

Please note that students are responsible for their own Internet access and computing resources. A loss of connectivity is not an excuse for late assignments. Some Internet service providers (ISPs) are notorious for inferior, unreliable service. In previous semesters, students have lost Internet connectivity in the middle of exams. Students who wait until the last possible moment to submit an assignment also run the risk of an unanticipated service disruption that prevents timely submission.

## Faculty Webpage and MYSJSU Communication

I will post announcements on Canvas on a regular basis. They will appear on your dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification from Canvas. Please make sure to check them regularly, as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

In this course we will use the CONVERSATIONS feature on the help corner (located in navigation links) to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the Canvas system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages regularly.

I receive many emails from students everyday, and I try to respond to all of them in a timely manner. An email is a formal communication between you and your professor, and it thus should be addressed properly. For my students, I am Dr. Bejar or Dr. Bejar-Lopez. Please keep this in mind when you send me an email. **I will not respond to emails that are not properly addressed.**

## Creating an Environment of Mutual Respect

This class is a partnership between you, your classmates and your professor. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment to learn and to explore challenging questions about International Political Economy. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect.

What do I expect from you, to create an environment of mutual respect? I expect you to complete the readings and watch all the posted lectures. I also expect professional behavior in the class and to remain engaged throughout the semester. Lack of interest or engagement is likely to be reflected in your grade.

What can you expect from me? You can expect me to be tirelessly enthusiastic and to work hard for you, both in this semester and in future semesters if needed. I encourage all of you to stop by my virtual office hours, even if you don't have a question and just would like to chat about the class, life after SJSU or life in general. You can reach me best via email at [sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu](mailto:sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu).

## Department of Political Science Learning Outcomes

1. Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
2. Application and Disciplinary Methods: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

3. Communication Skills: Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
4. Citizenship: Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

## Course Learning Outcomes

This class satisfies the D2 general education requirement (Comparative Systems, Cultures and Environments). Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental and spatial contexts;
2. Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them;
3. Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications to appropriate to contemporary social issues;
4. Compare and contrast two or more ethnic groups, cultures, regions, nations, or social systems.

Assessment of these outcomes will be measured as follows:

1. GELO 1: Discussion boards, Twitter engagement, exams, group projects.
2. GELO 2: Quizzes, Twitter engagement, group projects.
3. GELO 3: Discussion boards, exams.
4. GELO 4: Quizzes, discussion boards, Twitter engagement.

**See below for a detailed description of each of the aforementioned assignments and their requirements**

## E-mail Policy

I am usually quick to respond to student e-mails. However, student e-mails tend to do several things that try my patience. I have a new policy, effective Spring 2021, that outlines why I will not respond to certain e-mails students send. Multiple rationales follow.

1. The student could answer his/her own inquiry by reading the syllabus.
2. The student missed assignments or exams. I do not need to know the exact reason for a missed assignment or exam. Students with excusable reasons are responsible for giving me a note *in hard copy* that documents the reason for the missed class.
3. The student wants to know what topics have been covered in class. The answer is always "you missed what was on the syllabus."
4. The student is protesting a grade without reference to specific points of objection. These e-mails tend to be expressive utility on the part of the student and do not require a response from me. Students interested in improving their knowledge of material should see me during office hours.
5. The student is requesting an extension on an assignment for which the syllabus already established the deadline. The answer is always "no".
6. The student is "grade grubbing" or asking to round up a grade. The answer is always "no".
7. The student is asking for an extra credit opportunity, a request that amounts to more grading for the professor. The answer is "no".

8. The student emails during the weekend.

## Course Readings

[David Samuels, Comparative Politics, Second Edition, Pearson, 2018.](#)

Students will also read a variety of newspaper and magazine articles. The course's Canvas page will have the links to those additional readings.

## Assignment Weights and Due Dates

Assignment	Weight
Discussion Boards	5 x 5% each = 25%
Group Projects	3 x 10% each = 30%
Exams	2 x 17.5% each = 35%
Quizzes	5 X 2% each = 10%

## Description of Assignments

**Discussion Boards:** Students will participate in 5 graded discussion boards (there will be other non-graded boards). In each graded discussion you will be expected to make 3 posts: your initial post (minimum 200 words) and replies to at least two of your classmates (minimum 100 words each).

The nature of these posts varies. But you should expect to get questions on the documentaries and short videos that you are required to watch as well as on the newspaper and magazine articles that are part of your coursework. Your postings should be well written and clearly address the issues being discussed. I expect each writing assignment to have: (1) A clear introduction that addresses directly the question posed by the instructor; (2) A body of factual examples that support your thesis; these examples may be drawn from either the assigned readings or footnoted sources researched independently by the student; (3) Appropriate source citations; plagiarized threads will be penalized. (4) A succinct concluding paragraph. Your responses must be posted by the deadline specified on Canvas. .

If I have some concerns or comments about your thread, I will post a response. My comments are intended to help you improve your threads. If you respond to my comments, you may earn additional points. In order to earn a perfect score, you generally have to post an excellent thread the first time around and by the assigned deadline. In addition, you must respond to the threads of at least two other students 24 hrs. after the deadline.

**Group Projects:** Once the final roster of the class is available, I will randomly assign you to a working group (or team). As a team, you will craft two (2) short essays. The topics are below. Each brief should be 1,000 words long (max).

1. *Online Game:* You will meet your classmates virtually to play the [3rd World Farmer](#) game (fun!). This activity should not take more than 20-30 minutes. You are responsible to organize the online meeting on Zoom or any other platform that allows you to communicate with

your classmates. As a group, you will then write a short report (500 words) about your experience playing the game. How did you make decisions? Why? What are the main lessons you learned from playing the game?

2. *Country Profile*: Each group will be assigned a country different from the United States. You will present a country profile consisting of a short narrative and key economic and political. The narrative should focus on the country's modern evolution – the most salient political parties (PRI if studying Mexico, for example), social or political cleavages (agrarian elites versus Evo Morales in Bolivia for example) and major current events (The Olympics and their backlash in Japan).
3. *Current Events*: With your team, you will present the most salient political or economic event preoccupying the public, or government, currently. This might be a regional dispute, an anti-terrorist operation, an indigenous group's protest, or an economic crisis. You can draw from class resources, though you may need to read ahead, or outside of class, in order to best grapple with the analysis.

**Quizzes:** There will be 5 quizzes. Each of them will ask questions about the video lecture presentation(s) of the different modules. Success in these quizzes is simple: watch the lectures, take notes, pay attention and review your notes before the quiz. See course calendar below for due dates. *Late quizzes –even a second late- will receive a zero.*

**Exams:** Students will take two(2) mid-term exams. These exams will not be cumulative and are likely to include a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. See course calendar below for dates.

Both exams will be administered on Canvas. They will be open-notes and open-book exams, but you will not be allowed to collaborate with other students in completing them. Both exams will be timed. *Late exams –even a second late- will receive a zero.*

## Policy on Late Work

**Discussion board (initial posts):** initial posts can be submitted late but will incur a 25% penalty for each started 24-hour period (starting at 5:01pm on the day they are due). This means that you have 72 hrs. before your response receives automatically a 0.

**Discussion board (replies to classmates):** no late replies to classmates are allowed. The thread will close at 5:01pm on the day replies is due and no further submissions will be allowed.

**Group Policy Briefs:** your briefs will be penalized 25% for each started 24-hour period (starting at 5:01pm).

**Exams and quizzes:** exam and quiz make-ups are only given in cases of medical or family emergencies, in accordance with the university's policy on excused absences. In these cases, you **MUST** notify me before the exam and proper documentation must be provided.

## Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
A plus	98-100%
A	94-97.9%

Grade	Percentage
A minus	90-93.9%
B plus	87-89.9%
B	84-86.9%
B minus	80-83.9%
C plus	77-79.9%
C	74-76.9%
C minus	70-73.9%
D plus	67-69.9%
D	64-66.9%
D minus	60-63.9%
F	0-59.9%

## Public Sharing of Instructor Material

Students are prohibited from distributing, sharing, or posting class lectures, slides, exams, or any other instructional materials. Materials created by the instructor for the course (syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, presentations, exams, etc.) are copyrighted by the instructor. [University policy S12-7](#) is in place to protect the privacy of students in the course, as well as to maintain academic integrity through reducing the instances of cheating. Students who record, distribute, or post these materials will be referred to the Student Conduct and Ethical Development office. Unauthorized recording may violate university and state law. It is the responsibility of students that require special accommodations or assistive technology due to a disability to notify the instructor.

## Academic Dishonesty

Students who are suspected of cheating during an exam/quiz/assignment will be referred to the Student Conduct and Ethical Development office and depending on the severity of the conduct, will receive an F in the course. Grade Forgiveness does not apply to courses for which the original grade was the result of a finding of academic dishonesty.

## Course Schedule (Subject to Change with Fair Notice)

Module	Dates	Topics	Readings and Assignments
1	Aug 18 - Aug 20	Introduction	1. Syllabus 2. Watch introductory video (Canvas)

Module	Dates	Topics	Readings and Assignments
			<p><b>Discussion board #1 due Aug 21st (5 pm)</b></p> <p><b>Syllabus Quiz due Aug 21st (5 pm)</b></p>
2	August 23- August 27	<b>What is Comparative Politics?</b>	<p>1. Read Samuels, Chapter 1</p> <p>2. Listen <a href="#">Podcast</a></p> <p><b>Discussion Board #1 due August 27th (5 pm)</b></p>
3	August 30 - September 10	<b>Theories of State Formation</b>	<p>1. Read Samuels, Chapter 2</p> <p>2. Read Samuels, Chapter 10</p> <p>3. Read <a href="#">Saldinger</a></p> <p><b>Respond to Classmates' Posts by August 30th (5pm)</b></p>

Module	Dates	Topics	Readings and Assignments
			<p><b>Quiz #2 due September 3rd (5pm)</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Board #2 due September 10th (5pm)</b></p>
4	September 13 - September 24	<b>Political Regimes: Democracy and Autocracy</b>	<p>1. Read Dahl (See Canvas)</p> <p>2. Read Samuels, Chapter 4.</p> <p>3. Podcast <a href="#">How Democracies Die</a></p> <p>4. PBS Documentary "Commanding Heights"</p> <p><b>Respond to Classmates' Posts by September 13th, (5pm)</b></p> <p><b>Quiz #3 due September 22nd (5pm)</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Board #3 due September 24th (5pm)</b></p>

<b>Module</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
5	September 27 - October 8th	<b>Democracy, Religion and Economic Development</b>	<p>1. Read Bueno de Mesquita (see Canvas)</p> <p>2. Read Goldstone (see Canvas)</p> <p><b>Respond to Classmates' Posts by September 27th., (5pm)</b></p> <p><b>Discussion Board #4 due October 8th (5pm)</b></p>
6	October 11 - October 15	<b>Exam #1</b>	
7	October 18 - October 29	<b>Political Institutions 1: Parties, Elections and Participation</b>	<p>1. Read Samuels, Chapter 9</p> <p>2. Read Auyero (see Canvas)</p> <p>3. Read <a href="#">Open Democracy</a></p>

Module	Dates	Topics	Readings and Assignments
			4. Read <a href="#">Vote Buying</a>
			<b>Discussion Board #4 due October 22nd (5pm)</b>
			<b>Respond to Classmates' Posts by October 25th, (5pm)</b>
7	November 1 - November 12	<b>Political Institutions 2: Parliamentary/Presidential and Federal/Unitarian Systems</b>	
			1. Read Samuels, Chapter 3
			2. Read <a href="#">Selin</a>
			<b>Quiz #4 due November 9th (5pm)</b>
			<b>Discussion Board #5 due November 12th (5pm)</b>
9	November 15 - November 23	<b>Welfare Systems and Redistribution</b>	
			1. Read Samuels, Chapter 12

<b>Module</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
			2. Read Samuels, Chapter 13
			<b>Respond to Classmates' Posts by November 15th (5pm)</b>
			<b>Quiz #5 due November 19th (5pm)</b>
11	November 29 - December 6	<b>Other Topics</b>	
12	December 8	<b>Second Exam</b>	