

POLS 2-01: Introduction to Comparative Politics

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Office Hours: T 4:30-5:30 p.m. & Th 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (Zoom)

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Class Hours: TTh 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Class Room: Hugh Gillis Hall 116

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 the modern state, democracy and non-democracy, regime stability, political violence, political culture, economic development, and globalization.

Course Format

This is an **in-person** class with regularly scheduled class meeting times. We will meet each Tuesday and Thursday at 3:00-4:15pm in HGH 116.

Canvas Course Page

Course materials such as syllabus, readings, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course website](#).

You are responsible for regularly accessing the Canvas course website to read any required materials, complete assignments, and check announcements. Make sure that Canvas has your current email address. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#). For technical problems with Canvas please contact [eCampus](#).

General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

GELO 1: demonstrate understanding of the ways in which social institutions, culture, and environment shape and are shaped by the behavior of individuals, both past and present (assessed in exams and quizzes);

GELO 2: compare and contrast the dynamics of two or more social groups or social systems in a variety of historical and/or cultural contexts (assessed in exams and quizzes); **GELO 3:** place contemporary social developments in cultural, environmental, geographical, or historical contexts (assessed in group activities); and

GELO 4: draw on social/behavioral science information from various perspectives to formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues (assessed in analyses of current events).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

In addition, students will be able to:

CLO 1: Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental and spatial contexts;

CLO 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;

CLO 3: Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications to appropriate to contemporary social issues;

CLO 4: Compare and contrast two or more ethnic groups, cultures, regions, nations, or social systems.

Department of Political Science Learning Outcomes (PSPLO)

PSPLO 1: Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

PSPLO 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.

PSPLO 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.

PSPLO 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.

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 politics in a comparative perspective. 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 come to class prepared. 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 office hours (in person or via Zoom), even if you don't have a question and just would like to chat about the class, life after SJSU or life in general.

Course Communication and Help

If you have questions or need help with class, don't hesitate to talk to me. Here are several ways to contact me:

Office Hours: This is the best way to communicate with me. This semester, I have both in person and online office hours. **In-person office hours** will be held on Tuesdays from 4:30-5:30 pm. **Online office hours** will be on Thursdays from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. The link to my Zoom office hours will be posted on the Canvas webpage of the course.

When you click on the link for online office hours, you will be placed in a virtual waiting room. If I am not already talking to another student, you will be immediately allowed into the meeting. If I am in a meeting with another student, you will be in the waiting room until I am done and can let you into the "office."

If neither of my office hours work for you, please let me know and we will figure out a time to meet.

Email: I am usually quick to respond to student e-mails. You should expect a response for me within 24hrs **except on weekends and holidays**. While I do my best to answer most questions vial email, some student e-mails tend to do several things that try my patience. Please note that I will not respond to emails for the following reasons:

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.

Q&A Discussion Thread: I will keep a Q&A discussion board on canvas for the entirety of the semester. Any questions that might also be of concern to the entire class should be posted there (nothing confidential please). For example, questions about paper format, structure/requirements of different assignments, deadlines, and similar, would be beneficial to other students as well and should be posted on the Q&A tread. I will check the Q&A discussion board several times per week (on weekdays). If you know the answer to a question posed by another student, feel free to reply.

Course Readings

[Samuels, David J. \(2021\), Comparative Politics, Second Edition, Pearson](#)

The Spartan Bookstore is unlikely to carry the textbook, but you can order it from a variety of different online retailers. The course’s Canvas page will have the links to any additional readings.

Description of Assignments and Weights

Discussion Boards (20%): 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 (35%): 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 three (3) 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 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.
4. *Oral Presentation:* Each group will make a brief presentation of the country profile and current events assignments to the whole group. These presentations will take place the last week of November.

Quizzes (15%): 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 quizz. See course calendar below for due dates. *Late quizzes –even a second late- will receive a zero.*

Exams (40%): 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.

The Grading

You may notice that these points add up to 110- there's 10 extra credit points built in to the grading scheme! You're welcome. This is to help cover the occasional misstep that happens to us all a one time or another- computer problems, illness, life interference, etc. One bad week will not doom your grade in this class, though you will need to work hard and consistently throughout the semester to do well. You can calculate your final grade yourself, and convert it to a letter grade using simple math and the letter grade allocation from the student handbook, reprinted below.

Grading Scale

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

Cell Phones, Pagers, Laptops, PDAs

Unless Student Disabilities Services informs me that such a device is a necessary accommodation for a student with disabilities, all laptops, tablets, cell phones, and PDAs are to be put away during class (both in lecture and during exams). There are two reasons for this. One, you are on Facebook or Instagram anyway when you are using them during class. Both can wait. Two, laptops are—and I must emphasize this—*terrible learning devices*. Likewise, keep your phone or pager (do people still use those?) in your bag or pocket during class. The professor reserves the right to embarrass the student for not having a phone on “vibrate” during class. If not, the ringtone better be something good. *This is a legacy part of the syllabus that is here in the chance event that we meet in-person and is not applicable for the online component of the class.* However, you and your phone should probably be on mute during an online lecture.

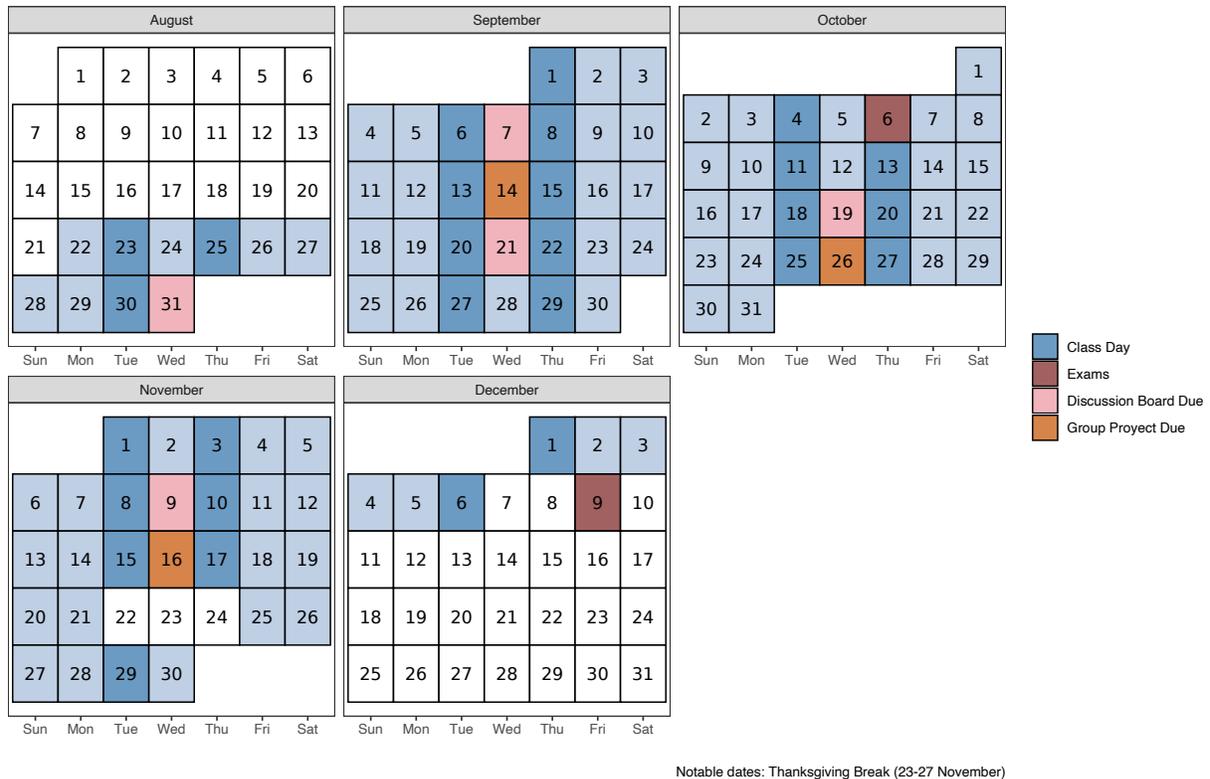


Figure 1: A Calendar for POLS 2-01 (Introduction to Comparative Politics, Fall 2022)

Class Schedule

Students must read the following before Tuesday’s class session. Important: class readings are subject to change, contingent on mitigating circumstances and the progress we make as a class. Students are encouraged to attend lectures and check the course website for updates.

Week 01, 08/22 - 08/26: Syllabus Day/

Read the following 2 short blogs for Thursday:.

- [Taking Good Notes](#)
- [Fun with Attendance and Grades \(i.e. Students Should Attend Class\)](#)

Week 02, 08/29 - 09/02: What is Comparative Politics?

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 1

Listen:

- [Podcast](#)

Week 03, 09/05 - 09/09: The State

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 2
- [Saldinger](#)

Week 04, 09/12 - 09/16: Democratic Political Regimes

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 3

Listen:

- Podcast [How Democracies Die](#)

Week 05, 09/19 - 09/23: Non-Democratic Political Regimes

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 4

Week 06, 09/26 - 09/30: Regime Change

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 5

Week 07, 10/03 - 10/07: Review and First Exam

Week 08, 10/10 - 10/14: Political Identity

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 6

Week 09, 10/17 - 10/21: Parties, Elections and Participation

Read:

- [Open Democracy](#)
- [Vote Buying](#)

Week 10, 10/24 - 10/28: Political Violence

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 10
- [Crises Only Sometimes Lead to Change. Here's Why](#)

Week 11, 10/31 - 11/04: Political Economy of Development

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 11

Week 12, 11/07 - 11/11: The Political Economy of Redistribution

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 12

Week 13, 11/14 - 11/18: Globalization

Read:

- Samuels, Chapter 13

Week 14, 11/21 - 11/25: Thanksgiving Week

Week 15, 11/28 - 12/02: Presentations Group Projects

Week 16, 12/05 - 12/09: Final Review