

GOV344L: Introduction to Comparative Politics  
Fall 2022  
Department of Government  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Unique ID: 38450

Instructor: Dr. Michael Mosser  
Office: Mezes 3.222  
Phone: 512.232.7280  
Email: [mosserm@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:mosserm@austin.utexas.edu)

Course location: UTC 3.134  
Course time: T/Th 9:30-11:00  
Office hours: MW 930 – 1100  
(and by appointment)

## Course concept:

The political world is highly complex, and yet we interact with it on a daily basis. At the international level, leaders gather to discuss issues that affect them individually and collectively, while the impact of their decisions on the people of their country depends enormously on the style of government and its representativeness. This course serves as the introduction to the sub-discipline of political science known as comparative politics. The course introduces the student to key concepts in the comparative study of political systems, including these key questions: *why* do we compare and *how* do we compare?

## Required readings:

The required text for this course is: *Comparative Politics, Updated Edition, 2nd edition* by David J. Samuels (Pearson, 2021). It is available as a set from the Co-Op using ISBN number 9780135709894. There will also be various supplementary academic journal, magazine, and newspaper articles where appropriate. Average reading load will be around 40 pages/class, with some lighter and some heavier classes.

Students will also be required to get an [academic subscription to Foreign Affairs](#), the preeminent journal for foreign policy professionals in the United States. Readings from Foreign Affairs archives and contemporary editions will be used throughout the country case portion of the course.

## Assignments and grading:

- Exams: 75%
- Quizzes: 5%
- Attendance: 5%
- Discussion postings: 10%
- Participation: 5%

This class will have two midterm exams and a final exam. Each exam will be worth 25% of your overall grade.

There will be two (ungraded) homework assignments that will be due during the first part of the course. These are designed to familiarize yourself with the comparative method of political science.

There will also be five quizzes which will occur over the course of the first term. Collectively, the quizzes will count for 5% of your overall grade.

Although unlikely, there may also be opportunities for extra credit that will be interspersed throughout the first term. These opportunities are entirely voluntary but can be of benefit to you both academically and personally. Extra credit will require attendance and a one-page summary of the event. Properly completed extra credit opportunities will replace a quiz grade or, if all quizzes are 100%, add 1% to your overall grade, up to a maximum of 5%.

Because this is an introductory course, I will stress even more strongly than usual the importance of class attendance. I strongly encourage you to attend every class and be prepared for lively and stimulating discussion.

There is a distinction between attendance and participation. Attendance will be managed through Canvas and will take place at five intervals throughout the session. Each of these attendance days will count for 1% of your course grade (for a total of 5%).

In-class participation will be graded as follows:

- Attending every day, but not participating in class: 80/100
- Attending every day, participating via question answering (from instructor): 90/100
- Attending every day, participating via question answering and active learning (extending discussion, asking follow-up questions): 100/100

Participation will count for 5% of your total grade.

### **Discussions:**

This class has a discussion forum that is an integral part of the course. Each week's discussion questions will be due every Saturday at midnight; the discussion forum locks at that time and there is no chance to post to that week thereafter. Postings can be drawn from the readings; in this case, they should reflect any questions, comments, or cries of outrage you may have regarding the arguments set forth by the authors. They most definitely will help you get the most from the class. Postings may also be brief synopses of newsworthy events. In this case, you must post both the link to the news story and a brief (50-word) précis of what the article discusses. Finally, postings may be replies to others' questions or news stories, as long as they are informative replies and not merely agree/disagree posts. One post (or a thoughtful reply to a post) counts as your post for that week.

There are no discussion postings necessary for midterm weeks. The total number of discussion postings will be counted at the end of the semester, and also will be examined throughout the semester for evidence of consistent posting. Do not expect to "catch-up" post only at the end of the semester and receive full participation credit.

- 12-15 postings: Full credit
- 8-11 postings: 70% credit
- 5-7 postings: 50% credit

- Less than 5 postings: No credit

**\*\* A word on late or missed assignments.** Over the course of the semester, it is inevitable that some event will cause a time management issue, which might lead to a missed assignment deadline. Though normally handled on a case-by-case basis, there are some baseline penalties for missed or delayed assignments. Missed exams for documented reasons (illness, family emergency) can be made up for 3 days post-exam with no penalty. Missed exams for any non-documented reason can be made up until 3 days post-exam but will accrue a 10% penalty for *each* missed day before grading.

## **Student Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of this course, students will have a basic understanding of comparative politics, including both the comparative method and country studies. Students will understand differential routes to democratization and will examine whether democracy is necessary and sufficient condition for global politics.

## **Grading standards:**

I will use the following grade standards. All grades given during the term will be converted to a 100-point scale.

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	<60	F

## **Other Important Information:**

### **Plagiarism / academic misconduct:**

Don't do it. Minimum penalties for cheating are zeros on quizzes or exams where the cheating takes place. Questions about what constitutes academic misconduct should be brought to my attention.

### **University Writing Center:**

The University Writing Center, PCL 2.330, 471-6222: <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/> offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UT can visit the UWC for assistance with any writing project. They work with students from every department on campus, for both academic and non-academic writing. Their services are not just for writing with "problems." Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance they provide is intended to foster independence. Each student determines how to use the consultant's advice. The consultants are trained to help you work on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work.

### **University of Texas Honor Code:**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Any student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty may receive an "F" in the course and be remanded to the appropriate University of Texas authorities for disciplinary action. For more information, view Student Judicial Services at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

**Religious Holidays:**

According to UT-Austin policy, students must notify the instructor of an impending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If a student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the student will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Student Privacy:**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires that student privacy be preserved. Thus the posting of grades, even by the last four digits of the social security number, is forbidden. All communication will remain between the instructor and the student, and the instructor will not be able to share details of the student's performance with parents, spouses, or any others.

**Documented Disability Statement:**

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). Please refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:**

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

**Suggested news sources:**

- *New York Times*: <http://www.nytimes.com>
- *Wall Street Journal*: <http://www.wsj.com>
- *Washington Post*: <http://www.washingtonpost.com>
- *Reuters*: <http://www.reuters.com>
- *Financial Times*: <http://www.ft.com>
- *The Economist*: <http://www.economist.com>
- *National Public Radio*: <http://www.npr.org>

# Course calendar

## **PART ONE: Concepts and Ideas**

### **Tuesday 23 August**

Topic:

- Doing Comparative Politics

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter One

### **Thursday 25 August**

Topic

- The State

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Two

### **Tuesday 30 August**

Topic:

- Democratic Political Regimes

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Three

### **Thursday 1 September**

Topic:

- Non-Democratic Political Regimes
- Regime Change

Readings:

- Samuels, Chapter Four
- Samuels, Chapter Five

### **Tuesday 6 September**

Topic:

- Political Identity

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Six

### **Thursday 8 September**

Topic:

- Religion and Politics
- Gender and Politics

Readings:

- Samuels, Chapter Seven
- Samuels, Chapter Eight

### **Tuesday 13 September**

Topic:

- Collective Action

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Nine

### **Thursday 15 September**

Topic:

- Political Violence

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Ten

### **Tuesday 20 September**

Topic:

- Political Economy of Development

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Eleven

### **Thursday 22 September**

Topic:

- Political Economy of Redistribution

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Twelve

### **Tuesday 27 September**

Topic:

- Globalization

Reading:

- Samuels, Chapter Thirteen

<b>Thursday 29 September – MIDTERM EXAM ONE</b>
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## **PART TWO: Country Case Studies**

### **Tuesday 4 October**

Topic:

- Introduction and the United Kingdom (Part One)

Reading:

- UK-specific readings (historical)

### **Thursday 6 October**

Topic:

- UK (Part Two)

Reading:

- UK-specific readings (contemporary)

### **Tuesday 11 October**

Topic:

- France (Part One)

Reading:

- France-specific readings (historical)

### **Thursday 13 October**

Topic:

- France (Part Two)

Reading:

- France-specific readings (contemporary)

### **Tuesday 18 October**

Topic:

- Germany (Part One))

Reading:

- Germany-specific readings (historical)

### **Thursday 20 October**

Topic:

- Germany (Part Two)

Reading:

- Germany-specific readings (contemporary)

### **Tuesday 25 October**

Topic:

- Japan

Reading:

- Japan-specific readings

<b>Thursday 27 October – MIDTERM EXAM TWO</b>
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### **Tuesday 1 November**

Topic:

- Mexico

Reading:

- Mexico-specific readings (historical and contemporary)

### **Thursday 3 November**

Topic:

- Russia (introduction)

Reading:

- Russia-specific readings (historical)

### **Tuesday 8 November – QUIZ FOUR**

Topic:

- Russia (Part Two)

Readings:

- Russia-specific readings (contemporary)

### **Thursday 10 November**

Topic:

- India

Reading:

- India-specific readings (historical and contemporary)

### **Tuesday 15 November – QUIZ FIVE**

Topic:

- China

Reading:

- China-specific readings (historical)

### **Thursday 17 November**

Topic:

- China (Part Two)

Reading:

- China-specific readings (contemporary)

### **Tuesday 29 November**

Topic:

- Nigeria

Reading:

- Nigeria-specific readings (historical and contemporary)

### **Thursday 1 December**

- Course wrap-up

<b>Final Exam: TBD</b>
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