

POLS 229: Comparative Politics. Sections 1 & 2.

Cal Poly, Dept. of Political Science
Autumn 2022

Section 1

Meeting time: T/R 4:10-6:00 PM

Meeting place: 10-111 (Erhart Agriculture 111);

Section 2

Meeting time: T/R 2:10-4:00 PM

Meeting place: 10-115 (Erhart Agriculture 115)

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Simmt

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Office: Bldg. 74M, Rm. B109

Office hours: MW 2:00-4:00

Or by appointment

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Course Description

As per the Registrar's catalogue, this course will (at a minimum) introduce...

- “Basic concepts, issues, methodology, and theories in comparative politics...”
- “Major issues/theories include electoral laws and party systems, parliamentary and presidential institutions, socialization, democratization, corporatism and pluralism, religious and cultural impacts on politics...”
- “Topics explored through politics of countries and regions throughout the world...”

With that said, I can put a little meat on the bone... as to what comparativists study. Much of our work revolves around:

- How do societies make their collective decisions?
- What are the different factors that go into their collective decisions?
- Why do they make their collective decisions differently?
- And, finally, what are the implications (societal outcomes) that differ based on how they make their collective decisions.

And, so, to put a little meat on that bone... as comparativists, we often want to understand when “the particular” of a society implicates good (or bad) consequences upon human welfare. We must, then, study the “trivia” of different political systems... but we study trivia not as a means rather than an end. (We are NOT just memorizing facts for the sake of memorizing facts!) We are, ultimately, upon a humanistic project to disentangle which features of a society are primary in determining social outcomes. In some cases, we find aspects of society that might be manipulated so as to build a better society and, in yet other cases, we discover that an aspect of society (i) is beyond manipulation; (ii) has non-constant effects upon manipulation (i.e., the mediating effects of unique context); and/or (iii) has the potential to be manipulated to solve one problem but, in turn, will trigger a watershed of other problems.

Course Content & Structure

The content of this course results directly from its objectives: what must we know in order to make claims about why/when particular features of a society incur a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ social outcome? The task is deceptively tricky. Due to the complexity of this objective, we necessarily cover a greater variety of topics than is orthodox in a university course. Ultimately, together we must build five bases of knowledge: substantive understanding of the features of political systems across the world and throughout history; the comparative method; political economy; distributive justice; and public economics.

Substantive Knowledge of Political Systems

Let's think about what needs to be covered to make a claim that a societal feature, “X,” of a country (let's go with Canada) causes a “good” (or “bad”) social outcome, “Y.” First, to propose such a theory requires knowing a hell of a lot about Canada (or whatever other country you might be considering). After all, to make such conjecture we must have enough knowledge about Canada so as to speak about (i) Canada's interesting social outcomes that are worthwhile to explain and, moreover, (ii) the many plausible traits about Canada that might explain this curious outcome. So,

understanding Canada's political system is a must. Moreover, knowing a lot about other countries will help us corroborate our findings: do countries with the same trait, "X," as Canada also have the same social outcome, "Y," and do those without Canada's trait *fail* to achieve this outcome (whatever it might be).

The Comparative Method

Second, to prove our theory right, we cannot *just* show that "X" and "Y" both happen to occur together in the case of Canada (i.e., correlation) but, rather, that in the absence of "X" there would be no "Y" (i.e., causation). To prove that our correlation in the Canadian context is not simply "lucky," or spurious to some other effect, we must make meaningful comparisons across cases. In class, I explain how the comparative method might enable us to demonstrate that a particular feature of Canada actually *causes* our outcome of concern, not merely that the input coincides with the output. I will often talk about the importance of making "meaningful comparisons," rather than being aimless in our selection of countries to compare – which leaves one's analysis vulnerable to drawing false conclusions based upon correlation with no basis in causation. As such, learning the comparative *method* is crucial.

Political Economy

Third, while we could just stop at showing how empirical evidence demonstrates that "X" causes "Y," we ultimately want to know *why* that link from "X" to "Y" exists. In other words, we don't just want to describe what we observe, but we also want to understand why the pattern happens in the first place. To accomplish this, we will study political economy. Political economy helps us understand *explanatory* theories about how individual preferences interact with institutions to procure particular outcomes. This will help us know why a certain feature (of Canada) causes a certain outcome; moreover, it will help us think about the conditions necessary for this link to exist. We may, for example, find that the cause of "Y" will only work in Canada due to a set of peculiar prerequisite conditions (e.g., her unique institutions).

Distributive Justice

Fourth, you may have noted that I spoke of making claims about "good social outcomes" and "bad social outcomes." Such language takes a lot for granted: what makes an outcome "good" or "bad"? While political economy might help us understand why a certain outcome happens, it cannot tell us whether that certain outcome is desirable. Hence, we need normative theory to justify the outcomes we pursue for society.

Often in political science, we try to responsibly explain what does happen, without taking a stance on whether that outcome is good or bad. Yet, it's not clear why we should study political science, beyond an academic (typically morbid) curiosity, if we are not going to use our knowledge of "what causes outcomes" in order to promote the good outcomes and avoid the bad ones. By bringing the normative realm into the open, rather than hiding it, we can collectively work on defending our vision for "a good society" from those who would disagree. Hence, being upfront about one's normative program may help one to become less dogmatic in one's stances. Or, it may reveal a contradiction between one's beliefs and one's policy stances. Further yet, one may "come around" to doubting beliefs previously taken for granted. As such, we will discuss the modern distributive justice literature, which helps us understand the values implicit in the policies and "shapes of society" that we pursue.

Public Economics

Once we have used our knowledge of distributive justice to feel confident saying, “Y is a socially desirable outcome,” then we have a follow up question, “what is the most effective way in which to achieve Y.” Ultimately, most outcomes can be achieved a multitude of ways. The question is: which way is the best? Public economics provides tools to understand how we can most efficiently attain outcomes we care about. Given the many different objectives we have to improve our society, and the scarcity of resources with which we have to attain them, we must strive to achieve each objective efficiently in order to leave resources for attaining all the others. For example, if we decide eliminating poverty is a good thing, then we must discuss whether the most effective solution is the free market, a minimum wage, a universal basic income, etc.

Lastly, note the importance that students and social advocates consider not only what is ideal, but what is feasible. Here we will, again, evoke political economy to theorize about whether the ideal policy is politically feasible and, if not, which of our “second-best” policies might be able to gather a politically salient coalition that can ensure its implementation. Perhaps you have concluded the universal basic income is the best policy to end poverty. Will it be politically feasible? If so, is it feasible across every political context, or only some? As such, if we are to come to conclusions about how to advocate for a better society, we cannot just consider each of the five topics above ‘in silos’ but must consider each topic as it interacts with each of the others.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to prepare you to read, interpret, critique and conduct research in political science (and beyond!). By the end of the course you will know how to...

- Introduce you to important concepts, ideas, and disputes in comparative politics, with the goal of preparing you to investigate the world more systematically and (possibly) to do more advanced work in other political science courses.
- Build your skills in reading social science texts critically and to have constructive conversations about them.
- Give you practice in thinking critically about complex problems while writing short analytical papers in an academic context.
- Students understand the systematic study of human behavior and cognition; the structure of human societies, cultures, and institutions; and the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact, communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources.
- Students understand the theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as they apply to the study of organizations and politics.
- Students understand the formation and durability of political, economic, and social organizing principles and their differences and similarities across contexts.
- Students comprehend and assess the nature and values of organizations and politics and their importance in social problem solving and policy making.
- Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.
- Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

- Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
- Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

Grading

Course Grade Expectations

A numeric weighted average of grades on course assignments will translate to final letter grades according to the thresholds below. Note: cutoffs are at the full point level rather than the half point level. I will not “bump-up” or “round-up” final student grades; an 89.99 is a B+. However, if you think a grade has been miscalculated or mis-entered, please let me know ASAP so I can check and make a correction.

- A (93.0-100%) Exceptional Performance
- A- (90.0-92.99%) Very Good Performance
- B+ (87.0-89.99%) Good Performance
- B (83.0-86.99%) Good Performance
- B- (80.0-82.99%) Satisfactory Performance
- C+ (77.0-79.99%) / C (73.0-76.99%) / C-(70-72.99%) Adequate Performance
- D+ (70.0-69.99) /D(65.0-66.49%) Minimal Passing Performance
- F (Below 65.0%) Unacceptable Performance

Grade Weights

Your final grade is a weighted average of the assignments listed in the table below.

Assignment	Percent	Due Dates
<u>Modular Worksheets</u>	$4\% \times 5 = 20\%$	By End of Select Classes 9/29, 10/6, 10/13, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10, 11/17
Quizzes	$2\% \times 20 = 40\%$ %	Must complete within 2-6 PM Window 10/20 **, 12/1**
<u>Policy Research Paper</u>		
Checkpoint 1	4 %	10/4, Canvas by start of class
Checkpoint 2	4 %	10/18, Canvas by start of class
Checkpoint 3	4 %	11/1, Canvas by start of class
Checkpoint 4	4 %	11/15, Canvas by start of class
Checkpoint 5	4 %	11/29 , Canvas by start of class
Final Policy Research Paper	20 %	12/4, Canvas by midnight**

**Draft graded on completion, effort, and timeliness.*

***These assignment deadlines are firm. See late work policy below.*

Modular Worksheets (Issued In-Class on Select Days); 20% of Final Grade

Learning how to conduct research within comparative politics – asking good questions, developing persuasive theories and models, relating events to concepts, designing appropriate empirical tests, and communicating findings – is best done by *doing*. These worksheets will break-down major research tasks into bite size pieces. They will be issued during class via Carmen (with approx 1/2 to 1 hour of class time made available to get started). Most can be completed in small groups of 2-3. Submit via Carmen. Hint: Those perceptive may have realized... there are 7 modules, but only 5 are graded. I will take your 5 best of the 7 total.

Exams; 40% of Final Grade

There will be two exams (potentially labelled as “quizzes” on Carmen) throughout the quarter. These quizzes will cover all terms and concepts discussed in our classes *up to the class prior to the quiz* and *all readings including those assigned on the date of the quiz*. Like the content of this course, all examinations are cumulative. Please note that these will be completed via Carmen, and must be completed within the scheduled time-frame. Failure to start or complete the exam within the allotted window will score you a ZERO! Note: Our exam days will occur online, meaning we will not meet in-person.

Policy Research Paper; 40% of Final Grade

The largest component of your grade consists of a semester long “Policy Research Paper,” that is broken down into checkpoints along the way. This paper (and each checkpoint) is described at length on Canvas. Completing check-points will contribute to your final grade (totalling to 20%); they will also help you put together this daunting task in manageable baby-steps, which will

likely prove helpful. The final paper, too, will contribute 20% to your final grade (For details on checkpoints, see Canvas, or look above: listed within “Grade Weights”).

Textbook and Readings

Many readings for this course will be posted on Carmen; however, there are two textbook for purchase. Our primary resource will be an excellent introductory textbook on comparative politics:

Carol Ann Drogus and Stephen Orvis. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Contexts*, 2014. 3rd Edition. ISBN-13: 9781452241524

De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and Alastair Smith. *The dictator’s handbook: why bad behavior is almost always good politics*. Hachette UK, 2011

Beyond this text, all other readings will be posted on Canvas. You are expected to complete the readings assigned for each class before the start of class.

Course Policies

Office Hours

Office hours are times during the week set aside for me to meet with students about any questions or concerns they have about the course. I intend to hold in-person office hours during the times listed at the top of this document and by appointment. That said, you may email me if you would prefer to discuss via Zoom – I will make a link. If you are in class or scheduled to work during those times, that’s A-ok, just send me an email with your availability and we will find a time where we are both free.

Late Work

I honestly don’t know which late-work policy is the best combination of ethical, practical, and pedagogically effective in a covid world. In my experience, deadlines with penalties are a great way to encourage students to stay on track with their work (y’all are generally a grade-motivated bunch!), but I do not want to penalize students for things outside of their control nor do I want to put myself in the position of deciding whose illnesses and life issues are important enough to justify an “excused” label.

So, y’all are the guinea pigs for a new policy: **I will automatically issue every student 192 cumulative hours (8 days) worth of “free” late penalties – although this CANNOT be used for Exams, NOT past the date of November 28th** (See **Qualifications** below).

Any student exceeding their cap will start to be penalized 5% per day, which is issued the very second an assignment is late (the penalty will, then, be re-issued the very second that 24 hours elapses; it will be re-issued for every 24 hour period until handed-in). These free days cannot be used for: Quizzes/Exams; past the last day of class, December 1 at midnight; nor for the final project due on December 4. As of December 1 at midnight, your “free” late days are null and void (I have to submit final grades, after all.)

I've set up deadlines that will make sure you are on-track to complete a solid final project at the end of the course. I ***STRONGLY*** recommend submitting work by the deadlines throughout the quarter, but if something out of your control happens and you need another day or two, go for it. If you need to exceed your 8 allowance days, then YOU MUST PROVIDE VALID DOCUMENTATION (e.g., medical) demonstrating the need for more than 8 excused days.

Some **Qualifications**:

- Exceptions here are quizzes, your draft (because other folks depend on you), and your final papers (because my deadline for submitting grades is firm).
- All late work must be submitted by the last day of classes: December 1 at 11:59 PM. Any work not received by midnight on the 1st will get an automatic zero. Note: all of the work in this course is designed to help you produce good final projects. If you don't do the work until the end of the quarter, it won't be helpful.
- You will get more timely – and therefore more useful – grading, for work that is turned in by the stated deadline. In general, I do not offer feedback for late work.
- Don't let the “free late days” lull you into a false sense of having extra time. The quarter moves fast. And, submitting late just means you're not able to advance on your final project.

Incomplete Grades

If extenuating circumstances affect your ability to finish the course material by the end of the quarter, please schedule a meeting with me as soon as possible to discuss whether taking an incomplete for the course is a good option for you. Incomplete grades will only be given for extenuating AND documented circumstances (simply falling behind because you're busy is not sufficient for an incomplete¹) and if an agreement is made **prior** to the end of the course. Once an Incomplete has been given, it is the student's responsibility to schedule meetings with me to facilitate the completion of the work.

Communication

In addition to announcements made in class, I will communicate with you through email. You are expected to check email regularly (daily, M-F). I check my email regularly during the work week – Monday through Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm – and respond as promptly as possible. Emails sent to me in the evenings and weekends *might* get a prompt(ish) response but probably won't. Emails sent in the middle of the night definitely aren't getting a prompt response (go to bed!). It is your responsibility to clear-up any questions about assignments at least 24 business hours in advance of a deadline!

Integrity of Scholarship

I take the integrity of scholarship very seriously in this course. By taking this course, you affirm that it is against course standards to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from my instructions about collaboration on work submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member,

¹I'm not trying to be harsh here. I've tried giving out incompletes for students who've fallen behind for non-specific reasons, and not a single one of them has ever finished the work late. In those cases, all the incomplete does is prevent students from re-registering for the course/taking the next courses, which ultimately hurts progress towards graduation.

and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that I am entitled to move you to another seat during quizzes without explanation.

Any evidence of cheating/plagiarism will be punished with an automatic 0 for the assignment. Severe offenses (defined at the instructor's discretion) will result in an automatic failure of the course. All cases of cheating will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, without exception.

For more information about Cal Poly's expectations for academic integrity see

<https://academicprograms.calpoly.edu/content/academicpolicies/Cheating>

The Department's Definition of Plagiarism "Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. Such an act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived through independent reasoning or logic or where the thought or idea is common knowledge. Acknowledgement of an original author or source must be made through appropriate references; i.e., quotation marks, footnotes, or commentary. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to the following: the submission of a work, either in part or in whole completed by another; failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another; failure to use quotation marks (or other means of setting apart, such as the use of indentation or a different font size) when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof; close and lengthy paraphrasing of another's writing without credit or originality; use of another's project or programs or part thereof without giving credit." <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/students/advising/policy>

The Department's Definition of Cheating "Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain, or aiding another to obtain credit for work, or any improvement in evaluation of performance, by any dishonest or deceptive means. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: lying; copying from another's test or examination; discussion at any time of answers or questions on an examination or test, unless such discussion is specifically authorized by the instructor; taking or receiving copies of an exam without the permission of the instructor; using or displaying notes, "cheat sheets," or other information devices inappropriate to the prescribed test conditions; allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent same." <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/students/advising/policy>

Access, Disability Services, and Resources

I am committed to providing appropriate accommodations. If you have a disability-related need please contact the Disability Resource Center at Cal Poly immediately: <http://drc.calpoly.edu/content/drc-services>, (805) 756-1395. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please let me know. You can email me, come to office hours, or schedule a one-on-one meeting. I want everyone to learn and will do what I can to facilitate that process.

Diversity and Inclusion

My goal is to create a learning environment that enables all students to succeed and know that their experiences are valid. I expect students to treat each other with kindness and civility. For more information on resources related to diversity and inclusion, please visit the Office of University

Diversity & Inclusivity website at <http://diversity.calpoly.edu>. If you notice behaviors or institutions in our class that undermine or obscure diversity and inclusion, please share those concerns with me (if you are comfortable doing so) or the department chair, Dr. Anika Leithner aleithne@calpoly.edu

Needs Support

If you face challenges securing food, housing, or other human needs know that you are not alone and Cal Poly can help. You can find resources available to support you through Cal Poly's Basic Needs Initiative at <https://www2.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/basic-needs-initiative> and information about the Food Pantry and Meal Vouchers at <https://studentaffairs.calpoly.edu/hunger>

Zoom Etiquette

While primarily an in-person class, we shall, on occasion, conduct meetings over Zoom. Most of you are familiar with the zoom etiquette norms at this point, but a few reminders:

- Mute yourself unless you are actively about to ask or respond to a question to minimize background noise.
- When your video is on, please minimize distractions for the other students. Life happens when we take classes from home, but – if possible – point your camera to minimize distractions behind you. Turn off any TV screens in the background, and temporarily turn your video off if you need to get up or do something other than listen and participate in the class (eating a meal, for example)
- When your environment has minimal distractions and you feel safe sharing it, please keep your video on. Having your video on is useful for a few reasons – having your video on is an incentive for you to stay focused on the course content, and having your video on is useful to me/your instructor (being able to see faces gives good feedback about whether or not what we are discussing makes sense).
- If you'd like, you're welcome to use that chat function to talk to other students about the content of the class, but move any extra-curricular conversations out of zoom (and after class).

Class Schedule

Any changes to the schedule below will be announced in class as soon as possible and an updated syllabus will be emailed and posted to Canvas.

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Tue Sep 20	1	Introduction	Syllabus	Read Syllabus & Submit Question Sheet
Thu Sep 22	2	The Comparative Method	D&O Ch 1 Steinmo, Sven "American Exceptionalism reconsidered: Culture or institutions?"	
Tue Sep 27	3	Concept of the State Formation of Modern States	D&O Ch 2 Pavone, "Review of Tilly's Capital, Coercion & the European State"	
Thu Sep 29	4	Weak States Post-Conflict Reconstruction	Milliken & Krause. "State failure, state collapse, and state reconstruction: Concepts, lessons and strategies." Englebert & Tull. "Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa: Flawed Ideas about Failed States."	Module 1 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Oct 4	5	Identity, Ideology and Regime Type (Democracy, Communism, Fascism, Theocracy)	D&O Ch 3,4	Checkpoint 1
Thu Oct 6	6	The Selectorate	The Dictator's Handbook, Intro + Ch 1-3	Module 2 @ 11:59 PM

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Tue Oct 11	7	Implications of Selectorate Theory	The Dictator's Handbook, Ch 4-6 Ross, "Is Democracy Good for the Poor?" Stasavage, "Democracy and Education Spending in Africa"	
Thu Oct 13	8	Redistributive Justice & Tools of Political Economy I	Bowles, Samuel. "What markets can—and cannot—do." Hahnel, Robin. "The case against markets."	Module 3 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Oct 18	9	Recapitulation Session		Checkpoint 2
Thu Oct 20	10	Midterm Exam; Online Session		Listed as Quiz 1; must be completed online via Canvas between 2-6PM
Tue Oct 25	11	Democracy I	D&O Ch 5	
Thu Oct 27	12	Democracy II	D&O Ch 6	Module 4 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Nov 1	13	Implications of Democratic Institutions	Steinmo, Sven. Taxation and Democracy. [Excerpt] Iversen & Soskice. "Electoral institutions"	Checkpoint 3
Thu Nov 3	14	Autocracy	D&O Ch 8 Gandhi & Lust-Okar. "Elections Under Authoritarianism."	Module 5

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Tue Nov 8	15	Regime Change	D&O Ch 7,9	
Thu Nov 10	16	States & Markets	D&O Ch 10, 12	Module 6 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Nov 15	17	Political Economy of Development	D&O Ch 11	Checkpoint 4
Thu Nov 17	18	Tools of Political Economy II	Kahn, "The tyranny of small decisions: market failures, imperfections, and the limits of economics." Lipsey & Lancaster, "The general theory of second best."	Module 7 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Nov 22	19	Thanksgiving Break		
Thu Nov 24	20	Thanks Giving Break		
Tue Nov 29	21	Recapitulation Session		Checkpoint 5
Thu Dec 1	22	Final Exam; Online Session		Listed as Quiz 2; must be completed online via Canvas between 2-6PM
Tue Dec 4				Final papers due by 11:59 pm

Signature Sheet

Please sign below. (in ink or e-sign) and submit this page to canvas on to indicate that you have read and generally understand the course policies outlined in this document:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

What questions do you have about the class that are not answered in the syllabus/ what policies are unclear?

Do you have access to an electronic device that you can use to work on my project in class? (It is totally OK if you do not, I just like to know so we can best make use of in-class work time.)

If professors/folks/people-with-names-like-Kevin tend to mispronounce your name, can you provide a phonetic spelling below to help me get it right?

If you'd like to share, what pronouns should I use to refer to you in class?

In addition, is there anything else that you would like to share with me?