

POL 002 Section A03/A04 Syllabus – Introduction to Comparative Politics – Spring 2024

Teaching Assistant (TA): Timea Balogh

Email: tbalogh@ucdavis.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10am – 12pm or by appointment; <https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/93661636775>

Section A03 ~ Wednesday 2:10 - 3pm; Olson Hall 227

Section A04 ~ Wednesday 3:10 – 4pm; Olson Hall 227

❖ **Description of Section**

- Welcome to section A03/A04! POL 002 is a large, introductory course that covers a lot of material in just ten weeks. I encourage you to think of section as an opportunity for you to meet in a smaller class setting, ask questions about course concepts, and learn from each other about course material. Typically, each section will include review of lecture material and/or discussion, usually focused on topics covered in class and those likely to be on the quizzes, the final exam, or your other assignments.
- To show you a little bit about how comparative politics research works, I will also devote time to discussing how political scientists measure the concepts and topics we discuss and what data they may use.

❖ **Section Details and Values**

- *Participation* – The goal of section is to learn together, which is made possible by being engaged and actively participating when you can. Participation can include but is not limited to coming to class weekly, asking questions during section (this can be to the class but can also be privately to me before or after class), completing in class activities, and contributing to discussions with your classmates.
 - This is a political science course, and as such we will be discussing *political* issues. As each of us comes into the section with unique experiences and opinions about political issues, there may be disagreements. **I insist we discuss our differences with respect, civility, and empathy.** Please do your best to keep an open mind about your peers' perspectives as your peers will expect the same of you.
 - Note: This does not mean you should avoid participating if/when you have an alternative point of view just because you may not wish to provoke an argument. Be bold, and share what you think (respectfully)!
- *Attendance*– I hope you attend and actively participate in each section because I have found it is the best way to engage you in learning. As a bonus, it is also an “easy” half (10% out of the total 20%) of your participation grade at the end of the quarter (see Course Syllabus for more details). I will take attendance each week by passing around an attendance sheet near the end of section for you to sign, which will count towards your final participation grade.
- *Options for making up absences*– I recognize that things happen and at times you may have to prioritize other courses or aspects of your life. Therefore, you may miss one section during the quarter, no questions asked. You do not need to explain your reasoning for missing, although you are welcome to disclose if you feel that I should know about your situation or you would like to chat about it.
 - If you must miss more than one section, you still have the opportunity to make up participation credit for **up to two additional missed sections** by first reviewing the week's section slides and then choosing one of the following options:
 - *Option 1:* Complete that week's section “makeup activity”, which will be posted to Canvas following each section, within a week of your absence. This activity can be done on your own, independently, will attempt to replicate some of the discussion and review that we engaged in during section, and will help make sure you are caught up on material. It will usually involve emailing me a word document to me with your completed answers.

- *Option 2:* Come to office hours (Tuesdays) in the week following your absence. During this time, we will discuss the material you missed, and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions you have.

❖ **Contacting me: Email and Office Hours**

- Throughout the quarter, you will likely encounter situations where you need to contact me via email or by attending office hours. The following outlines what each mode of communication entails and a general recommendation for which activities are best suited to each.
- *Office hours*
 - Office hours are when I set aside two hours each week to be available to students. Office hours are often underutilized by students in college, even though I find they strongly correlate with better performance and engagement in the course. Consider this your time. You do **not** need an appointment to come by.
 - My office hours are indicated at the top of this syllabus. If you prefer to meet outside of these hours and/or in-person, I am happy to schedule an alternate meeting with you, just email me.
 - Office hours are best for...
 - Discussing or clarifying concepts or lecture material in greater detail
 - Reviewing readings and their key arguments/concepts
 - Brainstorming paper ideas or going over drafts and outlines
 - Reviewing assignment grades
 - Conversing about grad school or comparative politics
 - Providing constructive feedback on section
 - I strongly encourage everyone to review the following document on the **hidden rules for office hours** - <https://www.wm.edu/sites/neurodiversity/documents/hidden-rules-for-office%20hours.pdf>
- *Emails*
 - If your question cannot wait until office hours, section, or class, then you can use email to contact me. When emailing, I encourage you to introduce yourself and try to be as clear as possible with your inquiry so that I can best help you. To help me see your email, please include “**POL 002 [insert your section #]**” in your email subject line.
 - Email is best for...
 - Asking quick, clarifying questions about lecture material, section material, or class assignments
 - Setting up a meeting with me outside of office hours
 - Email is not a good alternative for having a direct conversation or an in-depth discussion, or exhaustively reviewing material from lecture or section in office hours.
 - I will do my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours. I usually reply to emails during standard “business hours” (9-5 Monday-Friday), so if you send an email very late or on a weekend, responses may take longer.
 - If I have not responded within a reasonable time frame, please do not hesitate to send a follow-up email. I am a person too and it is very likely I forgot or missed it. I appreciate the reminder and you are not being annoying by reminding me.
- *Canvas*
 - I will typically communicate with my sections through Canvas. Please make sure your Canvas information is up to date and that you check it frequently over the quarter.
 - The main place to look is Course Canvas Page > Files > Sections > Timea – A03 & A04
 - You may also contact me via Canvas message instead of email, although if you are trying to contact multiple people at the same time (other TAs, the professor, etc...) I strongly encourage email to make replying all easier.

❖ **Inclusive Learning Statement**

- Your success in this class is important to me. It is my responsibility to ensure that you have the resources you need to be able to succeed in this course. Some of us may require accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.
- If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. I encourage you to visit the UC Davis Student Disability Center website at sdc.ucdavis.edu for more information regarding the resources available to you and to determine how you could improve your learning as well.
- There are also a range of resources on campus, including the [Writing Center](#) and the [Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers](#), which assist students by helping them improve their study skills, academic writing, and other specific topics.

❖ **Section Writing Assignments**

- There will be 2 one-two page “section memos” throughout the quarter, due in Week 5 (Thursday, May 2nd) and Week 8 (Thursday, May 23rd). These assignments will be specific to each section and TAs will vary in the prompt they assign. These are each worth 10% of your grade.
- We will discuss expectations and how to approach the memos a week prior to their deadline. More details will be given as these assignments approach.

❖ **Debate Preparation**

- Near the end of the quarter, there will be 4 class debates (Week 7-Week 10). Each section has been assigned to debate another section in one of those weeks. A03 is debating A06 in Week 9, on May 28th and A04 is debating A05 in Week 10, on June 4th.
- I will devote our section time the week prior to each debate (Week 8 for A03 and Week 9 for A04) to debate prep, where we will review the debate topic and prompt and prepare arguments.

❖ **Exam and Essay Preparation**

- The section held before the final exam and final paper are due (Week 10) will either be (1) a final review session or (2) an essay workshop. I will take a poll during Week 9 to gauge preferences and will decide based on majority rule.
 - *Final review session:* Unlike a typical section, the final review session would focus more on the material addressed recently in the course and likely to appear on the exam.
 - *Essay workshop:* Unlike a typical section, an essay workshop would allow you to workshop your essay draft and outlines with your classmates and get feedback on your writing from me. I will assist the section in properly delineating expectations, formatting ideas and outlining essay structure.

❖ **Tentative Section Schedule (NOTE: These are all subject to change)**

- Week 1: **No Section - MPSA conference**
- Week 2: Introductions and review section syllabus
- Week 3: How do political scientists measure democracy? (V-Dem, Polity, Freedom House, ...)
- Week 4: Electoral authoritarianism – why is Putin elected?; **Section Memo #1** explained
- Week 5: Comparative Electoral + Party Systems
- Week 6: Democratic Backsliding – why does democracy sometimes fail?
- Week 7:
 - A03: Prep for Week 8, 5/28 debate
 - A04: Topic TBD
 - All: **Section Memo #2** explained
- Week 8: Issue and Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective
- Week 9:
 - A03: Topic TBD
 - A04: Prep for Week 10, 6/4 debate
- Week 10: Essay workshop OR final exam review (TBD)