

# INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

## POLS 3311 - 02: 15756

Fall 2022

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**Instructor:** Tom Hanna  
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**Time:** 2:35 PM - 3:55 PM  
**Place:** PGH 200

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**Office Hours:** 11 AM to 12 PM Monday and Wednesday, 4-4:30 Monday, or by appointment

### Welcome to Introduction to Comparative Politics:

This course is an introduction to the scientific analysis of political systems using the comparative method. This course is primarily designed for advanced undergraduate students with an interest in social sciences generally and political science in particular. The course approaches the study of politics using the scientific method generally, and the comparative approach specifically. Scientific questions are not about what ought to be, but about what is. For example, in examining the differences between democracies and dictatorships, the question is not whether something a dictator does is right - it very likely isn't! The question is, "Why does the behavior happen?" This course will not provide an answer to all these questions. It will provide you a basic but thorough understanding of the comparative toolkit political scientists use for finding those answers.

**Objectives:** These are the major course objectives.

- First, you will become acquainted with, discuss, and learn to comment reasonably on what is hopefully an interesting topic - the way political behavior happens under a variety of political systems, cultural influences, economic circumstances, and geographical regions.
- Second, you will approach the material from a scientific perspective that will enhance your critical thinking and ability to make reasoned arguments in a professional manner.
- This approach will develop your ability to analyze controversial matters based on what actually occurs, which is also a useful tool for shaping those outcomes to closer match what we normatively hope will occur.

These objectives are intended to provide useful skills for other political science, social science, career, and life endeavors. The course format will be less formal lecture and more discussion/seminar style, which I hope will make the course more interesting for you. This does mean that to be successful in this course, you will need to have done any assigned readings or discussion preparation before class. The expectations and grading will be rigorous as appropriate to those with an expressed interest in the field, but with final grades appropriate to undergraduate students.

**Prerequisites:** Freshman level writing course is a bare minimum level of writing competence to succeed in this course. Some common reference points from American government, US and world history, geography, and basic social sciences and familiarity with current world events will be necessary to full participation in discussions.

**Main References: Recommended Textbook:** Though it is not required, the textbook *Foundations of Comparative Politics* by Clark, Golder, and Golder. First Edition (ISBN 9781506360737) is highly recommended and is available through the bookstore, as well as online. The book will play some role in preparation of the course and is a good resource for study beyond the readings and lecture material. **Any required reading will be posted in Teams, Blackboard, or Library Course Reserves on**

**Blackboard.** Most of the reading will be portions of academic articles. Most of the full articles are available through the University Library Search for download as PDFs, if you have an interest. This is a list of various interesting and useful books that will be referenced during the course. Many of these are available online through the library as well.

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, and Alastair Smith. *The Dictator's Handbook*.
- Weeks, Jessica L.P. *Dictators at War and Peace*.
- Svolik, Milan W. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*.

**Email:** I expect emails to be courteous and respectful of my time. Please include the course and section number in the email subject, along with the reason for the email. I am not particular about format, but a well written, brief email is easier to respond to quickly. I will respond to emails within 24 hours barring emergencies during normal work days and sooner if possible. You should bear in mind that a degree of professionalism in your emails is an important career skill you should start learning now and that professionalism is a graded component of this course. Note that I am a Ph.D. candidate, not a Ph.D., so for purposes of this course, please refer to me as Professor not Doctor, if using a title. Again, as long as you are courteous and respectful of my time, I am not concerned about precise format, but here is a great reference you should consider reading before emailing any professor: <https://marktomforde.com/academic/undergraduates/Email-Etiquette.html>

#### Course Policies:

- Respect for other people is non-negotiable. This includes other students, faculty, staff, and guests. This also includes people not present, such as the citizens of the nations we discuss, and even authors whose ideas we may disagree with.
- Academic honesty is non-negotiable. If you are uncertain whether something is not appropriate, ask me.
- **Online collaboration may be done using the class Microsoft Teams group Study Group channel. The GroupMe app is extensively used for academic dishonesty. If you set up a GroupMe or similar chat for this class, the instructor must be notified and, on request, given access.**
- Quizzes will be regular and unannounced with a quiz during most class periods. The time of quizzes may vary from beginning to middle to end of class.
- It is impossible to earn full professionalism credit without being here, being here on time, and remaining for the full class.
- *As I have another course immediately before this one, we will start each day at 2:35 PM and dismiss at 3:55 PM instead of 3:50. If you need to leave at 3:50, this is fine. If you have any obligation that makes regular arrival past 2:35 PM likely, please talk to me.*
- One quiz may be exempted without excuse. If you take all quizzes, your lowest quiz score will be dropped. (If we have at least 16 quizzes for the semester, two quizzes may be dropped or exempted.)
- Up to two absences, late arrivals, and early departures (total) may be exempted from professionalism grade without excuse.
- Generous extra credit will be made available throughout the semester to the entire class. Take advantage of this when it is offered.
- To get an A, regardless of extra credit, you must earn at least an A- on your regular work.

- **Regrading:** If you are not satisfied with any grade, you may request an official regrade after a 24-hour cooling off period and within one week following the grade. Regrade requests must be in writing, by email, and provide a reasoned argument why a better grade is justified. Any regrade will be a full re-examination of all aspects of the work and may result in an increase, decrease, or no change in the grade.

**Grading Policy:** Grades will be computed from the following: Professionalism and participation (10%), Quizzes (20%), Assignments (25%), Midterm (20%), Final (25%).

**Grading Scale:** Earning the following will guarantee the associate grade. Depending on class performance overall, I reserve the right to adjust the scale in the student's favor:

- A: 94.000 and above
- A- : 90.000 to 93.999
- B+ : 87.000 to 89.999
- B: 84.000 to 86.999
- B - : 80.000 to 83.999
- C+: 77.000 to 79.999
- C: 74.000 to 76.999
- C-: 70.000 to 73.999
- D+: 67.000 to 69.999
- D: 64.000 to 66.999
- D-: 60.000 to 63.999
- 59.999 and below: F

**Professionalism and participation:** As a student, you may consider school as merely preparation for a future profession. A better approach, and one which provides better preparation for the professional world, is to think of school as your current profession. You will have the opportunity to practice this, as a portion of your grade will be determined by the degree of professionalism you show in this course. Specific aspects of your approach to the course that may impact this grade include punctuality, courtesy to others, preparation for class, participation in discussions, good written communication including email, and living up to commitments, among others. A major component, will be coming to class on a regular basis, prepared to discuss the material, and participating in those discussions. Things I will specifically be looking for in discussions are:

- **Your questions about the reading.** If there are things you didn't understand from the reading, ask! This demonstrates that you did the reading, gives you the chance to understand the material better, and may help others better understand the material as well.
- **Your reaction to the reading.** Were you surprised by something? Was something interesting?
- **Critical thinking about the reading.** Did the reading raise questions about something related? Great! That is where future research comes from. Do you have a *reasoned* disagreement with something in the reading? Can you relate the reading to something else from another course, current events, etc.?

**Quizzes:** One of the best methods to improve your retention of a subject and improve thinking skills generally is testing, but high stakes tests like finals and midterms bring high stress levels <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/the-best-way-to-learn-faster-improve-your-memory-includes-10-science-backed-cognitive.html>. In studying, testing yourself is an effective, low stress method to improve learning. Quizzes, where each individual quiz is a small portion of the grade, is a middle ground, lower stress than major exams but still challenging you to remember the material. There will be regular quizzes during class. These will largely be short answer, true-false, multiple choice, and fill in the blank style questions and will be similar to questions you may see on the major exams. Each quiz should last less than five minutes. Students should expect at least one quiz per week and sometimes more. Quizzes may come at any time during the class period and it is possible there may be two quizzes in a class period. There will be no makeup quizzes, but one quiz will be automatically exempted or lowest score dropped.

**Midterm and Final:** The midterm and final will be multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer. There will be an opportunity to showcase your understanding with no more than three questions requiring no more than two paragraphs of writing each. There will be a half hour review period the class period before the midterm and a full class review of the semester material during the last class period. A good study strategy would be to review missed quiz questions and the questions you have from assignments, then ask questions during the review period. Following the Cornell Note Taking Method throughout the class will also be valuable: <https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/>  
The final will be comprehensive.

**Assignments:** To make the course more interesting and improve understanding of the material, there will be opportunities to engage with the course material in the form of short reaction papers, discussion posts, and other short projects. One of these opportunities will be a two to three page reaction paper based on a class topic. Late submissions without an extension at least 24 hours in advance of the due date will be penalized 50% plus 10% per day late. If an extension is granted, submissions will not be accepted after the extension date.

*For the reaction papers:* These will be three page papers responding to a particular reading. Each week several potential readings will be provided, appropriate to the week's topic. Students may propose alternative, scholarly, on-topic readings. You will write a two to three page paper critically responding to the reading based on both the overall quality of the research and the specific topic of the week. A rubric will be provided before the second class period. Twelve weeks will be available and you will be assigned one topic. Each week will be limited to no more than 5 students. Signups for topics and accompanying due dates will be done on the basis of random selection and order of preference with **ties decided by the time requests are entered**. This will be part of your Wednesday August 24 assignment, in lieu of a live lecture. More details will be made available during the first class.

## **Tentative Course Outline:**

### **Important Dates:**

- August 24: No in person class.
- September 5: Labor Day Holiday: No class
- September 7: Last day to drop/withdraw without a grade
- November 15: Last day to drop with a grade of W
- November 23: Thanksgiving Holiday starts - no class
- November 30: Last day of class
- Final Exam Period: December 8 to 14

- December 14: Official close of the semester - any late work must be submitted

### **Tentative Outline of Reading and Discussion Topics**

- August 22: Course introduction and policies
- August 24: Reading and assignment (no in person class)
- August 29: What is politics? What is comparative politics?
- August 31: The Scientific Method and its application to politics
- September 7: Collective Action - The Central Subject of Political Science (Ostrom); Collective Action Problems - the Prisoner's Dilemma
- September 12 - 14: Democracy and Dictatorship
- September 19 - 21: Varieties of Democratic Institutions -
- September 26 - 28: Varieties of Democratic Institutions - Electoral and Party Systems
- October 3 - 5: Varieties of Non-democratic Institutions - Autocracy, Oligarchy, Military Rule, One Party Rule
- October 10 - 12: Non-democratic Legislatures and Parties
- October 12 - Midterm
- October 17 - 19: Outcomes of Democratic and Non-Democratic Institutions
- October 24 - 26: Democratization, Modernization, and Economic Development
- October 31 - November 2: National, Regional, and Cultural differences in Political Development
- November 7 - 9: Democratic Backsliding and Autocracy Promotion
- November 14 - 16: Conflict, Trade, and Globalization
- November 21 & 28: Corruption
- November 30 - Semester review/finals questions

**Academic Integrity** Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be penalized. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Houston's policies against cheating and plagiarism. The University's statement on academic honesty is available here: <https://www.uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/honesty/> University view on *Academic Honesty: To cultivate an environment of academic integrity, the University of Houston expects students to abide by the University's Undergraduate Academic Honesty Policy, found in the Undergraduate Catalog.* <http://www.uh.edu/academic-honesty-undergraduate>

You are encouraged to work, study, and discuss information and concepts covered in class and readings with other students. Cooperation between students should never result in one student possessing a copy of work done by someone else, either in electronic form or hard copy. **Cooperation in studying for tests ends when the test begins.** Should copying occur, both the student who copied the work and the student who provided the copied material will automatically receive no points for that test. Repeated and/or egregious violations will be dealt with more severely, and may include failing the course and facing further disciplinary action.

### **Honor Code Statement**

Students may be asked to sign an honor code statement as part of their submission of any graded work including but not limited to projects, quizzes, and exams: “I understand and agree to abide by the provisions in the University of Houston Academic Honesty Policy. I understand that academic honesty is taken very seriously and, in the cases of violations, penalties may include suspension or expulsion from the University of Houston.”

**Title IX/Sexual Misconduct** Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexualmisconduct/resources/>.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

**Students with Disabilities:** The University of Houston values accessibility, diversity, and our students with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal law providing comprehensive protections, including reasonable academic accommodations, for persons with disabilities. The University of Houston is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students who have learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and health impairments. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should inform me personally. Any student with a disability experiencing barriers to learning, assessment, or participating is encouraged to contact the DART Student Accessibility Center to learn more about accommodation options and support. Students seeking accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of needed accommodations. Please reach the center by visiting our website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/>, calling (713)-743-5400 or by email [jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU).

**Statement on Counseling and Psychological Services** Counseling and Psychological Services: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)—[www.uh.edu/caps](http://www.uh.edu/caps)—are available for students having difficulties with a variety of concerns, including, managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for an appointment or if you or somebody you know is in crisis. The “Let’s Talk” program provides a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. <https://uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets-talk/index.php#hours>

### **Recording of Class**

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advance consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES.

If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, with any other person, or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor’s recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor’s recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

### **UH Email**

Email communications related to this course will be sent to your Exchange email account which each University of Houston student receives. The Exchange mail server can be accessed via Outlook, which provides a single location for organizing and managing day-to-day information, from email and calendars to contacts and task lists. Exchange email accounts can be accessed by logging into Office 365 with your CougarNet credentials or through Access UH. They can also be configured on IOS and Android mobile devices. Additional assistance can be found at the Get Help page.



**Webcams**

Access to a webcam may be required for students participating remotely in this course. Webcams must be turned on for office hours.

**Delivery Format and Final Exams**

Lectures being offered in the Face-to-Face format with a safe number of students in a socially distanced classroom. Lectures and participation occur in-person and in real time. Final exams will be conducted in face-to-face format on the day assigned by the University schedule.

**Required Language for Courses with a Face-to Face Component**

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are not clearly related to a pre-existing medical condition, do not come to class. Please see Student Protocols for what to do if you experience symptoms and Potential Exposure to Coronavirus for what to do if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Consult the (select: Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy or Graduate Excused Absence Policy) for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.

**Required Language for All Courses****COVID-19 Information**

Students are encouraged to visit the University's COVID-19 website for important information including diagnosis and symptom protocols, on-campus testing, and vaccine information. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates. Vaccinations

Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent vaccine information and to consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated.

**Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids**

The University of Houston complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center (formerly the Justin Dart, Jr. Center for Students with DisABILITIES).

**Excused Absence Policy**

Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy and Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

**Recording of Class**

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

**Syllabus Changes**

Due to the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through (specify how students will be notified of changes).

**Security Escorts and Cougar Ride** UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. Our Security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs. Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called Cougar Ride that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/afuniversity-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.