

# PS105 Systems of Power: Foundations of Comparative Politics

Instructor: [Dr. Adina Maricut](#)

Course Times: Mon 15:15 - 16:45, Wed 15:15 - 16:45

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Office Hours: Tue 10:30 – 12:00

## Course Description

Political power is one of the most contested concepts in the study of politics. The organization of political power into different political systems raises key questions about the capacity of various institutional arrangements to generate desirable social outcomes such as political stability, accountability, and redistribution. This course provides an introduction to central notions of comparative politics regarding the functioning of political systems in the post-World War II context. The course explores from a comparative perspective different types of states, political regimes, democratic and dictatorial institutions, political culture(s), as well as the role of identity groups in the organization of politics. At the same time, the course addresses current challenges of contemporary political systems, including globalization, civic disengagement, the rise of extremist movements, and new forms of political violence like terrorism. The core of the course consists of analyses of case studies illustrating the different concepts covered in the foundational readings of the field. The case studies are rooted in the diverse experiences of European states and additionally include, depending on the topic, comparisons with the United States, Russia, and China.

## Learning outcomes:

At the end of the course, students should:

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Content literacy              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be familiar with the basic concepts and theories used in the study of comparative politics and apply them to the analysis of political ideas, institutions, and practices;</li><li>• demonstrate knowledge and understanding of national and regional divergences between forms of government and their development over time; and</li><li>• be able to evaluate different interpretations of political issues and events.</li></ul> |
| Intellectual skills           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• gather, organize and deploy evidence, data, and information from a variety of secondary and some primary sources;</li><li>• identify, investigate, and synthesize alternative explanations;</li><li>• construct reasoned arguments and exercise critical judgment.</li></ul>   |
| Personal transferrable skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• communicate effectively and fluently orally and in writing;</li><li>• use communication and information technology for the retrieval and presentation of information;</li><li>• work independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organization and time-management;</li><li>• collaborate with others to achieve common goals.</li></ul>  |

## Requirements

### Attendance

This is a discussion-based course and active participation is essential. Mere attendance is not full participation. Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

Students are advised to consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Assessment

**Class participation—divided as follows:**

- general contribution to class discussions/raising questions about readings;
- 2 newspaper presentations (in teams of maximum 3 students);
- 2 reporting-style presentations (in teams of maximum 3 students).

The requirements and evaluation criteria for each component will be provided separately at the beginning of the semester.

Active participation means engaging in all group-based activities—including various types of presentations. Assignments differ from week to week, so students must carefully keep track of their tasks. All students enrolled in the course will be divided in two equally-sized groups: every week, look in the course schedule for respective assignments for Group #1 and Group #2. The two groups are divided alphabetically and remain stable throughout the semester. Within each group, teams of 2-3 members will be formed—depending on the number of students enrolled; teams can change throughout the semester with the permission of the instructor. Interaction between students is a core component of the course, so even when your Group does not have responsibilities for a session you are still expected to be prepared for the class by doing the reading and thinking about the material so that you can ask and answer questions.

### Writing Assignments and Deadlines

**Mid-term response paper (2,000 words)—20% of the final grade—due Friday, March 17, at midnight.**

- The mid-term response paper is an individual written assignment due in Week 7 of the semester. Each student is expected to choose one out of 4 readings—all discussed during week 6—as the basis for their response paper. In the papers, students should raise points for discussion, and note positive or negative aspects about the authors' arguments, not just summarize the arguments.
- All papers should have three parts:
  - The first part, approximately 70% of the text, should engage with the reading and provide an overview of the key arguments which demonstrates that you understand the material and that you are able to identify the key points.
  - The second part, approximately 25%, should be a focused paragraph at the end which is explicitly your own analysis of something in the readings. This is a place for you to do your own analysis, which may depart from the authors' views.
  - The third part, approximately 5%, consists of two discussion questions at the end.

- The paper should be approximately 2,000 words (and include page numbers and a  $\pm 10\%$ ). Use 12-point font, single-space, and 1-inch margins.
- Some examples of response papers will be provided in Week 5.

**Final argumentative essay (3,000 words)—30% of the final grade—due Friday, May 19, at midnight.**

- The final assignment for this course is an argumentative essay combining opinion with the use of facts (i.e., research) to support a particular argument. The argumentative essay is an individual written assignment and is supposed to be no longer than 3,000 words.
- Students are supposed to choose the topic of their final essays from a list of 10 questions that will be distributed in Week 12. Detailed instructions for the final essays will also be provided at that point.
- In week 13, students are required to send to the instructor a 2-page outline of their essays (10% of the final grade), describing succinctly: 1) their main argument; 2) the structure and overview of content; and 3) the type of evidence they will use. Due by Sunday, May 7, at midnight. Students will receive feedback on their essays during the course of Week 14.
- Essays are evaluated on the basis of the quality of their argument, the clarity and structure of the text, appropriate use of evidence/literature, focus on subject, as well as writing, grammar, style, and presentation.

**Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

*Written assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Each additional day being late brings a new downgrade of one full grade until grade C is reached. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

**Grade Breakdown**

- General contribution to class discussions/raising questions about readings: 20%;
- 2 newspaper presentations (in teams of maximum 3 students): 7.5% each;
- 2 reporting-style presentations (in teams of maximum 3 students): worth 7.5% each.
- Mid-term response paper (2,000 words): 20%
- Final argumentative essay (3,000) words: 30% (10% outline, 20% final version)

**Schedule**

This section details the individual classes, readings, and tasks for each seminar. All readings will be made available through the **Google Classroom** website, which will be shared with the students at the beginning of the semester. It is the responsibility of the students to check **Google Classroom** every week in order to download and read course materials. The instructor reserves the right to change any reading listed below depending on students' feedback on the degree of difficulty of assigned readings, as well as according to students' expressed interests throughout the semester.

Classes start on Monday, January 30 and run until Friday, May 12 with spring break planned for the week of April 10. Completion week is from May 12 to 19. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

There are three textbooks used throughout the course, but selected chapters will be available on Google Classroom. Students are not required to purchase the textbooks but can if they want to.

**Textbooks**

O'Neil, Patrick H. 2015. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. 5th edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (henceforth "Essentials").

O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl J. Fields, and Donald Share. 2015. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. 5th edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (henceforth "Cases").

O'Neil, Patrick H., and Ronald Rogowski, eds. 2013. *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*. 4th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co (henceforth "Readings").

### Week 1 — Introduction: what is comparative politics?

**Monday, January 30**

No readings assigned. Discussion of syllabus and structure of the course.

**Wednesday, February 1**

"Essentials", chapter 1.

Further reading: "Cases", chapter 1.

### Week 2 — The State

**Monday, February 6**

*Essentials*, chapter 2

**Wednesday, February 8**

*Readings*, chapter 2: Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*

*Readings*, chapter 2: Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty*

**Assignment Group #1:** Prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation based on recent newspaper coverage in connection to the concept of 'sovereignty'. Send the selected article to the instructor by Tuesday at 10 am, and the final slides by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 3 — Nations and Nationalism

**Monday, February 13**

*Essentials*, Chapter 3

**Wednesday, February 15**

*Readings*, chapter 3: Eric Hobsbawm, *Nationalism*

*Readings*, chapter 5: Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz, and Yogendra Yadav, *The Rise of "State-Nations"*

Muller, Jerry Z. 2008. "Us and Them." *Foreign Affairs*, March 2. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2008-03-02/us-and-them>.

**Assignment Group #2:** Prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation based on recent newspaper coverage in connection to the 'enduring appeal of nationalism'. Send the selected newspaper article to the instructor by Tuesday at 10 am, and the final slides by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 4 — Political regimes I: democracies

**Monday, February 20**

*Essentials*, chapter 5, part I

**Wednesday, February 22**

*Readings*, chapter 5: Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, *What Democracy Is ... and Is Not*

Cases, chapter 3 'United States'

Cases, chapter 4 'France'

Cases, chapter 5 'Germany'

**Assignment Group #1:** Prepare and deliver a 15-minute reporting-style presentation summarizing the historical development of democracy and the type of regime at play in the United States, France, and Germany (each team takes one case). Use the relevant sections from the *Cases* textbook to write a 2-page handout for your colleagues. Send the handout to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 5 — Political regimes II: non-democratic regimes

**Monday, February 27**

*Essentials*, Chapter 6

**Wednesday, March 1**

*Readings*, Chapter 9: Azar Gat, *The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers*

Cases, Chapter 7 'Russia'

Cases, Chapter 8 'China'

Cases, Chapter 10 'Iran'

**Assignment Group #2:** Prepare and deliver a 15-minute reporting-style presentation summarizing the historical development of democracy and the type of regime at play in the Russia, China, and Iran (each team takes one case). Use the relevant sections from the *Cases* textbook to write a 2-page handout for your colleagues. Send the handout to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 6 — Varieties of democracy and authoritarianism

**Monday, March 6**

Fukuyama, Francis. 2010. "The End of History." In *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, edited by Mark Kesselman, 10–17. Wadsworth Publishing.  
Huntington, Samuel P. 2010. "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century." In *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, edited by Mark Kesselman, 18–28. Wadsworth Publishing.

**Assignment for everyone:** write down 2 questions about the two readings attempting to engage critically with the texts. Share them with the class via *Google docs*.

**Wednesday, March 8**

*Readings*, Chapter 6: Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism*

*Readings*, chapter 6: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Modern Nondemocratic Regimes*, from *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*

**Assignment for everyone:** write down 2 questions about the two readings attempting to engage critically with the texts. Share them with the class via *Google docs*.

### Week 7 — Political regimes III: Regime transitions

**Monday, March 13**

*Readings*, chapter 6: Larry Diamond, *The Rule of Law Versus the Big Man*

*Readings*, chapter 9: Ivan Krastev, *Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism*

**Wednesday, March 15**

Bunce, Valerie. 2010. "Rethinking Democratization: Lessons from the Post-Communist Experience." In *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, edited by Mark Kesselman, 222–31. Wadsworth Publishing.

Carothers, Thomas. 2010. "The End of the Transition Paradigm." In *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, edited by Mark Kesselman, 247–55. Wadsworth Publishing.

Mid-term due by Friday, March 17, at midnight: response papers

Week 8 — Political economy

**Monday, March 20**

*Essentials*, Chapter 4

**Wednesday, March 22**

Scott, A. O. 2010. "Charles Ferguson Dissects the Wall Street Meltdown." *The New York Times*, October 7, sec. Movies. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/08/movies/08inside.html>.

Understanding political economy through the cinema: this session is dedicated to watching and discussing segments of the 2010 documentary "Inside Job" about the recent global economic and financial crisis.

Week 9 — Developing countries

**Monday, March 27**

*Essentials*, chapter 10

**Wednesday, March 29**

*Readings*, chapter 10: William Easterly, *To Help the Poor*, from *The Elusive Quest for Growth*

*Readings*, chapter 10: Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, *Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?*

*Readings*, chapter 10: Paul Krugman, *The Myth of Asia's Miracle*

Assignment Group #1: Prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation based on recent newspaper coverage in connection to the 'success story' of a developing country. Make sure to link your success story to one of the readings assigned for the session. Send the selected article to the instructor by Tuesday at noon, and the final slides by Wednesday at noon.

Week 10 – Political culture and social capital

**Monday, April 3**

Formisano, Ronald P. 2001. "The Concept of Political Culture." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 (3): 393–426.

Pavone, Tommaso. 2014. "Political Culture and Democratic Homeostasis: A Critical Review of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's *The Civic Culture*." [https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/tpavone/files/almond\\_verba\\_the\\_civic\\_culture\\_critical\\_review\\_0.pdf](https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/tpavone/files/almond_verba_the_civic_culture_critical_review_0.pdf).

**Wednesday, April 5**

*Readings*, chapter 5: Robert D. Putnam, *Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America*

Rothstein, Bo, and Dietlind Stolle. 2010. "The State and Social Capital, an Institutional Theory of Generalized Distrust." In *Readings in Comparative Politics: Political Challenges and Changing Agendas*, edited by Mark Kesselman, 403–11. Wadsworth Publishing.

**Assignment Group #2:** Prepare a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation based on recent newspaper coverage in connection to the concept of 'social capital'. Make sure to link your success story to one of the readings assigned for the session. Send the selected article to the instructor by Tuesday at noon, and the final slides by Wednesday at noon.

**Spring Break (April 10 – April 17)**

### Week 11 – Electoral and party systems

**Monday, April 17**

Federal holiday (no classes).

**Wednesday, April 19**

*Essentials*, chapter 5, part II

*Readings*, chapter 8: Maurice Duverger, *The Number of Parties*, from *Political Parties*

*Cases*, chapter 2 'United Kingdom'

*Cases*, chapter 3 'United States'

*Cases*, chapter 5 'Germany'

**Assignment Group #1:** Prepare and deliver a 15-minute reporting-style presentation summarizing the electoral and party systems of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany (each team takes one case). Use the relevant sections from the *Cases* textbook to write a 2-page handout for your colleagues, also including the other two readings for the session. Send the handout to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 12 – Political Violence

**Monday, April 24**

*Essentials*, chapter 7

*Readings*, chapter 7: Jack Goldstone, *Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies*

**Wednesday, April 26**

*Readings*, chapter 7: Max Abrahms, *What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy*

**Assignment Group #2:** Prepare and deliver a 15-minute reporting-style presentation summarizing the profile of two of the following terrorist organizations: socialist-communist (Red Brigades, FARC), nationalist-liberation (ETA, IRA), religious-political (Al Qaeda, Daesh). Use internet sources to collect accurate information about these organizations.

*Students receive a list of 10 essay questions as well as detailed instructions on the final written assignment.*

Week 13 — Writing in comparative politics

Monday, May 1

Federal holiday (no classes)

Wednesday, May 3

*Presentation by instructor on how to write an argumentative essay in comparative politics.*

Preparation for final essays: Submit a 2-page outline of your argumentative essay, describing succinctly: 1) the main argument; 2) the structure and overview of content; and 3) the type of evidence you will use. Due by Sunday, December 4, at midnight. Worth 10% of the final grade.

Week 14 — Globalization and global governance

Monday, May 8

*Essentials*, chapter 11

Wednesday, May 10

*Readings*, chapter 11: Dani Rodrik, *Is Global Governance Feasible? Is It Desirable?*

Weiss, Thomas G. 2000. "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges." *Third World Quarterly* 21 (5): 795–814.

Preparation for final essays: Students receive feedback on their essay outlines. Consultations are to take place over the course of this week.

Completion Week (May 10-19)

Final essay due by Friday, May 19, at midnight.