

PLS 140: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Nazarbayev University

Spring 2022

BASIC INFORMATION

Professor: Karol Czuba

TAs: Slyamzhar Akhmetzharov, Assel Bekenova, Saule Kassymova, and Eva Lennartz

Lectures: available on Moodle and PeerTube no later than 4 pm every Monday and Wednesday

Q&A sessions: January 28, March 9, March 28, and April 22, 4–4.50 pm, on Zoom (meeting ID: 954 5013 0245; passcode: 783244)

Professor's office hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 6–7 pm, on Zoom (meeting ID: 958 8260 9119; passcode: 753457; you can optionally book an appointment with me here: <https://karolczuba.youcanbook.me>)

TAs' office hours: TBA

Contact: Moodle forums and messages

OUTLINE

This course will introduce you to the essential questions of comparative politics, to some prominent scholarly responses to those questions, and to key concepts that help us to make inferences about how political power is organized and used in different parts of the world. We will consider questions such as:

- What are states, how have they formed, and why are they the dominant mode of organization of political power?
- Why are some countries democracies, while others are ruled by authoritarian regimes? Under what conditions does regime change happen?
- What are the effects of different types of constitutional design and electoral systems?
- When does the human capacity for collective action result in conflict and when does it lead to peace and stability?
- Why are collective identities such as ethnicity, gender, and race politically salient in some settings, but not in others?
- Do ideas and ideologies really motivate political action, or do they simply conceal the pursuit of material interests?

We will interrogate these key themes in the course in part by exploring the politics and political systems of Brazil, China, India, Nigeria, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States as well as Kazakhstan. My lectures and the readings and assignments that you complete in the course will not

only familiarize you with the main topics in comparative politics, but also help you to develop the analytical skills necessary for critical engagement with Political Science scholarship.

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course has multiple objectives, which correspond to the knowledge and skills that you should attain during the semester. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain key concepts such as ‘political order,’ ‘state,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘polyarchy,’ ‘authoritarianism,’ ‘hybrid regime,’ ‘ethnicity,’ ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism,’ ‘institution,’ ‘collective action,’ ‘revolution,’ ‘civil war,’ ‘ideology,’ and several more.
2. Understand the most important causes of the formation and evolution of states.
3. Explain key sources of regime change and durability.
4. Evaluate the effects of different types of constitutional design and electoral systems.
5. Assess the role of political parties and interest groups in politics.
6. Understand the reasons for political mobilization of different collective identities.
7. Identify different types of collective action, their effects, and the reasons why people rely on them.
8. Understand the role of ideas and ideologies in politics.
9. Explain the relationships between the phenomena covered in the course.
10. Assess the sources of variation across different regions of the world.
11. Productively contribute to your own and fellow students’ learning through careful and critical engagement with the course material, presentations, and active participation in online discussions.
12. Conduct your own research, develop and substantiate arguments, and communicate your analysis and findings through both speaking and writing.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

This is an introductory course in that I do not assume that you will have any prior knowledge of the subject matter and in that we will only address a small fraction of the many political and socioeconomic phenomena relevant to comparative politics, theories intended to explain those phenomena, and rich empirical evidence that scholars and others have collected in different settings. At the same time, this course will challenge you. We will cover concepts, theories, explanations, and empirical evidence that may be difficult to understand. To make sense of the course content, you will need to think about it carefully, logically, critically, and creatively and to develop new analytical skills. In other words, you will need to think like a social scientist.

This is a difficult set of skills to acquire and I am committed to helping you develop it. I fully expect that some of the material I ask you to absorb and the tasks I want you to complete will be challenging and confusing. Indeed, I will expose you to new content and ways of knowing and thinking precisely so that you come up against and grapple with the limits of your own understanding. All this new-ness can be destabilizing and disorienting. This is good because not having the knowledge and skills needed

to decipher social reality forces us to learn, to discard erroneous preconceptions, to make sense of existing explanations and develop new ones, to collect new empirical evidence that challenges our assumptions, and to communicate what we have learned to others through careful and clear writing and speaking based on evidence, rather than emotional arguments. I welcome your every question about any aspect of the course and this learning process, but you will also need to work hard to benefit from and do well in the course.

SYLLABUS ADJUSTMENTS

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is likely to disrupt my plans for the course. I also welcome your feedback and suggestions for changes to the course that you think would facilitate your learning. For these reasons, the syllabus is subject to change—at any time during the semester and at my discretion. I will endeavor to notify you of any syllabus adjustments as far in advance as possible.

CLASS ORGANIZATION

The exceptional circumstances also require changes to the usual course schedule and organization of classes. To facilitate access to learning for all students enrolled in the course, I have replaced Monday and Wednesday classes with fully asynchronous lectures that I will post on Moodle and PeerTube every week (no later than at 4 pm on Monday and Wednesday); you are welcome to watch or listen to the lectures at your leisure. The number of lectures per week may vary depending on the material we cover. All course readings and other content that you will need in the course are also available online. At the same time, you will have an opportunity to actively engage with the course material through participation in online asynchronous discussions of presentations given by your peers and work on your own individual and group assignments. I recognize that online learning can be isolating; I have designed the presentation and one of the papers that you will write in the course as group exercises in order to help you to develop your ability to productively collaborate with others and build supportive relationships with your peers. You will work on the other paper and other assignments in the course on your own; such individual work should help you to further develop the skills on which you will depend throughout your time at university and beyond.

I will also hold several synchronous Q&A sessions to give you an opportunity to ask me any questions you have about assessment and other aspects of the course. Attendance at the Q&A sessions is optional.

I hope that these general changes to the organization of classes will help those of you whose internet access is limited to engage with course material and meet NU's high academic standards. I am also always available to discuss specific challenges that you may encounter at any point during the semester.

ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

Grading scheme

Reading annotations	10%
Group paper	20%
Individual paper	20%
Group presentation	10%
Presentation discussion participation	10%
Term test	15%
Final exam	15%

Assignment submission deadlines

Reading annotations	February 11, February 18, February 25, March 4, March 18
Group paper	March 30
Individual paper	April 27

Presentation and discussion dates

Presentations:	
United Kingdom	February 11
Brazil and United States	February 25
China and Russia	March 4
India	March 18
Nigeria	April 22
Presentation discussions	Continuous for one week after each presentation

Test and exam dates

Term test	March 11
Final exam	TBA

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Reading annotations

You will use Perusall to annotate a total of five readings in the course. Annotating helps you to understand the content of a text and highlight the most important sections, which you will then be able to easily locate when you revise course material. Try to focus on the facts and ideas that you find the most interesting or challenging. As you annotate, you should underline or highlight important

terms and definitions, try to identify the research questions and the authors' main arguments, write down key words and definitions in the margins, highlight passages that you do not fully understand, ask questions in the margins when something strikes you as curious, add your own thoughts as you read, synthesize arguments, and make connections to other texts that you have read. You can find more information on how Perusall works here:

<https://support.perusall.com/hc/en-us/categories/360002173133-Students>

Papers

The purpose of the two papers is to provide you with an opportunity to practice thinking like a Political Scientist. These exercises will allow you to not only demonstrate your understanding of the course material, but also, and most importantly, help you to think critically about some key aspects of comparative politics, engage with scholarly work, and analyze political phenomena. You will write the first paper with two other students. The second paper will be your own individual work.

Presentations and presentation discussions

Your section's TA will assign you to a group that will be responsible for preparing and recording a video presentation on a country's political system, its evolution, and important recent political developments. The presentation should be 10-15 minutes long. In your section's forum on Moodle, your group will need to share a link to a presentation video uploaded to PeerTube, Youtube, Google Drive, or any other easily accessible platform. The group will also provide five discussion questions for an online asynchronous class discussion that will be moderated by your TA but led by students in the group. You will receive both a group grade and an individual grade for the presentation. The group grade will reflect the overall quality of the finished work. The individual grade will be based on your contributions to the output, which will be determined by your TA based on their assessment of your work, self-reporting, and your groupmates' evaluation of your efforts.

All students will participate in the online discussions, which will take place on Moodle in the course of the week following the submission of each of the seven presentations. Individual sections may, with their TAs' permission, choose to hold the discussions synchronously on Zoom. Your participation grade will reflect the quality of your contributions to the discussions.

Term test and final exam

The term test and final exam will both comprise short-answer questions intended to test your familiarity with material covered in the lectures and readings.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Writing standard

Development of the ability to express your ideas and knowledge in writing is a key component of your university education. Your grade is dependent on you turning in assignments that clearly convey your analysis and findings using standard language, format, citation style, etc. I encourage you to work with

NU's Writing Center to improve your writing. I will use my discretion in requiring students to use the Writing Center if assignments are consistently poorly written.

Research support

University librarians are available to help you locate appropriate scholarly sources, learn to use reference management software, and perform other foundational research tasks. You can schedule an appointment with a librarian here: <https://nu-kz.libcal.com/appointments/>. Alternatively, you can reach out directly to April Manabat, the subject librarian for Political Science; her email address is april.manabat@nu.edu.kz.

Assignment formatting

All assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. All citations should follow the American Political Science Association Style Manual (<https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/>).

Assignment submission

You will submit all assignments on Moodle. Every assignment should be submitted by 11.59 pm on the day that assignment is due.

I strongly advise you to keep rough and draft work *and* final copies of all of your assignments. You should keep all assignments until the marked assignments have been returned to you and the grades have been posted.

Late submission

I will apply a late submission penalty of 1% of the assignment grade per weekday (Monday to Friday) to the components of the research project submitted after the submission deadline.

I will not accept late submission of presentations, the term test, and the final exam.

Assignment return

I will grade and return all assignments submitted on time no later than two weeks after submission.

Grade appeals

If you wish to appeal your grade for any assignment, you should approach me no earlier than 72 hours and no later than two weeks after that assignment was returned to you. To appeal the grade, please submit a 150–200-word written explanation of why you wish to have the grade reviewed to me. I will decide whether or not to review the grade based on the strength of your argument. If I decide to review the grade, I may keep the grade that you originally received, reduce it, or increase it.

Grading scale

A	95-100%
A-	90-94%
B+	85-89%

B	80-84%
B-	75-79%
C+	70-74%
C	65-69%
C-	60-64%
D	55-59%
D-	50-54%
F	0-49 %

POLICIES

Contact

I strongly encourage you to raise questions not answered by the syllabus during Q&A sessions and office hours.

You are very welcome to join my office hours on Zoom anytime you wish to speak with me. These office hours are open to all students. If you prefer to speak with me privately, please make a booking on my youcanbook.me page.

Most of your questions should be, however, directed to the TAs, who will also hold office hours on Zoom and be available to answer short questions via the course and section forums on Moodle or Moodle messages. If your question is of general interest, you should post it in the forum, which I hope will become a useful source of information for students in the course. Questions that require more than one short response should be addressed in office hours. TAs will respond to forum posts and messages within one full working day. They will refer any questions that they cannot answer to me. I have every confidence that you know better than to message your professors and TAs to ask questions answered in the syllabus. To streamline communications in the course, you should only use Moodle or Zoom to contact me and the TAs.

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is defined broadly, to include a wide variety of behaviors that conflict with the values and mission of NU. Students should become familiar with the NU Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (Student Code), which is the official document outlining policies and procedures around academic misconduct at NU. Students are responsible for complying with NU policies, as well as those described in the syllabus for an individual class, whether the student has read them or not.

Information technology access

We will primarily use three information technology platforms—Moodle, Perusall, and Zoom—maintained by the university. The IT helpdesk (helpdesk@nu.edu.kz) can provide you with technical assistance needed to access and use both platforms.

Copyright and data protections

The materials that I create for the course and share with you are my intellectual property and are to be used solely for your learning in the course. The materials may not be reproduced or shared with others outside the course without my written permission.

Online copies of student assignments and other student data will only be stored on university servers or using services (such as Google Drive and Moodle) governed by NU's data protection policies.

Student presentations may not be stored or distributed without authors' express permission.

If some students are unable to participate in the Q&A sessions, I will ask for your permission to record our discussions for those students' benefit. I will only record the Q&A sessions if all students in attendance grant such permission. Because Q&A session recordings unavoidably contain identifying information about students, they may under no circumstances be copied or shared. I will delete all Q&A session recordings following the completion of the course.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The textbook that we will be using in the course is:

Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. 2018. *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. New York: Oxford University Press.

All other readings are available online through Moodle or links in the syllabus. Please pay attention to specified page numbers; in many cases only a section of a particular reading is required.

All readings listed in the syllabus are required.

I am likely to amend the schedule and readings to align them better with the learning needs of students in the course. For this reason, the schedule is tentative and likely to change as we move through the course material this semester.

PART I. COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Week 1: Comparative politics and comparative research

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 1–46.

PART II. THE STATE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Week 2: Political order and the state.

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 47–58.

Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review* 87 (3): 567–76.

Week 3: State-making: the United Kingdom in comparative perspective

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 58–70 and 543v551.

Tilly, Charles. 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” In *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. New York: Cambridge University Press. 169–91.

Week 4: Economic and political development, inequality, and exclusion

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 97–120.

Kohli, Atul. 2004. “Introduction: States and Industrialization in the Global Periphery. In *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1–24. (skim pp. 1–8)

Scheidel, Walter. 2017. “The Only Thing, Historically, That’s Curbed Inequality: Catastrophe.” *The Atlantic*, February 21. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/02/scheidel-great-leveler-inequality-violence/517164/>.

PART III. POLITICAL REGIMES

Week 5: Democracy, democratization, and democratic backsliding: Brazil and the United States in comparative perspective

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 121–146, 400–410, and 558–568.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. “Democracy’s Third Wave.” *Journal of Democracy* 2(2): 12–34. (skim pp. 22–33)

Müller, Jan-Werner. 2017. “Introduction: Is Everyone a Populist?” In *What is Populism?* London: Penguin.

Week 6: Authoritarianism: China, Kazakhstan, and Russia in comparative perspective

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 147–173, 413–425, and 529–539.

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2002. “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51–65. (skim pp. 58–63)

Schatz, Edward & Elena Maltseva. 2012. “Kazakhstan’s Authoritarian ‘Persuasion.’” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28(1): 45–65.

Week 7: Parts I-III review and term test

PART IV: ORGANIZATION OF THE STATE

Week 8: Constitutions and constitutional design: India in comparative perspective

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 174–200 and 457–466.

Hirschl, Ran. 2008. "The Judicialization of Mega-Politics and the Rise of Political Courts." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11(1): 93–113. (skim pp. 98–112)

Week 9: Legislatures and electoral systems

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 201–228, 553–554, and 569–570.

Week 10: Coalitions, coalition-building, and executives

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 229–253, 525, and 571.

PART V: COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Week 11: Political parties, interest groups, and contentious politics

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 254–307, 425–426, 526–527, and 539–541.

Week 12: Identities, ideas, and ideologies: Nigeria in comparative perspective

Dickovick and Eastwood, pp. 308–371, 467–468, 514–527, 541–542, and 554–556.

Week 13: Review