

PLS 140: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2022

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Nazarbayev University

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(TENTATIVE and SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

1 General Information

Class Hours

Official Class Hours for this class is **10:30-11:45 Tuesdays/Thursdays** at **Blue Hall**. (adjustments may be made in the case the class goes online, subject to change as the semester proceeds):

Office Hours

Office hours will be **by appointment**, or you can stop by at my office in **8.507A**, 15 : 00 – 16 : 00 **on Tuesdays/Thursdays** (students with appointments have a priority). Check the availability from the URL below.

<https://calendly.com/gentok/office-hours>

Each meeting slot is for 15 minutes. If you want a longer meeting, reserve two slots separately. Make an appointment at least 4 hours prior to the meeting times. **If the given slots do not work for you, contact me directly with the proposal of your available times.**

Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistant TBA.

2 Prerequisite

This is an introductory course in the field of political science. I don't expect any prior knowledge about subject contents or methodologies. On the other hand, be motivated to ask questions when you have difficulty understanding the contents. Asking questions helps both your fellow students and the instructor (me!) to handle the course materials better.

3 Course Objectives

What is *Comparative Politics* and how do we study it? This class approaches this question by using the scientific approach to studying politics. More specifically, we ask the following set of questions:

- What is Comparative Politics, and how is it different from other sub-fields in political science?
- What is the state, and where did it come from?
- Why are some states democratic and others authoritarian?
- Are some cultures incompatible with democracy?
- Do natural resources and foreign aid help or hinder democracy?
- How can we explain democratic transitions?
- What explains the different types of dictatorships we observe in the world?
- Are people materially better off in democracies or dictatorships?
- Is the decision-making process in democracies normatively superior to that in dictatorships?
- How do institutions influence who gets to rule and with what consequences?
- Why do some countries have many parties whereas others have only a few?
- Are there institutional solutions to ethnic conflict?
- How do political institutions influence the quality of political representation?
- Do parliamentary or presidential democracies last longer and why?

To answer these questions, we need to go beyond the collection of studies on individual countries. If studying only a single country, we cannot assess how different experiences of democracy/dictatorship causes the policy, social, and economic outcomes. This course, therefore, addresses these questions through *cross-national comparisons* of politics and demonstrates how the scientific approach helps us to make valid and reliable assessments.

4 Textbook

The main textbooks for this course is:

- William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2019. *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. International student edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press

Target chapters the textbook will become available through Moodle (several books will be available through shot loans in the library). There will be additional required readings that will be available through Moodle. For those who are interested in a more methodologically rigorous version of the textbook, also check William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2018. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. International student edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

5 Course Requirements

Following are the components of the course requirements. Check [section 6](#) for the detailed grading policy.

1. **Mini Review Quiz (2% * 10 = 20%)**: There will be (almost) weekly mini quizzes at the **start of the class on Tuesdays** to review materials covered in the previous week (the total of 10 quizzes). Quiz responses will be recorded through an online survey tool, but students are expected to answer them in the classroom (the detailed procedure will be explained in the class). Each quiz contains 5 questions and the general grading scale is as follows:
 - ✓+: 4-5 correct answers
 - ✓: 2-3 correct answers
 - ✓-: 0-1 correct answers
 - Fail: No submission
2. **Discussion Questions (3% * 5 = 15%)**: Students are expected to contribute to weekly discussion forums on Moodle. Students are able to **post up to one discussion question per week**, and **can make unlimited replies**. The question must be original and must be based on the reading of the week. Each discussion forum will be **locked after midnight on Mondays following the target week**. Each post will be graded by the following system:
 - Each **discussion question** will be graded on the scale of **1 to 6 points**. The typical score is 4. The scores of 5 and 6 are reserved for exceptionally insightful posts. **Discussion question is graded only when it is posted before 12:00pm (i.e., noon) on Wednesdays. The question posted after this time will get the score of 0.**
 - Each **reply** will be graded on the scale of **1 to 3 points**. The typical score is 2. The score of 3 is reserved for exceptionally insightful post. Only the replies with substantive content will get scores. **Non-substantive replies (e.g., “I agree,” “Interesting!,” etc...) will get a score of 0.**
 - The score of the week will be based on **the sum of points given for discussion question and replies. The maximum possible score is 10.**

At the end of the semester, **five best-scored weeks will be counted toward the final grade**. Using the following formula, **the final grade is on 0 to 100 scale**: *(The best week's score + the 2nd best week's score + ...+ 5th best week's score) × 2.*

3. **Theory Proposal Group Presentation (10%)**: Each student will be assigned to a group of 4-5 to work on a mini project to develop a short theory to explain the cross-national variations in civil conflict, income inequality, or gender equality. The group assignment will be random. Students will be presenting their argument in a **5-10 minutes presentation during the week of 8 through 13**. Additional details about the format will be provided as the date approaches. The grade will be given on the A-F scale.
4. **Theory Proposal Paper (15%)**: On the topic of Theory Proposal Group Presentation, each student is asked to individually work on a short paper (2-3 pages) that summarizes and further develops one's own argument. The paper is due on **the Friday of the week following the presentation**. Additional details about the format will be provided as the date approaches. The grade will be given on the A-F scale.

5. **Midterm Exam (20%)**: There will be a midterm exam that will be conducted **in class on September 29**. The exam is **closed book**. Students are not allowed to look at notes/textbooks during the exam. The question format will be a mix of multiple choice, true/false, and short answers. The questions ask about both the knowledge of contents covered in the lecture and the skill to apply the given knowledge to real-world phenomena/data. Readings are used to aid the understanding of the lecture contents, thus the students don't need to remember the contents of readings that are never covered in the lecture. The grade will be normalized to 0-100 percentage point.
6. **Final Exam (20%)**: There will be a final exam during the final exam period (the date TBA). The exam will be cumulative and the format will be similar to that of the midterm exam. The grade will be normalized to 0-100 percentage point.
7. There will be extra credit opportunities distributed toward the end of the semester.

6 Grading Policy

6.1 Grading Scale of Assignments and Exams

Each assignment will be given a numeric **score** of a **letter grade**, either by A to F or $\checkmark+$ to $\checkmark-$ scale. Each letter grade is translated to a 0-100 scale point by the following tables:

| $\checkmark+$ to $\checkmark-$ Scale | A to F Grade | Point | Explanation |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--|
| $\checkmark+$ | A | 97.5 | Exceeds the highest expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | A- | 92.5 | Satisfies the highest expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | B+ | 87.5 | Satisfies most of the highest expectations. |
| \checkmark | B | 82.5 | Fully satisfies the basic expectations and more. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | B- | 77.5 | Satisfies the basic expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | C+ | 72.5 | Satisfies most of the basic expectations, but not all. |
| $\checkmark-$ | C | 67.5 | Satisfies some of the basic expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | C- | 62.5 | Satisfies the minimal expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | D+ | 57.5 | Satisfies most of the minimal expectations. |
| <i>Not Applicable</i> | D | 52.5 | Satisfies some of the minimal expectations. |
| Fail | F | 0.0 | Does not satisfy the minimal expectations. |

6.2 Grading Scale of the Course

The final letter grade on the A to F scale will be determined by the weighted average of assignment and exam scores to the percentages presented in the Course Requirements section ([section 5](#)), using the following table. Extra credit points will be added after the averaging. Note that the instructor holds discretion over curving up final grades (Grades will never be curved *down*; No grade appeals allowed).

| Letter Grade | Averaged Point + Extra Credit Point |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| A | ≥ 95 |
| A- | $\geq 90, < 95$ |
| B+ | $\geq 85, < 90$ |
| B | $\geq 80, < 85$ |
| B- | $\geq 75, < 80$ |
| C+ | $\geq 70, < 75$ |
| C | $\geq 65, < 70$ |
| C- | $\geq 60, < 65$ |
| D+ | $\geq 55, < 60$ |
| D | $\geq 50, < 55$ |
| F | < 50 |

6.3 Late Submission

For any assignment, the following late submission policies will be applied. The assignment submitted incorrectly will be considered as missing.

- Late submission **within 24 hours of the deadline**: Allowed without penalty. However, **a student needs to notify me through the Google Form (<https://forms.gle/b3p8s5pVotwos3UM6>) before the deadline**. Without notification, the assignment will be treated in the same way as the *late submission within 1 week of the deadline*. E-mail notification is NOT allowed.
- Late submission **within 1 week of the deadline**: Allowed with penalty. **The highest grade a student can get will be B or \checkmark** . No notification is required.
- Late submission **after 1 week of the deadline**: Not allowed at all time.

If you have any special reasons that force you to submit after the deadline, please E-mail me or come talk to me **before the deadline**. If the reason is valid, I may extend the deadline for you. I will **not accept any request after the deadline**.

6.4 Regrading Request

If there is a very clear error in grading your assignment or exam, please let me know as soon as possible. However, if you wish to contest your grade on other grounds, then you must submit a written request to me with following contents:

- Clearly identify the components of the exam or assignment that should be reconsidered.
- For each component, **propose the score** that you think you deserve on that specific component.
- For each component, provide at least a paragraph length explanation for why you think your score should be reconsidered.

I will only have a right to **accept or reject** your proposal. If your proposed score and explanation are compelling, I will change your score on that specific component to the score you proposed. Otherwise, I will reject it and keep the score as it is.

*Under no circumstances will I change any score on any assignment **more than one week** after we have released the grades to the class. If you anticipate that it will take you more than a week to review your graded assignment and draft a response, then you will need to request an extension in advance.*

7 Course Outline

Schedule and contents are subject to change.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS?

Week 1: August 16, 18

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.1
- RECOMMENDED:
 - Gerardo L. Munck. 2007. “The Past and Present of Comparative Politics.” In *Passion, Craft and Method in Comparative Politics*, edited by Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, 32–59. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press

WHAT IS SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO STUDYING POLITICS?

Week 2: August 23, 25

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.2 and 3
 - Arend Lijphart. 1971. “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method.” *The American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682–693
- RECOMMENDED:
 - Robert W. Jackman. 1985. “Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics.” *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (1): 161–182

WHAT IS THE (MODERN) STATE?

Week 3: September 1

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.4

WHY DEMOCRACY (AND NOT DICTATORSHIP)? ECONOMIC EXPLANATION

Week 4: September 6, 8

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.5
 - Freedom House. 2022. *Freedom in the World 2022 Methodology*. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>
 - Monty G. Marshall. 2020. *POLITY5: Dataset Users' Manual*. Center for Systemic Peace. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html> (pp.13-21)
- RECOMMENDED:
 - Ilya Lozovsky. 2016. “Freedom by the Numbers.” *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2016. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/29/freedom-by-the-numbers-freedom-house-in-the-world/>
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (1): Start of the class, September 6.

WHY DEMOCRACY (AND NOT DICTATORSHIP)? CULTURAL EXPLANATION

Week 5: September 13, 15

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.6
 - World Values Survey. n.d. *Findings and Insights*. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (2): Start of the class, September 13.

HOW DO STATES TRANSITION FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY?

Week 6: September 20, 22

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.7
 - Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse. 2022. “The Belarus Crisis: People, Protest, and Political Dispositions.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 38 (1-2): 1–8
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (3): Start of the class, September 20.

MIDTERM REVIEW AND EXAM

Week 7: September 27, 29

- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (4): Start of the class, September 27.
- MIDTERM EXAM: September 29 (In-Class Exam)

Week 8: FALL BREAK

VARIETIES OF DICTATORSHIP

Week 9: October 11, 13

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.8
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: CIVIL CONFLICT (1)

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY: WHAT IS “THE BEST DECISION-MAKING RULE”?

Week 10: October 18, 20

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.9
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (5): Start of the class, October 18.
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: CIVIL CONFLICT (2)

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY: PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER?

Week 11: October 25, 27

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.10
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (6): Start of the class, October 25.
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: INCOME INEQUALITY (1)

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY: HOW ARE VOTES COUNTED?

Week 12: November 1, 3

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.11
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (7): Start of the class, November 1.
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: INCOME INEQUALITY (2)

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY: WHERE ARE PARTIES COME FROM?

Week 13: November 8, 10

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.12
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (8): Start of the class, November 8.
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: GENDER EQUALITY (1)

VARIETIES OF DEMOCRACY: WHO HAS WHAT KIND OF POLITICAL POWER?

Week 14: November 15, 17

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.13
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (9): Start of the class, November 15.
- GROUP PRESENTATIONS: GENDER EQUALITY (2)

DOES DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN MATTER?

Week 15: November 22, 24

- READING:
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder (2019) Ch.14
- MINI REVIEW QUIZ (10): Start of the class, November 22.
- FINAL REVIEW SESSION: November 24.

8 Academic Conduct

I do not expect that any of the students in this course will violate the University's Student Code of Conduct. However, please be aware that **cheating, plagiarism, or other violations of the Code will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Vice Dean and/or the Dean** for appropriate action. In addition, students caught cheating and/or plagiarising will get an automatic zero (i.e., fail) for the relevant exam or assignment. Please check NU Student Code of Conduct for more details (<https://nu.edu.kz/media/upload/NU-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>). Also, NU library provides a helpful guideline regarding academic integrity (https://nu.kz.libguides.com/avoiding_plagiarism/academicintegrity).

9 A Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe and comfortable learning environment for my students and for the university as a whole. If you have any problems or concerns regarding your student life, including, but not limited to relationships, stress, self-esteem, body image, sexuality, anxiety, and/or depression, NU Health and Wellness Center (HWC) provides consultation service for you. Contact nu_counseling@nu.edu.kz or make an appointment with psychologist through NU web portal, under HWC → **Consultation** tab. HWC also has YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZZCN6Kc7UcwWJO4Ai3y0XQ>) with additional resources.

References

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2018. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. International student edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
- . 2019. *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. International student edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.
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- Jackman, Robert W. 1985. “Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics.” *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (1): 161–182.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method.” *The American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682–693.
- Lozovsky, Ilya. 2016. “Freedom by the Numbers.” *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2016. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/29/freedom-by-the-numbers-freedom-house-in-the-world/>.
- Marshall, Monty G. 2020. *POLITY5: Dataset Users’ Manual*. Center for Systemic Peace. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.
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- World Values Survey. n.d. *Findings and Insights*. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>.