

PS 4303 Comparative Politics and Government

Spring 2024

Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

LH 303

Instructor: Dr. Yen-Hsin Chen

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Office hours:

1. Monday & Wednesday 2PM-3PM
2. Wednesday 9:30AM-12:30PM
3. Tuesday & Thursday 1PM-3 PM

Course Description

PS 4303 Comparative Politics and Government is designed as a general overview of the subfields of comparative politics. This course will introduce students to the basic concepts and major theoretical approaches to the study of the field of comparative politics. We focus on how political scientists understand the development of political system around the world, and we will talk about major theoretical approaches to the study of comparative politics.

Course Learning Objectives

Students will be expected to learn about some basic facts about the world, broad schools of thoughts. Achieving this goal will involve an understanding of basic geography and current events, which will be regularly visited in order to apply the concepts and ideas to the current period. At the end of the course, students should be able to analyze international events and drawing on the theoretical explanations provided in the class.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work and oral communication.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication.

Marketable Skills

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- identify and articulate the major concepts and approaches utilized in one of the social or behavioral sciences.
- evaluate and interpret relevant scientific or textual evidence and formulate conclusions based on that evidence.
- identify and articulate the limitations of the approaches (e.g., theories, models, methodologies) within one of the social or behavioral sciences.

Assignments and Grading

Short Essay/Short Paper (20% of your grade, 5% for each):

Students are required to submit 4 short essays over the course of the semester. Short essay has to be related to a political news of a foreign country. The news source can be from a particular media outlet (e.g. CNN or ABC or FOX News) or government-run source (e.g. XinHuaNet of China), but should not be blogs.

In each short essay, students will summarize the news article and show evidence of students' independent thoughts. Further, students could focus on a particular theme and tell me how the event relates to our class discussion.

Each essay is required to be at least 2 but no longer than 3 double-spaced pages in length. Each short essay will be turned in on Blackboard. Thus, please do not email your papers to me or leave them in the department office or my mailbox.

Semester Paper & Presentation (30% of your grade):

One policy proposal will be required for this class and will focus on teaching students how to integrate current events and what we have learned in class. One of the most valuable skills you can learn in university is how to find properly sourced information and integrate it into arguments, and this paper will be the place to demonstrate that.

Students will design a constitutional arrangement for a country that is currently non-democracy or from civil war. In this project, students will be formulating a constitutional design that would be most appropriate for this country. This constitutional design will include the design of executive power, the structure of the legislature, the electoral system, and/or the territorial division of power by using concepts, themes, or theories presented in the course. Please notice that students must establish a clear argument and defend it with references to appropriate readings. Any argument that rests on a point of fact must be backed up by an appropriate citation. This paper is required to be at least 8 double-spaced pages, and no more than 10 pages. Further details will be provided on a separate handout in the future.

Please do not email your paper to me or leave it in the department office or mailbox except for special situations. A student's paper will be judged not on the length but on the quality of its argument. More specifically, students should present a reasoned, analytically sound, and empirical valid argument in their paper. It is due on **April 30th**. Students will lose 10 points for every calendar day your paper is late. Also, students will be presenting their policy proposal in class.

Exams (50% of your grade):

Two closed book exams will be given during this course. Exams will include multiple choice questions as well as short essays on topics covered in the course. The midterm exam (20% of your grade) will be held in class on **February 29th**. The final exam (30% of your grade) will be held during the final exam week.

Quiz (Extra credit):

A number (to be determined by the instructor) of unannounced quizzes will be given occasionally. The score of the quizzes will be added to your grade as extra points.

Grade Scale

Your grade will be determined based on the following grading scale:

Points	Letter Grade
100- 90.0	A
89.9-80.0	B
79.9-70.0	C
69.9-60.0	D
59.9 or less	F

Assigned Reading

The required text for this course is:

Stephen Orvis and Carol Ann Drogus. 2021. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*, 5th Edition. ISBN: 9781544374451

Students are expected to have read the assigned chapters before coming to class. Should class need to be canceled due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, the material scheduled for the missed class will be covered the next time the class meets. All additional readings will be on the Blackboard and through the Library website.

Attendance and Participation

It is students' decision to attend college, and students are responsible for their college education. As this is a college-level course, I do not take attendance. However, if you are not in class consistently, it will affect my evaluation of your performance. Also, since much of the exam material is based on class lecture, it would be your best interest to attend class meetings regularly. I will occasionally give pop quizzes as extra points, so coming to class regularly will improve your chances of being successful in this course.

Classroom Rules

All students must treat the instructor, the other students, and the classroom setting with respect. Please come to class on time, stay for the entire class, turn off cell phones during class, and refrain from potentially disruptive activities such as talking with friends or passing notes. These policies are put in place to facilitate a learning environment in the classroom that allows all students to focus on the lecture and class discussion. It is also important to show respect for alternative opinions and points of view during class discussions. Thus, you should listen when either the instructor or a fellow student is speaking to the class, and refrain from using insulting language and gestures, no matter how vehemently you may disagree with your classmates. Please note that I reserve the right to stop discussion at any time.

Tentative Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. Thus, items on this syllabus are subject to change per the discretion of the instructor. If I deem it necessary to make changes and/or modifications in the schedule, I will make an announcement in class.

Week 1 (1/15): Introduction to the course

- No readings

Week 2 (1/22): What is Comparative Politics

- Chapter 1

Week 3 (1/29): What do we know about modern state

- Chapter 2 and Chapter 3
- **First short essay due on 2/1**

Week 4 (2/5): What do we know about democracy

- Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

Week 5 (2/12): Political participation

- Chapter 6

Week 6 (2/19): Contentious politics

- Chapter 7
- **Second short essay due on 2/22**

Week 7 (2/26): Midterm exam

- **Online midterm exam on 2/29**

Week 8 (3/4): Non-democratic regimes

- Chapter 8

Week 9 (3/11): Spring Break!

- No class meetings

Week 10 (3/18): Changes and Challenges

- **Third short essay due on 3/21**
- Chapter 9

Week 11 (3/25): What do we know about political economy

- Chapter 10

Week 12 (4/1): Political economy and development

- Chapter 10 and Chapter 11
- No Class meeting on 4/3; I will be out for a conference meeting

Week 13 (4/8): Public policies and policy outcomes

- **Fourth short essay due on 4/11**
- Chapter 12

Week 14 (4/15): Students presentation

Week 15 (4/22): Students presentation

- **Policy proposal due on 4/30**
- **Final Exam during the final exam week**

Academic Integrity

Intellectual development requires hard work. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. The policy can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/> In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

Course Blackboard Resources

There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class.

Blackboard Technical Support

SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

SUSR Library Services

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

ADA Statement

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Rebecca Greathouse Wren, LPC-S, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email rebecca.wren@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Classroom Climate of Respect

This class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Commitment to Diversity

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). I also understand that the crisis of COVID, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.