

## **PS 4303 Comparative Politics and Government**

Spring 2026

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

LH 201

Instructor: Dr. Yen-Hsin Chen

Office: LH 308

Phone: 432-837-8342

Email: Yen-Hsin.Chen@sulross.edu (Please give me 24 hours to respond)

Office hours:

- Monday & Wednesday: 9 AM-10 AM and 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
- Tuesday & Thursday: 11 AM- 12:00 PM

### **Course Description**

PS 4303, Comparative Politics and Government, aims to provide a broad overview of the subfields of comparative politics. This course will introduce students to fundamental concepts and key theoretical approaches in the field. We examine how political scientists interpret the development of political systems worldwide and discuss major theoretical frameworks in comparative politics.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

Students will be expected to learn some basic facts about the world and broad schools of thought. Achieving this will require understanding basic geography and current events, which will be regularly revisited to apply concepts and ideas to the present. By the end of the course, students should be able to analyze international events and use the theoretical explanations provided in 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.

## Connecting with Students for Success

This course participates in the Connecting with Students for Success Program. I will do my best to learn your name, provide you with friendly and timely feedback on your assignments, maintain high standards and support you in achieving them, and hold individual meetings with each student.

### Assignments and Grading

#### **Attendance and Participation** (20% of your grade):

You have decided to attend college; therefore, you are responsible for your education. Students are expected to arrive promptly and actively participate in class discussions. If you are inconsistent in your attendance and participation, it will affect my evaluation of your performance. If you are on the Alpine campus, please attend in-person class meetings. If you are on the SRSU International campus, please log in to the virtual meetings on time and turn on your camera. Otherwise, you will be marked as absent. Additionally, I reserve the right to drop students if necessary.

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

One policy proposal is required for this class, focusing on incorporating current events into in-class learning. One of the most valuable skills you can develop in college is how to find properly sourced information and include it in arguments. This paper will serve as a platform to demonstrate that.

Students will design a constitutional arrangement for a country that is currently non-democratic or experiencing trouble. In this project, students will develop a constitutional design best suited to their country. This constitutional design will incorporate the structures of executive power, the legislature, and the electoral system, as well as the territorial division of power, drawing on concepts, themes, or theories presented in the course. Please note that students must establish a clear argument and defend it with references to appropriate readings. An appropriate citation must back up any argument that rests on a point of fact.

This paper requires at least eight double-spaced pages and no more than 10 pages. 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 empirically valid argument in their paper. It is due on **April 12<sup>th</sup>**. Students will lose 10 points for every calendar day when their paper is late. Additionally, students will present their papers in class.

Your paper needs to include the following sections. Students are required to schedule meetings with me to discuss their plans and progress.

1. First meeting: Select a country and identify the issue (by January 29<sup>th</sup>)
2. Second meeting: What caused the issue? (by February 12<sup>th</sup>)
3. Third meeting: New institutional arrangement (by March 19<sup>th</sup>)

Please note that these meetings are mandatory; you must demonstrate progress. If you do not meet this requirement, I will reject your paper, and you will receive a "0" for this assignment. No exceptions. Further details will be provided in a separate handout.

#### **Exams** (50% of your grade):

Two closed-book exams will be given during this course. The midterm exam (20% of your grade) will be held on **February 26<sup>th</sup>**. The final exam (30% of your grade) will be held during the final exam week.

**Quiz (Extra credit):**

Several unannounced quizzes (to be determined by the instructor) will be given occasionally. The quiz scores 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. 2023. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*, 6th Edition. ISBN: 9781071875506

Students should read the assigned chapters before class. If a class is canceled due to illness or other unexpected reasons, the material for that session will be covered at the next meeting. All additional readings will be available on Blackboard and the library website.

**Classroom Rules**

All students must treat the instructor, peers, and the classroom environment with respect. Please arrive on time, stay for the entire class, turn off cell phones and electronic devices during class, and refrain from disruptive activities, such as talking with friends or passing notes. These policies help create a classroom environment that allows all students to focus on the lecture and class discussion. It is also essential to respect alternative opinions and points of view during class discussions. Thus, you should listen when the instructor or a fellow student is speaking to the class and refrain from using insulting language or gestures, no matter how vehemently you disagree with your classmates. Please note that I reserve the right to stop the 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 at the instructor's discretion. If I deem it necessary to make changes to the schedule, I will announce them in class.

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

- No reading

**Week 2** (1/20): What is Comparative Politics

- Chapter 1

**Week 3** (1/27): What do we know about the modern state

- Chapter 2 and Chapter 3

**Week 4** (2/3): What do we know about democracy

- Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

**Week 5** (2/10): Political participation

- Chapter 6

**Week 6** (2/17): Contentious politics

- Chapter 7

**Week 7** (2/24): Midterm exam week

- **Online midterm exam on 2/26 (Thursday)**

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

- Chapter 8

**Week 9** (3/10): Spring Break!

- No class meetings

**Week 10** (3/17): Changes and challenges

- Chapter 9

**Week 11** (3/24): What do we know about political economy

- Chapter 10

**Week 12** (3/31): Political economy and development

- Chapter 10 and Chapter 11

**Week 13** (4/7): Public policies and policy outcomes

- Chapter 12
- **Semester paper due on 4/12(Sunday)**

**Week 14** (4/14): Student presentation

- Students will present their papers in class.

**Week 15** (4/21): Student presentation

- Students will present their papers in class.

**Week 16** (4/28): Final exam week

- **Final Exam during the final exam week**

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### **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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or by 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 the SWTJC website, [library.swtjc.edu](http://library.swtjc.edu). The SWTJC Libraries serve as pickup locations for Interlibrary 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](mailto: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 others' viewpoints. 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 based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of discussing politically sensitive issues fruitfully.

### **Commitment to Diversity**

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may 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 a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel your performance in the class is being affected by experiences outside the class, please don't hesitate to come talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.