

**PS 5301 Seminar in Comparative Government**  
2026 Summer

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)

**Course Objectives**

This course aims to introduce graduate students to the central theoretical approaches and methods in Comparative Politics. It involves comparing all nations or subsets of nations to identify general laws that explain and predict the behavior and performance of individuals, groups, and institutions across various systems. Given the breadth, diversity, and complexity of comparative politics, no single paradigm dominates the field. Therefore, this course will necessarily involve brief introductions to major research traditions in comparative politics.

**Program Learning Outcomes**

<b>Public Administration</b> The graduating student will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration.</li><li>• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes.</li><li>• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.</li></ul>	<b>Political Science</b> The graduating student will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science.</li><li>• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes.</li><li>• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.</li></ul>
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**Marketable Skills**

<b>Public Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students can organize and execute presentations relevant to public administration.</li><li>• Students understand and can execute a program evaluation.</li><li>• Students can conduct statistical analyses that are useful to the work of public administrators.</li><li>• Students can read and interpret an organization budget.</li></ul>	<b>Political Science</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students can organize and execute verbal and written presentations of complex social issues.</li><li>• Students can tackle social and political problems by acquiring relevant data and using insight and technical skills to analyze data and develop logical solutions.</li><li>• Students understand the roles and responsibilities of institutional authority within local, state, national, and international communities.</li><li>• Students understand and can execute a policy analysis.</li></ul>
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## Assigned Readings

The three required textbooks for this course are:

- Huntington, Samuel. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. ISBN: 9780806125169
- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. ISBN: 9780300189124
- Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691037387

In addition, the following three books are suggested:

- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Moore Jr. Barrington. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon.
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. 2005. *The Logic of Political Survival*. The MIT Press.

## Assignments and Grading

### 1. Research proposal (30% of your grade):

Each student is expected to complete a research proposal on some topic in comparative government. Students should approach this assignment as the initial step in a research project that will culminate in a conference paper or peer-reviewed journal article. Accordingly, the end product should include a clearly defined research question, a review of the relevant literature that grounds it, a theoretical argument, and hypotheses derived from a well-articulated theoretical framework grounded in the existing literature on the subject.

This project aims to develop your ability to think and write critically and analytically. This requires developing specific skills and familiarity with the research production process. Accordingly, you must create your research proposal in the following cumulative installments. To track their progress, students need to schedule three meetings with me.

- First meeting: Problem Statement and My Educated Guess by June 7<sup>th</sup>
- Second meeting: Literature Review by June 21<sup>st</sup>
- Third meeting: Theory and Hypothesis by July 12<sup>th</sup>

Please keep in mind that meeting with me is NOT optional. You may NOT pass the course by turning in nothing but a final draft. Failure to complete one of the installments will result in a grade of "0" for that portion of your research project grade.

This research proposal must have at least eight double-spaced pages and no more than 10 double-spaced pages. The final draft is due on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. You will lose 10 points for every calendar day when your paper is late. Further details will be provided in a separate handout.

**2. Oral Presentation (10%)**

Students are required to present their research proposals on Blackboard. I will set up a student presentation session for students to record and post their presentations. Each student has up to 20 minutes to present. Further details will be provided in a separate handout.

**3. Discussion Leader (20%)**

Each student will serve as a discussant responsible for introducing and commenting on the required readings for their week.

You will record and post your discussions on Blackboard by the Sunday of the week preceding your week. For example, if you lead “Week 4 (June 15<sup>th</sup>): Comparative Institutions”, then you need to post your discussion on Blackboard by June 14<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). If you lead “Week 8 (July 13<sup>th</sup>): Political Parties”, then you need to post your discussion by Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>.

**4. Exam (40%)**

There will be ONE take-home final exam consisting of essay questions. You are free to use any books, notes, or journal articles that you have, but you are not to confer with other students on the test questions. The exam will be distributed on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and is due on August 11<sup>th</sup>. Please turn your exam in on time. You will lose 10 points for each calendar day your exam is late.

**Remember**

- The research proposal and oral presentation are NOT optional; you will receive an “F” grade for the course if you do not turn in any of the major paper assignments, regardless of your score on the exam.
- You CAN NOT do a paper on an issue in U.S. domestic policy or U.S. domestic politics. If you do, you will receive a grade of “0” for the paper assignment. If you have the slightest doubt concerning the legitimacy of your paper topic, clear it with me.
- Your paper must demonstrate that you have read multiple scholarly articles from several refereed scholarly journals (not news magazines, government reports, or websites) and use the appropriate citation and bibliographic format.

## Grade Scale

Your course grade will be determined using the following grading scale. Meanwhile, I do not grant “incomplete.”

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

Please note that a grade of “C” is required in graduate school to pass the class. In addition, you must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing. The program faculty evaluates the progress of students in the program at the end of each semester. Maintaining a “B” average in the program is not enough to be deemed eligible to continue or complete the comprehensive exam.

## Tentative Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. The following outline delineates the major themes addressed in the course and the assigned readings for each theme. You are expected to complete the assigned readings every week. This course’s reading load is rather heavy, but you must devote the time needed to master it.

Week 1 (May 27): Overview of the Field

- Dahl, Robert. 1961. “The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest” *American Political Science Review* 55:763-772.
- Almond, Gabriel 1965. “A Developmental Approach to Political Systems” *World Politics*, 17: 183-214.

Week 2 (June 1): Institutionalism – Rational Choice Approaches

- De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. 2005. *The Logic of Political Survival*. MIT Press.
- Tsebelis, George. 1990. *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press). Chapters: 1, 2, and 5.

Week 3 (June 8): Modernization Theory and Its Critics

- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy”, *American Political Science Review*. 53: 69-105.
- Deutsch Karl. 1961. “Social Mobilization and Political Development” *American Political Science Review* 55:493-514.
- Huntington, Samuel.1965. “Political Development and Political Decay,” *World Politics* 17 (3): 386-430.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. “Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation within the Capitalist World Economy”, *African Studies Review* 17 (1): 1-26.

Week 4 (June 15): Comparative Institutions

- Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, Chapters: 1-3, 5-8, 11, 15, and 16.
- Linz, Juan. 1990. "Perils of Presidentialism" *Journal of Democracy* 1:51-69.
- Horowitz, Donald. 1990. "Comparing Democratic Systems" *Journal of Democracy* 1:73-79.

Week 5 (June 22): Political Culture

- Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Boston: Little Brown, Chapters: 1 and 12.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapters: 1-4, 10, and 11.

Week 6 (June 29): Civil Society

- Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapters: 1, 4, 5, and 6.
- Putnam, Robert. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" *Journal of Democracy* 6: 65-78
- Tusalem, Rollin 2007 A Boon or a Bane? The Role of Civil Society in Third- and Fourth-Wave Democracies *International Political Science Review*, 361–386

Week 7 (July 6): Ethnic Politics

- Lijphart, Arend. 1969. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics* 21 (January): 207–25.
- Fearon, James D., And David D. Laitin. 1996. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation," *American Political Science Review*. 90: 715-735.
- Horowitz, Donald 1993. "The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict: Democracies in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 4 (4): 18-38.

Week 8 (July 13): Political Parties

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," *The Journal of Political Economy* 65: 135-150.
- Krouwel, Andre. 2003. "Otto Kirchheimer and the catch-all party" *West European Politics* 26:23-40.
- Gunther, Richard and L. Diamond "Species of Political Parties: A New Typology" *Party Politics*, March 1, 2003; 9(2): 167 – 199.
- Ishiyama, John, and Anna Batta. "Swords into plowshares: The organizational transformation of rebel groups into political parties." *Communist and post-communist studies* 44, no. 4 (2011): 369-379.

Week 9 (July 20): Contentious Politics

- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2009. "Comparative perspectives on contentious politics." *Comparative politics: Rationality, culture, and structure*: 260-90.
- Lichbach, Mark I. 1994. "Rethinking Rationality and Rebellion: Theories of Collective Action and Problems of Collective Dissent," *Rationality and Society* 6: 8-32.
- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and grievance in civil war" *Oxford Economic Papers* 56: 563 – 595

- Mason, T. David, Mehmet Gurses, Patrick Brandt, and Jason Quinn. 2011. “When Civil Wars Recur: Conditions for Durable Peace after Civil Wars” *International Studies Perspectives* 12(2): 171-189

Week 10 (July 27): Democratic Transitions and Consolidation

- Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2001. “A Theory of Political Transitions.” *American Economic Review* 91:938–63.
- Ross, L. Michael. 2001. “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics*. 53 (April), 325-61.
- Carothers, Thomas. 2002. “The End of the Transition Paradigm” *Journal of Democracy* 13:5-21

Week 11 (August 3): Students' Presentation

- Students will record and post their oral presentations on Blackboard.

Week 12 (August 10): Final Exam Week

- The final exam is due on August 11.

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## **Other Course Policies & Resources**

### **Academic Integrity**

Intellectual development requires hard work. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in using 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/>. Please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

### **Course Blackboard Resources**

Several resources are on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard during 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 LoboID 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 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](http://library.swtjc.edu). The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

## **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. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartze Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email [mschwartze@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartze@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

## **Supportive Statement**

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 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.

## **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.