

POLS 225: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL 2020, 3 CREDITS

Basic Information

Professor: Dan Pemstein
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Class Location: Family Life 122¹
Class Time: 2-3:15 PM
Office Location: Putnam 12
Office Hours: Fridays 10-12:00

Course Description

Summary

Comparative analysis of contemporary political systems, practices, institutions, and actors.

Overview

POLS 225 is an introduction to the field of comparative politics that is grounded in how political scientists organize theory and data to inform and persuade other scholars and policymakers. While this course will acquaint students with the politics of countries around the globe, the purpose of this class is not to provide a tour of the political world, but rather to introduce students to core concepts and methods that underpin the study of political behavior and institutions within states. That is, we will focus on general patterns across countries, rather than particular nations' peculiarities. Therefore, this course is organized around a small number of 'big' questions in comparative politics, such as why some countries have democratized while others have not, what determines the size and structure of political party systems, and how political institutions affect economic outcomes.

Objectives

After completing POLS 225, students should be able to understand, criticize, and produce both abstract and empirically based arguments about how politics works within states. They should also have a basic grounding in the structure of the modern state, various forms of democratic and authoritarian government, electoral and party systems, and the relationships between national politics and economic outcomes.

Texts

The following required textbooks are available for purchase at the University bookstore:

¹You need not attend in person. Students who wish to attend from the classroom will need to bring a personal wifi-enabled videoconferencing-capable device and headphones. Please get in touch if you anticipate connectivity issues.

- William Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Ed.* Washington, DC: CQ Press. (2nd Ed. is fine)
- Bates, Robert. 2001. *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development.* New York: W.W. Norton.

These books are on reserve in the main library. You are expected to read all of the assigned material before the class meeting for which it is assigned!

Evaluation

Summary

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Study Guides	20%
Participation	20%

Exams

The midterm and final exams will each count for 30% of your total grade. Each exam will contain a mixture of multiple choice and short answer/essay questions. The final exam is non-cumulative and each exam covers about half of the course material.

Study Guides

Students will use the exam review questions (available on Blackboard) to develop written study guides, on an ongoing basis, throughout the semester. Students have substantial leeway to develop guides that work for them, but they should address every question in the exam review documents. These guides will help students to distill key materials from readings and lectures and should help to reduce the temptation to cram for exams. Students will also be able to consult their guides during exams. While students can work together to develop guides, they should each produce a guide of their own. **Guide sections will be due every Sunday night—excluding exam and holiday weeks—at 11:59PM, starting 8/30.** I will grade guide sections on a pass-fail basis. Students may drop 3 guide sections without penalty. There will be 13 guide sections, so each of the 10 required guide sections will be worth 2% of students' overall grades.

We will use a portion of many class periods to work on developing study guides. To maintain distancing and provide access to remote learners, I will set up a <https://gather.town/> virtual workspace where students can interact with one another and the instructor while working on their guides.

Participation

Generally (but this semester I will be very flexible about exceptions, see below) I expect you to attend every class and to participate in class activities and discussions. Participation is

worth 20 percent of your final grade and will reflect your engagement in and contribution to class. Participation can take many forms, including—but not limited to—asking questions, answering my queries, engaging in class debate, organizing or participating in study groups, and taking an active role in group activities. Towards the end of the semester, each student will write a short (1-2 page) paper making an evidence-based case for the participation grade that she feels she deserves. These papers, and the persuasiveness of their arguments, will form the basis for students' participation grades. Although you have substantial leeway in how you make your case for your participation grade, your self-evaluation should follow this rough rubric:

- A Strong attendance, frequent and thoughtful verbal participation, active participation in group work
- B Strong attendance, regular and thoughtful verbal participation, active participation in group work
- C Strong attendance, some verbal participation, satisfactory participation in group work
- D Missed more than 3-4 classes, little to no verbal participation in class lack of engagement in group work
- F Frequently miss class, no verbal participation, leave your group members hanging

This semester is unusual and I understand that students may need to miss class for illness, family emergency, child or elder care, or a host of other issues. The rubric above is for a normal semester. You may adjust this rubric—particularly the attendance expectations—if you face challenges that affect your ability to attend class. You need not provide specifics, simply note that circumstances forced you to reduce your attendance by a certain amount and go from there. Please get in touch if you have questions. While I want to be as flexible as possible this semester, please note that regular attendance and participation makes the course better for everyone. Please do not abuse this policy.

Class Policies

Format

Like most NDSU courses this semester, this course takes a synchronous HyFlex format, which means that both students and faculty may attend either in person, or remotely. To allow for distancing during group activities and to ensure equity for students who do not feel comfortable meeting in person, all students must use a personal computing device to connect to class through zoom, even when they are present in the classroom. This device must have a working microphone and audio output. When possible, please use your camera, and feel free to use one of NDSU's virtual backgrounds to help protect your privacy. I understand that there may be times when you are not in position to use a camera, but in general I ask that you follow these guidelines for professional teleconferencing: <https://bit.ly/3aIn116>. Please use headphones to reduce cross-talk and feedback. **Note that the lecture/discussion portion of each class will be recorded.**

COVID 19 Disclaimer

The policies that I list below are largely my standard non-crisis policies. To the extent possible, I would prefer to conduct this course as if it were a normal course but I also realize that students may need to miss class or miss exams—for reasons—illness, but also a variety of stresses and emergencies stemming from the pandemic—that would not normally be a concern. **I will be very understanding about such needs.** Please contact me as early as possible with any issues that may arise.

Grades

I use a flat grade scale: A=90–100, B=80–89, C=70–79, D=60–69, F=59 or lower. If you have a complaint about an exam or quiz grade you must type a formal appeal describing the problem. Your appeal should clearly explain why you believe that your original work correctly answered the exam/quiz question and make a cogent argument for improving your grade. Attach a copy of the original exam or quiz to your appeal.

Make-Up Exams and Assignments

You may drop four study guides, so make-up assignments should only be an issue in exceptional circumstances. Please get in touch with the instructor if you find yourself in this situation.

Students who miss an exam can take a thirty-minute spoken examination to replace the missed exam. If necessary, please contact the instructor to arrange a time. Please do not take this option unless you have a good reason to miss the written exam (although, this semester, I will not ask for a reason) and notify the instructor in advance, if possible.

Office Hours

Office hours are a time for students to discuss any aspect of the course with the professor. I will hold “drop-in” office hours at the scheduled times, but you may also arrange to meet at another time if those times do not work for you. I will conduct office hours virtually using my personal Zoom meeting room. For more about office hours, in general, see <https://vimeo.com/270014784>.

Academic Honesty

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at <http://www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty>.

Please make sure that you understand common standards of academic integrity and plagiarism and consult the instructor if you are ever in doubt. I have a no tolerance policy for academic misconduct and students who commit such misconduct should expect, at minimum, to receive a failing grade for this class.

Discrimination and Harassment

NDSU is committed to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of its university community. NDSU's policy on discrimination and harassment is available at <http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/156.pdf> and the equity office provides information about filing complaints here: http://www.ndsu.edu/equity/filing_a_complaint_at_ndsu/. Any form of violence or harassment, including sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking is unwelcome at the University. NDSU provides a Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Sexual Assault Resource Guide at http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/equity/Resources/Sexual_Harassment_Guide_PROV_1437.pdf.

Low-grade discrimination and harassment can be especially pernicious in a classroom setting. Please read the following blog post and work to avoid the behaviors that the post describes: <http://bit.ly/36vwaus>.

Please note that the instructor has a mandatory responsibility to report instances of discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and retaliation, as described here: http://www.ndsu.edu/equity/reporting_responsibilities/. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of such misconduct that I observe, or that students or others report to me.

Students with Special Needs

Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services Office (<http://www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices>) as soon as possible.

Attendance

According to NDSU Policy 333 (<http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf>), attendance in classes is expected. In this course, (remote) attendance is mandatory unless you have a valid reason to miss a session (again, this semester, I will be very understanding of students' needs on this front).

Veterans and student service members with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible and are encouraged to provide Activation Orders.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
8/25	Setup	
8/27	What is Comparative Politics?	CGG Ch. 1
9/1, 3	Studying Comparative Politics	CGG Ch. 2
9/8, 10	Politics & Games	CGG Ch. 3
9/15, 17	The State	CGG Ch. 4
9/22	Democracy & Dictatorship	CGG Ch. 5
9/24	Forms of Authoritarianism	CGG Ch. 10
9/29, 10/1	Democracy & Development	CGG Ch. 6
10/6, 8	Democracy & Culture	CGG Ch. 7
10/13, 15	Democratic Transitions	CGG Ch. 8
10/20	Review & Catch-Up	
10/22	Midterm Exam	
10/27, 29	Prosperity and Violence	Bates (2001)
11/3, 5	Democratic Government	CGG Ch. 12
11/10, 12	Electoral Systems	CGG Ch. 13
11/17, 19	Party Systems	CGG Ch. 14
11/24, 26	Thanksgiving	
12/1	Institutions and Social Choice	CGG Ch. 11
12/3	Veto Players & Constitutions	CGG Ch. 15
12/8	Review & Catch-Up	
12/10	Final Exam	
12/15	Participation Papers Due	