

PSC 203: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2025
MWF 12:00-12:50
ten Hoor Hall Rm. 113

Instructor: Corinne Lyons (she/her)

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Office Hours: MW 12:50-2:00 ten Hoor Rm. 351, or by appointment via Zoom.

Course Description

Theoretical approaches to the comparative study of national political systems.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the different characteristics of regime types and their effects on politics.
2. Identify the characteristics of political institutions across systems.
3. Analyze the role of different actors in the political process and the forms of political behavior.

Required Text

O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2023. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics: An Integrated Approach*. 3rd Edition. New York: W. W. Norton.

Other assigned readings will be based on current events throughout the semester and will be made available via Blackboard.

Course Requirements

Blackboard

Announcements regarding the course will be posted in Blackboard and sent to your Crimson email address. It is your responsibility to either regularly check your Crimson email for communication from me about the course, or regularly check BB Announcements.

Attendance & Participation

Attending class is expected. Please communicate attendance issues to me in advance. If you will miss class for an extended period of time, please notify me so that we can consider appropriate solutions. ***Note that attendance does not equal participation.*** Note that if you are absent on the date an assignment is due, you are still responsible for submitting the assignment on time unless prior arrangements have been made.

Reading

You should plan to devote a significant amount of time to carefully reading the chapters. You are encouraged to take notes on the reading in whatever format you think will be most helpful to you (chapter outlines, notes on important terms or concepts, etc.). I do **not** cover everything from the reading material in the lecture.

You should also read the news from a variety of news sources.

Graded Assignments

- There will be **three exams worth 25% of your total grade**. The exams will be administered in person and the format will be essay and multiple choice.
- There will be **ten quizzes on Blackboard worth 10% of your total grade** based on total points (not weighted by chapter). Quizzes will be given via Inquizitive.
- **Participation** is worth **15% of your total grade**. Active participation is expected in all lectures, discussions, and in-class activities.

Students are expected to submit original work for these assignments. Submitted responses with traces of plagiarism will result in a referral to the Dean's office.

Policy Regarding Make-Ups and Late Work

- Exams – If you have to miss any exam due to university-sponsored events, illness, or a traumatic event, you should contact me within 48 hours of the event and provide documentation for a make-up exam to be scheduled.

- Chapter Quizzes – **Quizzes are due by 11:59pm on Fridays** and will be accepted late in extenuating circumstances, for which appropriate documentation is required.

Extra Credit

I reserve the right to assign extra credit assignments and opportunities.

Grading Summary

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	25%
Chapter Quizzes	10%
Participation	15%
Total	100%

Final Grade Calculation

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F <60
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Course Schedule

The course schedule and syllabus may be modified during the course of the semester. In the event of such modifications, an updated syllabus will be posted on Blackboard Learn and students will be notified via Crimson email. All times listed are in Central Time.

	Dates	Topic	Exams & Assignments
Week 1	August 20	Syllabus Review	
	August 22	Introduction to Comparative Politics	Read OFS Ch. 1
Week 2	August 25	Introduction to Comparative Politics	
	August 27	States	Read OFS Ch. 2
	August 29	States	Ch. 1 Quiz Ch. 2 Quiz
Week 3	September 1	No Class 9/1: Labor Day	
	September 3	Nations and Society	Read OFS Ch. 3
	September 5	Nations and Society	Ch. 3 Quiz
Week 4	September 8	Political Economy	Read OFS Ch. 4
	September 10	No class: Instructor at conference	
	September 12	No class: Instructor at conference	
Week 5	September 15	No class: Instructor at conference	
	September 17	Political Economy	
	September 19	Political Economy	Ch. 4 Quiz
Week 6	September 22	Political Violence	Read OFS Ch. 5
	September 24	Political Violence	
	September 26	No Class 9/26: Instructor out of town	Ch. 5 Quiz
Week 7	September 29	Unit Overview: Basic Concepts in Comparative Politics	
	October 1	Exam 1: Multiple-choice	
	October 3	Exam 1: Essay	
Week 8	October 6	Democratic Regimes	Read OFS Ch. 6
	October 8	Democratic Regimes	
	October 10	Democratic Regimes	Ch. 6 Quiz

Week 9	October 13	Developed Democracies	Read OFS Ch. 7
	October 15	Developed Democracies	
	October 17	Developed Democracies	Ch. 7 Quiz
Week 10	October 20	Case Study: The United Kingdom	Read OFS UK
	October 22	Case Study: The United Kingdom	
	October 24	Unit Overview: Democratic Governance	
Week 11	October 27	Exam 2: Multiple-choice	
	October 29	Exam 2: Essay	
	October 31	No class: Fall break	
Week 12	November 3	Nondemocratic Regimes	Read OFS Ch. 8
	November 5	Nondemocratic Regimes	
	November 7	Nondemocratic Regimes	Ch. 8 Quiz
Week 13	November 10	Communism and Post-communism	Read OFS Ch. 9
	November 12	Communism and Post-communism	
	November 14	Case Study: China	Ch. 9 Quiz
Week 14	November 17	Case Study: China	
	November 19	Developing Countries	Read OFS Ch. 10
	November 21	Developing Countries	Ch. 10 Quiz
Week 15	Thanksgiving week	No class 11/24-11/28: Thanksgiving	
Week 16	December 1	Case Study: Mexico	Read OFS Mexico
	December 3	Case Study: Mexico	
	December 5	Unit Overview: Nondemocratic Governance	
Week 17	December 11	Exam 3	Exam 3 is on December 11 at 10:30 AM.

University of Alabama Policies & Statements

COVID-19 Policy Statement

All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at studentaccounts.ua.edu and financialaid.ua.edu. UA students, faculty and staff are required to comply with University Spring 2022 Operations (<https://healthinfo.ua.edu/news/university-spring-2022-operations/>) guidance regarding face coverings and other measures.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to [Protect Our Herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [University Medical Center](#), the [Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers.

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students in class and/or via email and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

AI Use Statement

Students are welcome to explore generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, to seek support for their assignments or other activities. However, students should follow the "verify everything" approach to the content generated by these AI tools. These tools learned the models from the public internet, which means they may reproduce substantial text from other sources. It is the student's responsibility to check the original sources to be sure they are not plagiarizing someone else's work. Students should also cross-check the content and citations generated by these tools to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.

Students should incorporate the subsequent statement in their assignments when using a Generative AI Tool: "For this assignment's preparation, the author(s) have utilized [Generative AI Tool Name], a language model created by [Generative AI Tool Provider]. Within this assignment, the [Generative AI Tool Name] was used for purposes such as [e.g., brainstorming, grammatical correction, writing paraphrasing, citation, specific sections of the assignment]."

Controversial Topics

Some of the topics in this course may be considered controversial. One of the core purposes of a university is to discuss important topics through a scholarly lens. When members of a class find themselves feeling strongly about a topic, that is a signal that the topic is important enough to be discussed rather than avoided. Differences of opinion are expected and will result in rich discussions. In these discussions students will be expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of concepts presented in the course materials and to ground their positions in concepts and evidence relevant to the course. This in turn will entail coming to class prepared, asking relevant questions, sharing perspectives, having a willingness to listen, and practicing open-mindedness when encountering the perspectives of others. In this course we will assume the positive intentions of all class members when discussing important topics, and we will give them the benefit of the doubt when considering their perspectives and sharing our own.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. The [Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy](#) will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

Statement on Disability Accommodations

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call **348-4285** or visit **133-B Martha Parham Hall East** to register for services. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

Severe Weather Protocol

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general

classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life-saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](#) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take. The Office of Public Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through Connect-ED--faculty, staff and students ([sign up at myBama](#))
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA 7. WVUA 7 Storm Watch provides a free service you can subscribe to that allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail, pager or cell phone. Check <http://www.wvua7.com/stormwatch.html> for details.

Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know is facing a challenging time or dealing with academic or personal stress, anxiety, depression, or other concerns, we strongly encourage and support you to seek assistance or to help friends find the care that they may [need](#). Also, if you are experiencing a personal crisis and need urgent assistance, you can also contact the following resources:

Counseling Center

- Monday-Friday during routine Center hours (205-348-3863).
- Weekends, holidays, after-hours (contact UAPD at 205-348-5454 and ask to speak with the on-call counselor).
- You may also text BAMA to 741-741 to text with a trained volunteer.

Women and Gender Resource Center

- Monday-Friday during routine Center hours (205-348-5040).
- Weekends, holidays, after-hours (contact UAPD at 205-348-5454 and ask to speak to the on-call advocate for the WGRC).

UAct Statement

The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides extensive information on how to

report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, hate or bias incidents, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the UAct website.

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines.