

# **POLI 350 - Research Proj: Comp Politics**

**Fall 2025**

Section 001: 793 KMBL on MW from 12:30pm - 1:45pm

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## **Course Information**

### **Description**

#### **Purpose and Scope of the Course**

Poli 350 is a dedicated course to help students develop a full research paper. In this course we will build on the skills and knowledge you have developed in your previous coursework. The goal of this course is not just simply to help you *write* a paper, but work through the entire process of developing a research idea, implementing and practicing research, with the culmination of the process producing a high-quality research paper.

This course is explicitly structured to develop yours skills in a comparative framework. Through this course you should attain the capacity to think critically as you develop theoretical frameworks and empirical strategies to explain our political world.

In your typical comparative course, you will analyze a region of the world or specific research theme (democracy, political economy, war, etc). However, in this course we will use works of fiction to build our ability to think through the assumptions we make about the political world. We refer to this as ontology. Ontology is the foundation of all scientific inquiry, and by developing your skills with regards to ontology, you will be better able to critically evaluate the claims of politics, whether scientific or not, others make.

Because the goal of this class is to help you gain a deeper understanding of ontology, almost everything is on the table. You will choose your own preferred work of fiction so long as the outcome of the work is contingent on politics. We will then work to take the theory presented in the work of fiction, and develop an appropriate theory and empirical evaluation of the theory in the real world. This means you will need to think critically about the assumptions the authors are making, what elements of their world are not transferrable, what the world would look like if we altered those assumptions, and where these claims may actually hold in our world.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisites for this course are Poli 200. It is unlikely that you will be able to succeed without the basic research skills that are taught in that course. Poli 300 is not required *prior* to taking this course, but if you have not already taken Poli 300, you should take it concurrent with this course.

### **Learning Outcomes**

#### **Effective and Professional Writing**

In this course, you will learn how to complete an article-length research project using appropriate methods of analysis and a professional standard of writing. In doing so, you will draw heavily from your learning in previous courses.

### **Political Process, Theory, and Thought**

Possess a factual and theoretical knowledge of politics in other countries, in at least one specialized area.

### **Effective Research and Analysis**

Use appropriate methods of analysis and research, including qualitative and quantitative methods, historical comparison, and textual interpretation to answer political questions.

### **Effective Oral Communication**

Communicate effectively by presenting ideas in a high quality oral presentation.

### **Effective and Professional Writing**

Write professional grade research papers on political science questions.

### **Faith and Political Analysis**

Apply comparative frameworks to religious history.

### **Grading Scale**

Grade	Percent
A	93%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	83%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	73%
C-	70%

Grade	Percent
D+	67%
D	63%
D-	60%
E	0%

### Grading Policy

The emphasis for grading is on effective writing. Because you will be engaged in research which I cannot directly observe, I will assess your research skills through your writing and a presentation at the end of the semester. Take your writing seriously -- it is how you will present what you have learned to me. If you cut corners, wait too long, or give half-hearted effort on your writing, it will ultimately present poor quality research.

In the process of developing your final research project, you will provide several drafts of your work. I will provide feedback on every draft you submit. The comments I provide are intended to improve your work. I will be more lenient on your drafts, but if you do not incorporate the feedback you receive on the drafts, you demonstrate that you did not seek to improve your own work, and the grade you receive will reflect that lack of growth.

### Participation Policy

I operate my senior seminars around collaboration. I will rarely lecture in this course, but instead use interactive teaching methods to help you learn. Thus, you are expected to engage while we are in class. I will keep mental note throughout the semester of students that actively engage versus those that "free ride" on their classmates participation. Those who consistently and meaningfully engage during the course will receive full points for participation.

### Attendance Policy

I do not take attendance, but you will not be able to garner full points in the course if you skip class. Both participation and your reading assignments require you to be in class in order to receive points. If you need to miss a class due to illness or other obligations related to the university, please email me *prior* to class to let me know.

### Classroom Procedures

As you will notice, the structure in the course largely follows a pattern of introduction to an ontology on a Monday, followed by an evaluation of a work of fiction under that ontological framework on Wednesday.

#### Monday:

Come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for class, including a work in political science you have read that uses that ontological framework. You will turn in a (max) one page explanation of how that work uses the ontology assigned for the week. After a discussion of what that ontology is, how it differs from others, and how we use it in political science, we will work as a class through the examples of research performed by other political scientists you have brought to class. Thus, if you do not come prepared, we will not be able to fulfill the objectives of the class.

**Wednesday:**

Following a discussion on Monday which should help you understand what the assigned category of ontology is and how we use it, you should be ready to assess your own work of fiction under this ontological framework. We will use Wednesday classes to do just that. Almost the entire session will be active learning, with some pauses to come together as a class to assess our understanding of the assigned ontology.

## Assignments

Title	Due
Reading Assignment 1	Mon, September 8 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on a structure ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p> <p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on structure to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Participation	Wed, December 10 23:59 pm MST
<p>An overall assessment of your attendance and participation in class.</p>	
Research Proposal	Wed, September 10 23:59 pm MST
<p>Provide basic research proposal. The document should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work of fiction</li> <li>Research question</li> <li>Dependent variable</li> <li>Independent variable</li> <li>Basic theory -- a paragraph about how something from the work of fiction would work in the real world</li> </ul>	
Reading Assignment 1.5	Wed, September 10 23:59 pm MST
<p>Write one page on how structure is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this week.</p>	

Title	Due
Annotated Bibliography	Mon, September 22 23:59 pm MST
<p>You are to provide an annotated bibliography with 10 citations relevant to your project.</p> <p>In an annotated bibliography, you provide the citation (in whatever format you choose, just use an academic style consistently) and then a brief paragraph which explains why that citation will be useful for your project.</p>	
Final Presentation	Wed, December 10 23:59 pm MST
<p>Present your research findings in a 15 minute presentation.</p> <p>Turn your powerpoint into Learning Suite</p>	
Reading Assignment 2	Mon, September 15 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on a coalitions ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p> <p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on coalitions to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Rough Draft: Literature Review and Theory Section	Wed, October 15 23:59 pm MST
<p>Provide a rough draft of the framework for your paper. This includes an introduction, literature review, and theory section.</p> <p>Writing should reflect the discussion from the earlier class with readings and discussion on writing this section of a paper.</p>	
Peer Review of Literature Review and Theory	Mon, October 27 23:59 pm MST
<p>For this assignment you will provide a peer review for two members of class.</p>	

Title	Due
<p>Peer reviews should re-state the key points of the paper back to the writer to help determine if they have effectively conveyed critical information. The reviewer should then provide useful feedback (what to clarify, what they didn't understand, how to think about a problem, etc).</p>	
<p>We will use Box to distribute and return the drafts and peer reviews.</p>	
Reading Assignment 2.5	Wed, September 17 23:59 pm MST
<p>Write one page on how coalitions used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this class.</p>	
Rough Draft: Empirical Strategy	Wed, November 12 23:59 pm MST
<p>In this draft you will provide the empirical strategy you will use to test the ontological framework you've developed. You must outline your epistemological approach which will include whether you are using quantitative/or qualitative methods, your case selection, and the specific methods you will use. The goal of this section is to show me, the reader, how you're testing your theory.</p>	
Reading Assignment 3	Mon, September 22 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on an agency ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p>	
<p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on agency to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Peer Review of Empirical Strategy	Wed, November 19 23:59 pm MST
<p>For this assignment you will provide a peer review for two members of class.</p>	

Title	Due
<p>Peer reviews should re-state the key points of the paper back to the writer to help determine if they have effectively conveyed critical information. The reviewer should then provide useful feedback (what to clarify, what they didn't understand, how to think about a problem, etc).</p>	
<p>We will use Box to distribute and return the drafts and peer reviews.</p>	
Reading Assignment 3.5	Wed, September 24 23:59 pm MST
<p>Write one page on how agency is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this week.</p>	
Full Rough Draft	Mon, November 24 23:59 pm MST
<p>Provide a full rough draft of your paper which includes the introduction, literature review, theory, empirical strategy, findings, and conclusion.</p>	
Reading Assignment 4	Mon, September 29 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on a rational choice ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p>	
<p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on rational choice to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Gospel Ontology	Wed, December 3 23:59 pm MST
<p>For this assignment you are tasked to take some element of politics from the Book of Mormon (regime transitions, ethnic identity, conflict, etc) and apply one of the ontologies we have learned in class in an analysis of that phenomenon we observe in the Book of Mormon as a history.</p>	



Title	Due
In this paper you will need to explain which ontology you are using, and then apply it by creating a theoretical framework for how that ontology is operating. This may be from the perspective of the writer (i.e. Nephi, Mormon, etc see the world operating under these assumptions,) or from you own perspective of explaining the outcomes as a function of some core elements of human behavior.	
Reading Assignment 4.5	Wed, October 1 23:59 pm MST
Write one page on how rational choice is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this week.	
Final Draft	Wed, December 10 23:59 pm MST
Provide the final draft of your paper	
Reading Assignment 5.5	Wed, October 15 23:59 pm MST
Write one page on how institutions are used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this class.	
Reading Assignment 6	Mon, October 27 23:59 pm MST
Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on an historical institutional ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.  Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on historical institutionalism to explain some outcome of interest.	
Reading Assignment 6.5	Wed, October 29 23:59 pm MST
Write one page on how historical institutionalism is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this class.	

Title	Due
Reading Assignment 7	Mon, November 3 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on an identity ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p> <p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on identity to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Reading Assignment 7.5	Wed, November 5 23:59 pm MST
<p>Write one page on how identity is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this class.</p>	
Reading Assignment 8.5	Wed, November 12 23:59 pm MST
<p>Write one page on how psychology is used in your selected piece of fiction and bring it to class based on the readings assigned for this class.</p>	
Reading Assignment 5	Mon, October 13 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on an institutional ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p> <p>Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on institutions to explain some outcome of interest.</p>	
Reading Assignment 8	Mon, November 10 23:59 pm MST
<p>Identify a work in Comparative Politics or International Relations that relies on an psychological ontology to explain an outcome you are interested in.</p>	

**Title****Due**

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Bring a page to class to turn in with a brief (half page to full page) explanation of how the paper relies on psychology to explain some outcome of interest.

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## University Policies

### Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

### Preventing & Responding to Sexual Misconduct

*The health and well-being of students is of paramount importance at Brigham Young University. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment (including sexual violence), there are many resources available for assistance.*

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, BYU prohibits unlawful sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, against any participant in its education programs or activities. The university also prohibits sexual harassment by its personnel and students. Sexual harassment occurs when

- a person is subjected to unwelcome sexual speech or conduct so severe, pervasive, and offensive that it effectively denies their ability to access any BYU education program or activity;
- any aid, benefit, or service of BYU is conditioned on a person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; or
- a person suffers sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking on the basis of sex.

University policy requires all faculty members to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment that come to their attention in any way, including through face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at [t9coordinator@byu.edu](mailto:t9coordinator@byu.edu) or (801) 422-8692 or 1085 WSC. Reports may also be submitted online at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report> or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours a day).

BYU offers confidential resources for those affected by sexual harassment, including the university's Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate, as well as a number of non-confidential resources and services that may be helpful. Additional information about Title IX, the university's Sexual Harassment Policy, reporting requirements, and resources can be found at <http://titleix.byu.edu> or by contacting the university's Title IX Coordinator.

### Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. A disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Whether an impairment is substantially limiting depends on its nature and severity, its duration or expected duration, and its permanent or expected permanent or long-term impact. Examples include vision or hearing impairments, physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, emotional disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety),

learning disorders, and attention disorders (e.g., ADHD). If you have a disability which impairs your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 801-422-2767 to request a reasonable accommodation. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. If you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, please contact the Equal Opportunity Office at 801-422-5895, [eo\\_manager@byu.edu](mailto:eo_manager@byu.edu), or visit <https://hrs.byu.edu/equal-opportunity> for help.

### **Academic Honesty**

The first injunction of the Honor Code is the call to "be honest." Students come to the university not only to improve their minds, gain knowledge, and develop skills that will assist them in their life's work, but also to build character. "President David O. McKay taught that character is the highest aim of education" (The Aims of a BYU Education, p.6). It is the purpose of the BYU Academic Honesty Policy to assist in fulfilling that aim. BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.

### **Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom**

"Because we feel the depth of God's love for His children, we care deeply about every child of God, regardless of age, personal circumstances, gender, sexual orientation, or other unique challenges" (President Russell M. Nelson, "The Love and Laws of God," September 2019). As a university community we strive to foster an educational environment that promotes the personal dignity of every student and accept individual responsibility to eliminate racism, sexism, and nationalism. Our course participation reflects our understanding that every individual is a child of Heavenly Parents. We create learning environments in which every individual is motivated to express their opinions and perspectives and ask questions to augment discussions and learning. We listen to, learn from, and strive to consider thoughtfully the opinions of others. We use language that is polite, considerate, and courteous—even when we strongly disagree.

## Schedule

Date	Topic or Task	Readings	Assignment
<b>Week 1: Sun, Aug 31–Sat, Sep 6</b>			
Wed, Sep 03	<b>Start of Classes</b> <b>What Ontology Is</b>	Grix 2002.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Hall 2003.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	
<b>Week 2: Sun, Sep 7–Sat, Sep 13</b>			
Mon, Sep 08	<b>Structure in Political Science</b>	Haslanger 2015.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Easton 1990.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 1
Wed, Sep 10	<b>Structure in Fiction</b>		Research Proposal Reading Assignment 1.5
<b>Week 3: Sun, Sep 14–Sat, Sep 20</b>			
Mon, Sep 15	<b>Coalitions in Political Science</b>	Dahlum 2023.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Slater 2010.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 2
Wed, Sep 17	<b>Coalitions in Fiction</b>		Reading Assignment 2.5
<b>Week 4: Sun, Sep 21–Sat, Sep 27</b>			

Date	Topic or Task	Readings	Assignment
Mon, Sep 22	<b>Agency in Political Science</b>	Mahoney and Snyder 1999.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Schmitter 2014.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> (focus on agency, not on examples) Körösiényi et al 2015.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> (skim with more time on the beginning)	Annotated Bibliography Reading Assignment 3
Wed, Sep 24	<b>Agency in Fiction</b>		Reading Assignment 3.5
<b>Week 5: Sun, Sep 28–Sat, Oct 4</b>			
Mon, Sep 29	<b>Rational Choice in Political Science</b>	Tadelis 2008.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Little and Pepinsky 2016.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 4
Wed, Oct 01	<b>Rational Choice in Fiction</b>		Reading Assignment 4.5
<b>Week 6: Sun, Oct 5–Sat, Oct 11</b>			
Mon, Oct 06	<b>Writing Literature Reviews and Theory</b>	Bem 2021.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Geddes 2003 Chapter 2.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	

Date	Topic or Task	Readings	Assignment
Wed, Oct 08	<b>Fall Break</b>		
<b>Week 7: Sun, Oct 12–Sat, Oct 18</b>			
Mon, Oct 13	<b>Institutions in Political Science</b>	Shepsle 2008.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Greif and Kingston 2011.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 5
Wed, Oct 15	<b>Institutions in Fiction</b>		Rough Draft: Literature Review and Theory Section Reading Assignment 5.5
<b>Week 8: Sun, Oct 19–Sat, Oct 25</b>			
Mon, Oct 20	1-on-1s		
Wed, Oct 22	<b>Writing Introductions and how to Structure a Research Paper</b>	Weingast 1995.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Little 2016.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	
<b>Week 9: Sun, Oct 26–Sat, Nov 1</b>			
Mon, Oct 27	<b>Historical Institutionalism in Political Science</b>	Thelen 1999.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Grzymala-Busse 2011.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 6 Peer Review of Literature Review and Theory



Date	Topic or Task	Readings	Assignment
Wed, Oct 29	<b>Historical Institutionalism in Fiction</b>		Reading Assignment 6.5
<b>Week 10: Sun, Nov 2–Sat, Nov 8</b>			
Mon, Nov 03	<b>Identity in Political Science</b>	Abdelal et al 2006.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Kalin and Sambanis 2018.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 7
Wed, Nov 05	<b>Identity in Fiction</b>		Reading Assignment 7.5
<b>Week 11: Sun, Nov 9–Sat, Nov 15</b>			
Mon, Nov 10	<b>Psychology in Political Science</b>	Monroe et al 2009.pdf <a href="#">Download</a> Huddy et al 2013.pdf <a href="#">Download</a>	Reading Assignment 8
Wed, Nov 12	<b>Psychology in Fiction</b>		Rough Draft: Empirical Strategy Reading Assignment 8.5
<b>Week 12: Sun, Nov 16–Sat, Nov 22</b>			
Mon, Nov 17			

Date	Topic or Task	Readings	Assignment
Wed, Nov 19			Peer Review of Empirical Strategy
<b>Week 13: Sun, Nov 23–Sat, Nov 29</b>			
Mon, Nov 24	1-on-1s		Full Rough Draft
Wed, Nov 26	<b>No Classes</b>		
<b>Week 14: Sun, Nov 30–Sat, Dec 6</b>			
Mon, Dec 01	Presentations		
Wed, Dec 03	Presentations		Gospel Ontology
<b>Week 15: Sun, Dec 7–Sat, Dec 13</b>			
Mon, Dec 08	Presentations		
Wed, Dec 10	<b>Last Day of Class</b> Presentations		Final Draft Final Presentation Participation
<b>Week 16: Sun, Dec 14–Sat, Dec 20</b>			
Tue, Dec 16	<b>Final Exam Day</b>		
Wed, Dec 17	<b>Final Exam Day</b>		