

POLI 250 - Principles of Comparative Politics

Fall 2022

Section 001: 280 KMBL on M/W from 11 am – 12:15 pm

Instructor/TA Info

Instructor Information

Name: Darin Self

Office Location: 790 KMBL

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Student Hours: Monday 2:30pm – 3:30pm
Tuesday 9:30 am – 10:30am

Or By Appointment

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TA Information

Name:

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Or By Appointment

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Course Information

Description

POLI 250 is an accelerated introductory course to political science and its subfield of comparative politics. Ultimately, it is about the science in political science. It introduces you to the main theories and concepts of comparative politics and also teaches you the philosophy of science and how to test scientific theories. Along the way, it improves your reasoning, writing, and research skills, and teaches you how to work together in groups. The course helps you achieve these objectives through a hefty set of readings, reading responses; class discussions; and two essays. There will also be two midterms and a final exam to test your ability to use basic concepts in political science to evaluate and build theories and empirical strategies with the goal to evaluate political phenomenon.

Grading Policy

In this course you will be evaluated using reading responses, midterms, essays, and a final.

Reading responses must be completed 1 hour before class; late responses will not be accepted. Essays are due at the time specified in the syllabus, although

these may be turned in late with a penalty (a half grade by 5 p.m. and another full grade for each 24-hour period after, starting at 5 p.m.). Any assignment missed for a legitimate reason (unpleasant things beyond your control, like illness) can be made up without penalty if you consult with me right away. Your grade will be based on the following assignments. Details are below. Assignments will be curved up (never down), so that the class average is set at a B/B+.

- Reading Responses 10%
- Essays 40%
- Participation 5%
- Midterms and Final Exam 45%

Assignments

Reading Responses 10%

The readings in this class are assigned to help you become acquainted with core works in comparative politics as well as newer works that advance our understanding of the world. At first glance it may seem like a heavy load, but we will practice how to quickly read academic social science in way that allows you to draw the key conceptual, theoretical, and methodological points from either a paper or book chapter.

These readings will structure the course for the day, so you should come prepared to apply what you have read. To help improve your understanding of the readings, I have assigned reading responses. Because each class features 2-3 readings, you will choose one reading for the reading response. For the reading response you will state, in your own words, the research question(s), what is being explained (dependent variable/outcome) what explains the outcome (independent variable/explanation) and the theoretical story/model.

You will also be required to provide a constructive critique of the work. It is easy to point out flaws in someone's work, but it takes more careful thought to critique work in a way that can help improve the scientific approach to explaining politics.

A longer description of the assignment follows. In exchange for your doing the on-line course evaluation at the end of the term, I will drop your lowest two reading response scores.

Essays 40% (20% + 20%)

During the term you will write two 5-page scientific essays (double-spaced, not including title or works cited pages) on one of the topics we discuss during the semester or, with approval, something within the scope of comparative politics. Each essay will require you to use methods of comparison to draw inferences about the world while modestly incorporating modern social science. The essays are short by design to help you focus on the quality of your argument and writing.

Participation 5%

You are required to attend and participate in class discussions, and you should be prepared to be called on. We will keep track of your participation by noting

when you join in open discussions and by having you submit your written responses to any in-class exercises at the end of each hour. If you need to go online this semester because of COVID-19, you are still required to be present and actively involved (camera on) in any Zoom meetings. We will not record class except under unusual circumstances.

Midterm 10% + 10% + Final exam 25%

Although there is a heavy emphasis on higher-level learning objectives in this class (critique, synthesis, application, etc.), we learn many concepts and skills that can only be evaluated on an exam. Take notes and review your reading responses. Exams will be administered on the dates and times listed in the syllabus. There will be an exam administered at the end of each thematic section. For the midterms the questions will focus on the preceding section and will be cumulative in the sense that you should be able to apply skills and concepts learned as the material becomes increasingly complex. The final exam will be cumulative with greater weight given to the third section of class.

Online course evaluation

The university asks you to fill out the online course evaluation at the end of the term. The results of this evaluation are very important to my department and me, and if you do the evaluation on time, I will compensate you by dropping your two reading response scores.

Reading Response

Purpose

To learn the theories of comparative politics, to prepare for discussion, and to practice critiquing theories. Reading Responses prepare you for the Essays.

Task

The reading response should range from a half to a full page. The response should immediately identify the work's research question(s) and then provide a detailed explanation of the outcome of interest (dependent variable), the mechanisms which explain the outcome (independent variable(s)), and then summarize the theoretical model.

You should also provide a thoughtful and constructive critique of the work. Rather than simply highlight weaknesses or disbelief, you should focus on how the author's theory, concepts, methods, or case selection/data, led them to draw certain inferences and what you would do differently.

Avoid complaining about the quality of the author's writing.

Grading

Reading responses are due 1 hour before class on the day listed in the syllabus. They are graded based on (a) how well you understand the argument of the author and (b) the extent you offer thoughtful critique while applying the principles of scientific reasoning.

Each Reading Response receives up to 10 points as follows:

5 points - The summary. A good summary restates the author's core insights in ways that show you worked hard to understand them. You will not understand everything you read, but you should try to identify the

author's research question, their answer (usually some scientific theory or causal argument), and their evidence. In particular, try to understand the mechanisms of their argument. If you don't understand something, indicate this in the response and bring your concerns to class. You will not be penalized if you can demonstrate that you read but did not fully understand something but you will be penalized if you only do a poor job of summarizing the reading.

- *5 points - The critique.* The best critique makes a clear, interesting argument that forces us to stop and think, and backs up this argument with clear reasoning and telling evidence that make us want to continue the conversation; it also proposes a smart, compelling solution--a "fix--that moves our theorizing forward. A less-effective critique makes potentially interesting arguments about core aspects of the reading, but sometimes its own reasoning and evidence are thin, or it doesn't really propose a fix to the theory's problems. An ineffective critique provides only vague, incoherent claims, or focuses on peripheral aspects of the author's argument.

Assignments

Assignment Descriptions

Essay 1

Due: Thursday, Oct 13 at 11:59 pm

Purpose

To use the paired-comparison case selection method to explain some political outcome and employ qualitative data. It also helps us make a final evaluation of your writing and research skills, encourages you to master a topic of comparative politics, and showcases your ability to critique and test scientific theories.

The task

Write a 5-page essay on any topic that falls within the scope of comparative politics. A half page proposal that outlines your cases, your initial research question, and basic theory is due by September 12th. This is not a contract; your question and theory should evolve and improve as you give it greater thought.

Details

Your essay should make clear claims, reason them out, and provide evidence. The entire essay will have an overall claim about a theory that you are testing--a thesis--in the first paragraph. The theory does not have to be original but can be if you choose. As part of the paper, you should acknowledge existing work on the topic and whether/how you contribute to existing work. The paper must also make a clear and strong justification for the two cases you are comparing.

Evidence to back up your claim can and may come from the readings themselves, but in order to receive the highest grade, you must help us see old evidence in a new light, or give us new evidence drawing from your observations.

Papers should accurately cite sources (including any class readings) using a consistent citation style. Writing must be high quality and concise (the 5-page limit is a flexible upper limit, not a goal). If there are more than a few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors (including problems with formatting your citations), the assignment will be returned ungraded, and you can resubmit it up to two days later with a half-grade penalty.

Because these are major assignments, grades are assigned using a traditional letter-grade on a 100-point scale with the following rubric:

	Fails to meet standards	Meets standards	Exceptional
Thesis and organization 20%	You wait to provide a thesis until the end, or never really have one. It's hard to tell what the research topic was, at least in the sense of a specific question. The paper wanders, suggesting you wrote this quickly and without much planning.	There is a clear overall claim at the beginning, although you maybe lose sight of it sometimes. The intro feels wordy and takes a while to get going, but the paper has a clear topic that is introduced in the beginning. We can follow the order of your argument as we read, but occasionally you surprise or lose us.	You introduce the research question quickly, in a way that engages us. There is a clear overall claim at the start of the paper, and you stay on message throughout. The paper follows a sensible outline with signposting to make transitions clear.
Reasoning and evidence 60%	You provide cursory, vague explanations to back up your claims, and you often focus on peripheral concerns. There is little evidence to back up your claims and reasoning. Often, you summarize others' theories without really critiquing them. You fail to go beyond the readings from class or overlook several of them.	You offer a clear explanation of a theory, with focused reasoning and evidence. You incorporate additional research that allows you to add meaningfully to existing literature. However, the way you summarize some of the theories is a little inaccurate, and some of the reasoning is thin or focused on peripheral concerns, making it hard for us to engage with your ideas. You didn't go much beyond the evidence at hand and maybe missed an important point from the class readings.	You offer a clear and strong explanation of your theory and test it with clear, persuasive arguments and crucial evidence. It is clear you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the theory presented and the limits of your work.
Writing/formatting 20%	You avoid major concerns with spelling errors but struggle with punctuation and grammar. Paragraphs are not built around clear topic sentences and are hard to read. You forgot to provide complete citations for all of your sources. No page numbers.	No noticeable concerns with sentence-level mechanics. Paragraphs flow pretty well, although you sometimes struggle with topic sentences or wordiness. The page numbers and section headings (if you use them) are helpful. You provide consistent in-text citations/footnotes and complete citations.	Clear writing at the sentence and paragraph levels. It is easy to understand and is not a mystery novel. Readers hardly notice the writing as they read and think about your ideas. The bibliography actually <i>looks</i> good. Sections headings, if needed, are sparing and clear.

Essay 1

Due: Thursday, December 8 at 11:59 pm

Purpose

To use elementary methods using a large-n to explain some political outcome. It also helps us make a final evaluation of your writing and research skills, encourages you to master a topic of comparative politics, and showcases your ability to critique and test scientific theories.

The task

Write a 5-page essay on any topic that falls within the scope of comparative politics. A half page proposal that outlines your cases, your initial research question, the basic theory, and source of your data is due by November 7th. This is not a contract; your question and theory should evolve and improve as you give it greater thought.

Details

Your essay should make clear claims, reason them out, and provide evidence. The entire essay will have an overall claim about a theory that you are testing--a thesis--in the first paragraph. The theory does not have to be original but can be if you choose. As part of the paper, you should acknowledge existing work on the topic and whether/how you contribute to existing work. The paper must also make a clear and strong justification for the two cases you are comparing.

Evidence to back up your claim can and may come from the readings themselves, but in order to receive the highest grade, you must help us see old evidence in a new light, or give us new evidence drawing from your observations.

Papers should accurately cite sources (including any class readings) using a consistent citation style. Writing must be high quality and concise (the 5-page limit is a flexible upper limit, not a goal). If there are more than a few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors (including problems with formatting your citations), the assignment will be returned ungraded, and you can resubmit it up to two days later with a half-grade penalty.

Because these are major assignments, grades are assigned using a traditional letter-grade on a 100-point scale with the following rubric:

	Fails to meet standards	Meets standards	Exceptional
Thesis and organization 20%	You wait to provide a thesis until the end, or never really have one. It's hard to tell what the research topic was, at least in the sense of a specific question. The paper wanders, suggesting you wrote this quickly and without much planning.	There is a clear overall claim at the beginning, although you maybe lose sight of it sometimes. The intro feels wordy and takes a while to get going, but the paper has a clear topic that is introduced in the beginning. We can follow the order of your argument as we read, but occasionally you surprise or lose us.	You introduce the research question quickly, in a way that engages us. There is a clear overall claim at the start of the paper, and you stay on message throughout. The paper follows a sensible outline with signposting to make transitions clear.
Reasoning and evidence 60%	You provide cursory, vague explanations to back up your claims, and you often focus on peripheral concerns.	You offer serious arguments for/against each theory, with focused reasoning and evidence. You incorporate	You offer a clear and strong explanation of your theory and test it with clear, persuasive arguments and crucial

	There is little evidence to back up your claims and reasoning. Often, you summarize others' theories without really critiquing them. You fail to go beyond the readings from class or overlook several of them.	additional research that allows you to add meaningfully to the list of theories you critique. However, the way you summarize some of the theories is a little inaccurate, and some of the reasoning is thin or focused on peripheral concerns, making it hard for us to engage with your ideas. You didn't go much beyond the evidence at hand and maybe missed an important point from the class readings.	evidence. It is clear you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the theory presented and the limits of your work.
Writing/formatting 20%	You avoid major concerns with spelling errors but struggle with punctuation and grammar. Paragraphs are not built around clear topic sentences and are hard to read. You forgot to provide complete citations for all of your sources. No page numbers.	No noticeable concerns with sentence-level mechanics. Paragraphs flow pretty well, although you sometimes struggle with topic sentences or wordiness. The page numbers and section headings (if you use them) are helpful. You provide consistent in-text citations/footnotes and complete citations.	Clear writing at the sentence and paragraph levels. It is easy to understand and is not a mystery novel. Readers hardly notice the writing as they read and think about your ideas. The bibliography actually <i>looks</i> good. Sections headings, if needed, are sparing and clear.

Final Exam 7-10am in-class

Due: Saturday, Apr 16 at 10:00 am

Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments
Monday Aug 29	Comparative Politics	Seawright and Gerring 2008 Collier 1993 Keohane 2009
Wednesday Aug 31	Collective Action	Ostrom 2010
Monday Sep 5	Labor Day	
Wednesday Sep 7	Institutions	North 1990 Shepsle 2008
Monday Sep 12	The State Essay 1 proposal due	Tilly 1992 Herbst 2000
Wednesday Sep 14	State Strength	Hendrix 2010 Fauvelle-Aymar 1999
Monday Sep 19	Regimes	Dahl 1971 Coppedge et al 2011

Wednesday Sep 21	Regimes	Geddes 1999 Schmitter and Karl 1991 Schedler 2002
Monday Sep 26	Democratization	Ziblatt 2017 Ansell and Samuels 2014
Wednesday Sep 28	Autocratization	Bermeo 2016 Waldner and Lust 2018
Monday Oct 3	The Military	Brooks 2022 Singh 2014
Wednesday Oct 5	Midterm 1	
Monday Oct 10	Contentious Politics	Tarrow 2011 Machado et al 2011
Wednesday Oct 12	Political Parties and Systems	Mainwaring and Scully 1995 Aldrich 2011
Thursday Oct 13	Essay 1 Due by Midnight	
Monday Oct 17	Political Parties and Systems	Riedl 2014 Anna Grzymala-Busse 2002
Wednesday Oct 19	Voters and Elections	Kitschelt 2000 Fornos et al 2004
Monday Oct 24	Voters and Elections	Hicken 2011 Magaloni 2006
Wednesday Oct 26	Populism	Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014 Patana 2021
Monday Oct 31	Gender	Clayton 2015 Franscshet and Piscopo 2008
Wednesday Nov 2	Midterm 2	
Monday Nov 7	Ethnicity and identity Essay 2 proposal due	Chandra and Wilkinson 2008 Habyarimana et al 2007
Wednesday Nov 9	Ethnicity and identity	Harkness 2018 Posner 2004
Monday Nov 14	Civil War and Violence	Kalyvas 2006 Balcells 2017
Wednesday Nov 16	Civil War and Violence	Wilkinson 2004 Wood 2003 Flores-Macias and Zarkin 2021
Monday Nov 21	Economic Development	Haggard 1986 Kohli 2004
Wednesday	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	

Nov 23		
Monday Nov 28	Economic Development	Doner et al 2005 Dell et al 2018
Wednesday Nov 30	Political Economy of Industrialized Countries	Piketty and Saez 2014 Mares and Carnes 2009
Monday Dec 5	Political Economy of Industrialized Countries	Pontusson and Raess 2012 Sahasrabuddhe 2019
Wednesday Dec 7	Last Day	
Thursday Dec 8	Essay 2 Due by Midnight	
Thursday December 15	Final Exam – 11am to 1pm	280 KMBL

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 Sexual Misconduct

Brigham Young University prohibits all forms of sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking on the basis of sex—by its personnel and students and in all its education programs or activities. University policy requires all faculty members to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment that come to their attention in any way and encourages reports by students who experience or become aware of sexual harassment. Incidents should be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at 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 a number of resources and services for those affected by sexual harassment, including the university's confidential Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate. Additional information about sexual harassment, the university's Sexual Harassment Policy, reporting requirements, and resources can be found in the University Catalog, by visiting <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, or visit <https://hrs.byu.edu/equal-opportunity> for help.