

**POSC 120: Comparative Politics Syllabus
Spring 2018**

Last update: January 5, 2018

Department of Political Science
University of Southern California

Lectures: MW 10:00-11:30am, VKC 102

Instructor: Prof. Tyson Roberts
Office Hours: MW 2pm-3pm

email: tysonrob@usc.edu
Office: VKC 313

TA: David Somogyi, dsomogyi@usc.edu

This syllabus is current as of the version date above. It is subject to change. You will be notified in class and/or by e-mail whenever the syllabus is updated. The current version of the syllabus will always be posted on Blackboard.

Course Description and Objectives

In this introductory course, we will study a number of questions central to research in Comparative Politics: Why do some states thrive while others fail? What are the causes and effects of democracy and dictatorship? How do political institutions vary and why do these differences matter? And how does “globalization”—the increasing integration of economies and intermingling of cultures—affect politics and people’s well-being? The goal is not just to introduce you to these questions and the debates that surround them but also to help you begin to develop the tools to reach your own reasoned conclusions about them.

This course approaches Comparative Politics from the perspective of how political scientists actually conduct research in this field. Thus the course is not simply a journalistic commentary on current events or a survey of the politics and institutions of three or four foreign countries. It is a course focused on identifying and trying to account for broad patterns in political behavior and outcomes in the countries of the world.

This is an *introductory course*. It is designed to teach you concepts, approaches and, more broadly, methods of reasoning and analysis that should be applicable to any upper division Politics course (as well as any analytically-oriented job) that you may take in the future.

Course Requirements and Grading

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

10%	Lecture participation
10%	Discussion section participation
10%	Research and analysis exercises
10%	Final group research paper
30%	Midterm exam
30%	Final exam

Required Textbooks

- Comparative Politics, by David Samuels. 2nd Edition (or 1st Edition)
We'll read the entire book. If you want to save some money you can buy the 1st Edition, they're very similar. I'll try to scan and post any material that is dramatically different or new.
- Essential Readings in Comparative Politics, edited by Patrick O'Neil and Ronald Rogowski, 5th Edition.
We'll read about half this book. I recommend buying the physical book of this as well, but if you need to choose one in eBook format, choose this one.
- *(Additional readings, videos, and podcasts will be posted on Blackboard)*

OPTIONAL Textbook

- Cases in Comparative Politics, by O'Neil et al. *This is 100% optional. None of it is assigned. For students who are interested in more details about specific countries that are mentioned in the other textbooks, this is a good resource.*
- There is also something called *REVEL for Comparative Politics -- Access Card* from Pearson. Some of this may be offered as *optional* material.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Students requesting accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is 213-740-0776. Students must make their request in the stipulated period prior to an exam.

Policy on Academic Ethics and Honesty

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting or collaboration, consult your teaching assistant. For more information on USC policies regarding student integrity and plagiarism, see <http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-policies/#plagiarism>.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Week 1 (Jan 8-10): Introduction

- Samuels Chapter 1: Doing Comparative Politics
- Essential Readings: King, Keohane, Verba pp. 10-
- Essential Readings: Mill pp. 16-

Jan. 15: MLK Day – No class

Week 2 (Jan 17): The State

- Samuels Chapter 2: The State
- Essential Readings: Herbst pp. 35-
- Essential Readings: Krasner pp. 57-
- Can Iraq and Syria Survive as Countries?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J05gH65GnX0>

Week 3 Jan. 22-24: Democracies

- Samuels Chapter 3: Democratic Political Regimes
- Essential Readings: Lijphart, pp. 189-
- Essential Readings: Duverger, pp. 432-
- The evolution of Israeli politics. <https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/03/economist-explains-11>
- How British elections work. <https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/04/economist-explains-9>
- Britain's election 2015: seats-to-votes calculator: Square pegs, round hole.
<https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/05/britain-s-election-2015-seats-votes-calculator>

R&A Exercise 1: Duverger's Law

Week 4 (Jan. 29-31): Non-Democracies

- Samuels Chapter 4: Non-Democratic Political Regimes
- Essential Readings: Geddes, Wright, Frantz, pp. 273-
- Essential Readings: Hale pp. 489-
- How Corrupt Is Russia? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F3n6L3P_f0
- How Corrupt is Ethiopia? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_X4dH5Sj8

R&A Exercise 2: Personalism & Corruption

Week 5 (Feb. 5-7): Regime Change

- Samuels Chapter 5: Regime Change
- Essential Readings: Boix and Stokes, pp. 387-
- Essential Readings: Ansell and Samuels, pp. 419-

- The collapse of Venezuela, explained
<https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/8/29/16201552/collapse-maduro-venezuela-explained>
- The Arab Winter <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21685503-five-years-after-wave-uprisings-arab-world-worse-ever>

R&A Exercise 3: Modernization theory

Week 6 (Feb. 12-14): Political Identity

- Samuels Chapter 6: Political Identity
- Essential Readings: Stepan, Linz, Yadav pp. 189-
- Essential Readings: Fearon and Laitin, pp. 75-
- Essential Readings: Alesina and La Ferrara, pp. 86-

Feb. 19 Presidents Day – No class

Feb. 21: Midterm Exam

Week 8 (Feb. 26-28): Religion and Politics

- Samuels Chapter 7: Religion and Politics
- Essential Readings: Atran and Axelrod, pp. 343-

Week 9 (March 5-7): Gender and Politics

- Samuels Chapter 8: Gender and Politics
- Essential Readings: Waylen, pp. 213-
- Aili Mari Tripp. 2016. “Where do African women have more power? Surprise — in countries emerging from war.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/15/womens-rights-in-africa-grow-stronger-after-conflicts-heres-why/?utm_term=.2a57b527b1bf

R&A Exercise 4: Women in power

March 12-16 Spring Break – No class

Week 10 (March 19-21): Collective Action

- Samuels Chapter 9: Collective Action
- Essential Readings: Baldwin and Huber, pp. 103-

Week 11 (March 26-28): Political Violence

- Samuels Chapter 10: Political Violence
- Essential Readings: Skocpol, pp. 310-
- Essential Readings: Crenshaw, pp. 328-

Week 12 (April 2-4): Political Economy of Development

- Samuels Chapter 11: Political Economy of Development

- Essential Readings: Smith, pp. 141-
- Essential Readings: North, pp. 147-
- Essential Readings: Clark, pp. 515-

R&A Exercise 5: Nature, institutions, and growth

Week 13 (April 9-11): Political Economy of Redistribution

- Samuels Chapter 12: The Political Economy of Redistribution
- Iverson and Soskice pp. 437-

R&A Exercise 6: Diversity and welfare

Week 14 (April 16-18): Globalization

- Samuels Chapter 13: Globalization
- Essential Readings: Rogowski, pp. 163-
- Essential Readings: Rodrik, pp. 550-

Week 15 (April 23-25) Application and Review

- Samuels Chapter 1: Doing Comparative Politics
- Essential Readings: King, Keohane, Verba pp. 10-
- Essential Readings: Mill, pp. 16-

Final group research paper

Final Exam