SOSC 3520: UNDERSTANDING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Wednesdays & Fridays, 13:30 – 14:50, Room 2463 (lifts 25-26)

Instructor	Teaching Assistant
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Course Description

This course analyzes politics from a comparative perspective. The central theme is to demonstrate how political science understands and explains the variations of political phenomena across different countries. It explores three major themes, i.e., thinking like a comparative political scientist, regime types, and political actors, institutions and outcomes. Students will benefit with the knowledge, skills, and attitude for analyzing the world of politics.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. (a) Describe the key methods, concepts, and theories in comparative politics; and
   (b) Explain the similarities and differences in political regimes, actors, and institutions.
2. Apply concepts and theories in discussing issues in comparative politics.
3. Exercise independent and critical judgments in the study of politics.

Common Core Competencies (CCCs)

Students will have the opportunity to develop their problem-solving skills in the following domains: Application of critical thinking (PS02) and evaluation of information and sources (PS03).

Class Schedule

Date	Class	Theme	Topics
Feb 5, 7, 12 & 14	1-4	I – Thinking Like a Comparative Political Scientist	What does comparative politics study? How do we study it?
Feb 19, 21, 26, 28, Mar 5, 7, 12 & 14	5-12	II – Regime Types	Why are some countries democratic? Why are some autocratic regimes more durable than others?
Mar 19	13	Mid-term Revision	
Mar 21	14	Mid-term Test	
Mar 26, 28, Apr 9, 11, 16, 23, 25, 30	15-22	III – Political Actors, Institutions and Outcomes	What explains the location of political parties on a spectrum? Why are some social groups more able to mobilize than others? Why are some government systems 'better' than others? What are the political consequences of different electoral system designs?
May 2, 7	23-24	Group Project – Presentations and Peer Reviews	
May 9	25	Final Revision	

Note: Class schedule and topics may be adjusted to facilitate students' learning.

Assessment and Grading

Deliverable / Weighting		Requirements
Group Project *Alignment with ILOs: 1(a), 1(b), 2 & 3* *Alignment with CCCs: PS02 & PS03*	20%	***Deliverables: Poster (15%) and Presentation (5%)*** • Students will form into groups. Each group will identify a phenomenon in real-world politics (e.g., revival of authoritarianism, reform of electoral systems, rise of far-right parties, etc.), formulate a study question, and answer the question from a comparative perspective. The analysis should incorporate **at least TWO country/jurisdiction cases** and apply relevant concepts and/or theories. • Each group will create a **poster** <u>AND</u> deliver a **3-minute presentation** on **May 2 (Fri)**. The poster and presentation will be peer-reviewed. All groups will verbally respond to the peer reviews on **May 7 (Wed)**.
Peer Review and Assessment *Alignment with ILOs: 2 & 3* *Alignment with CCCs: PS02*	10%	***Deliverable 1: <u>Group-based</u> Peer Review (5%)*** • Each group will critically review a poster and presentation of a peer group as assigned. • They will deliver a **3-minute verbal review** on **May 7 (Wed)** to offer comments and suggestions. ***Deliverable 2: <u>Individual-based</u> Peer Assessment (5%)*** • Each student will assess the quality of a poster and presentation of a peer group as assigned. • They will complete an **assessment form** to recommend a grade with justifications based on the rubric provided. The form should be submitted by **23:59, May 10 (Sat)**.
Mid-term Test and Final Test *Alignment with ILOs: 1(a), 1(b), 2 & 3* *Alignment with CCCs: PS02 & PS03*	70% (35% each)	• Both are open-book tests. • Part I contains multiple choice questions; Part II contains an essay question. The time allowed for completion is, approximately, 20 minutes for Part I and 40 minutes for Part II. **The two parts are timed separately.** • Mid-term Test is scheduled for **Mar 21 (Fri)**. Final Test will take place during the examination period in May 2025, and the exact date will be decided by the University. • Students must complete the tests in person. <u>**Under no circumstances can the test be completed outside the test venue.**</u> In case of medical/family emergencies or unavoidable duties, students must present appropriate evidence to request for 'make-up' arrangements.

Remarks:
  (1) A maximum of 5 points of **attendance and participation bonus** will be awarded to students who contribute actively to class discussions. Attendance will be taken on an ad hoc basis.
  (2) For late submission, no submission or no show, **mark penalty** will apply. For confirmed cases of

plagiarism, cheating and abuse of generative AI tools, sanctions will be imposed.
(3) For the group project, each team should submit detailed **division of labor**. The score of each individual student may be adjusted based on the division and quality of labor.
(4) This course will be assessed using **criterion-referencing**. The rubrics for the major assessment tasks are provided at the end of this syllabus, outlining the criteria used for evaluation. Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within **two weeks of the due date**.

Important Dates

Date / Time	Task	Date / Time	Task
Feb 16 / 23:59	Group Project – grouping confirmation	May 7 / in class	Group Project – Peer reviews
Mar 21 / in class	Mid-term Test	May 10 / 23:59	Submission of assessment form
May 2 / in class	Group Project – Poster presentations	Examination period	Final Test

Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on Subject Grading Description
A+, A, A-	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates excellent attainment of knowledge, skills and attitude in the comparative analysis of politics.
B+, B	Good Performance	Demonstrates good attainment of knowledge, skills and attitude in the comparative analysis of politics.
B-, C+, C	Marginal Performance	Demonstrates adequate attainment of knowledge, skills and attitude in the comparative analysis of politics.
F	Failure	Demonstrates insufficient attainment of knowledge, skills and attitude in the comparative analysis of politics.

Course AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools is permitted for open-book assignments. However, students should understand that generative AI tools should only be used as *tools* and should NOT be a substitute for students' own work. Students must certify that the work submitted in their assignments is their own original work, except where they have acknowledged the use of external sources or assistance, including generative AI tools.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include comments and suggestions for further improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback, including scores, should consult the Instructor OR Teaching Assistant within five working days after the feedback is received.

Resubmission Policy

Students who are unable to submit any of the assessed tasks should contact the Instructor or Teaching Assistant within five working days after the respective deadlines to discuss arrangements for resubmission.

Required Text

- William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder & Sona Nadenichek Golder (2019) *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press [NB: 2024 version ordered in HKUST Library.]

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Additional Resources

- Andrea Kendall-Taylor, Natasha Lindstaedt & Erica Frantz (2019) *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Andrew Heywood (2019) *Politics* (5th edition), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. **[e-book]**
- John McCormick (2020) *Cases in Comparative Government and Politics*, London: Red Globe Press. **[e-book]**
- John T. Ishiyama (2012) *Comparative Politics: Principles of Democracy and Democratization*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. **[e-book]**
- Patrick H. O'Neil, Karl Fields & Don Share (2013) *Cases in Comparative Politics* (4th edition), New York: W. W. Norton & Co. **[e-book]**
- Rod Hague, Martin Harrop & John McCormick (2019) *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (11th edition), London: Red Globe Press. **[e-book]** (NB: 2022 version available in hard copies at HKUST Library)
- Todd Landman (2008) *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, Abingdon, Oxon/New York: Routledge. **[e-book]**

Last revised: 17 January 2025

Appendix 1: Grading Rubrics

Grading Rubric for Group Project

Excellent Performance	Good Performance	Marginal Performance	Failure
The poster has a sensible interpretation of the topic. There is a logical argument substantiated by appropriate evidence and/or examples. There is application of relevant concepts and theories in comparative politics. The analysis is well-structured and coherent. There is good use of language. The presentation is clear.	The poster demonstrates the attainment of only some of the desired attributes (as for excellent performance) while some attributes are not yet attained. For the attributes attained, there is room for enhancement.	The poster demonstrates only minimal attainment of the desired attributes (as for excellent performance). For the attributes attained, there is significant room for enhancement.	The poster is inadequate, demonstrating very limited attainment of the desired attributes.

Grading Rubric for Mid-term Test and Final Test

Excellent Performance	Good Performance	Marginal Performance	Failure
The questions are answered accurately and/or justified with reasonable explanations. There is a logical and coherent elaboration with good use of language.	Only some of the questions are answered accurately and/or justified. The explanations are generally reasonable, but they are not substantiated well and/or there lacks sufficient clarity. There is room for enhancement in terms of logic, coherence, and/or use of language.	Only a very few questions are answered accurately. The explanations are unclear or do not make sense. There is significant room for enhancement in terms of logic, coherence, and/or use of language.	Most of the questions are answered inaccurately or the answers are not relevant to the questions. The answers are unsatisfactory in terms of logic, coherence, and/or use of language.

Appendix 2: Reading List

THEME I: THINKING LIKE A COMPARATIVE POLITICAL SCIENTIST	
Required Text	• Clark, Golder & Golder (2019), chapters 1-2.
Recommended Texts	• John T. Ishiyama (2012), chapter 1. [e-book] • Rod Hague, Martin Harrop & John McCormick (2019), chapters 1-3. [e-book] • Todd Landman (2008), chapters 1, 2 & 4. [e-book]
Journal articles	• John Gerring (2004) What is a Case Study and What is it Good for? *The American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-354.

THEME II: REGIME TYPES	
Required Text	• Clark, Golder & Golder (2019), chapters 5, 6 & 8.
Recommended Texts	• John T. Ishiyama (2012), chapters 2, 3 & 4. [e-book] • Rod Hague, Martin Harrop & John McCormick (2019), chapters 5 & 6. [e-book] • Todd Landman (2008), chapters 6 & 9. [e-book]
Journal articles	• Beatriz Magaloni (2008) Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule, *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4/5): 715-741. • Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson (2005) *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. • Jennifer Gandhi & Adam Przeworski (2007) Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats, *Comparative Political Studies* 40(11): 1279-1301. • Jennifer Gandhi & Ellen Lust-Okar (2009) Elections Under Authoritarianism, *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 403-422. • Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart (2008) Islamic Culture and Democracy: Testing the 'Clash of Civilizations' Thesis, *New Frontiers in Comparative Sociology* 109: 221-250. • Stephen Haber & Victor Menaldo (2011) Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse, *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 1-26.

THEME III: POLITICAL ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS AND OUTCOMES	
Required Text	• Clark, Golder & Golder (2019), chapters 10, 12 & 14.
Recommended Texts	• John T. Ishiyama (2012), chapters 7-9. [e-book] • Rod Hague, Martin Harrop & John McCormick (2019), chapters 8, 9, 15-18. [e-book] • Todd Landman (2008), chapter 8. [e-book]
Journal articles	• André Blais (1991) The Debate over Electoral Systems, *International Political Science Review* 12(3): 239-260. • Anthony Downs (1957) An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy, 65(2): 135-150. • Arend Lijphart (2012) *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance*

in Thirty-six Countries, New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Cameron G. Thies & Schuyler Porche (2007) The Political Economy of Agricultural Protection, *The Journal of Politics* 69(1): 116-127.
- Cas Mudde (2004) The Populist Zeitgeist, *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 541-563.
- George Tsebelis (2000) Veto Players and Institutional Analysis, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 13(4): 441-474.
- Ignacio Jurado & Sandra León (2017) Geography Matters: The Constitutional Effect of Electoral Systems on Social Spending, *British Journal of Political Science* 49: 81-103.
- John D. Huber (2012) Measuring Ethnic Voting: Do Proportional Electoral Laws Politicize Ethnicity? *American Journal of Political Science* 56(4): 986-1001.
- John M. Carey & Simon Hix (2011) The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems 55(2): 383-397.
- José Antonio Cheibub & Fernando Limongi (2002) Democratic Institutions and Regime Survival: Parliamentary and Presidential Democracies Reconsidered, *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 151-179.
- José Antonio Cheibub & Svitlana Chernykh (2008) Constitutions and Democratic Performance in Semi-Presidential Democracies, *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 9(3): 269-303.
- Juan J. Linz (1990) The Perils of Presidentialism, *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.
- Lawrence Ezrow et al. (2010) Mean Voter Representation and Partisan Constituency Representation: Do Parties Respond to the Mean Voter Position or to Their Supporters? *Party Politics* 17(3): 275-301.
- Matt Golder (2003) Explaining Variation in the Success of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe, *Comparative Political Studies* 36(4): 432-466.
- Steffen Ganghof (2003) Promises and Pitfalls of Veto Player Analysis, *Swiss Political Science Review* 9(2): 1-25.
- Torben Iversen & David Soskice (2006) Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More than Others, *The American Political Science Review* 100(2): 165-181.