

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus Template

The World of Politics

SOSC 1300

3 Credits

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:45am – 11:45am

Course Description

This class is designed to introduce students to two main subfields of political science: International Relations (IR) and Comparative Politics (CP). The International Relations section focuses on developing an analytical perspective on major issues in international security and the global political economy through the study of both theory and history. The Comparative Politics section explores various institutions and systems within states, aiming to help students understand how differences in institutional settings influence political outcomes. Throughout the course, students will also be exposed to a range of methodological approaches used in the study of international relations and comparative politics.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the main concepts and theories in International Relations and Comparative Politics.
2. Apply those concepts and theories to analyze international and domestic political events.
3. Think analytically and critically about international and domestic political events.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
CP Exam	25%	26/03/2026 *
IR Exam	25%	05/05/2026 *
Final paper	25%	26/05/2026 *
Attendance + Reading Quiz	15%	Throughout the class

Participation	10%	Throughout the class
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* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

[add to/delete table as appropriate]

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
First Examination Second Examination	ILO1, ILO2	Examinations are designed to assess students' foundational understanding of the theories and key concepts in International Relations (IR) and Comparative Politics (ILO1) as well as their ability to apply them (ILO2)
Final Paper	ILO2, ILO3	The final paper is designed to develop analytical thinking and presentation skills in explaining real-life phenomena related to IR or Comparative Politics (ILO2, ILO3)

Grading Rubrics

Detailed grading rubrics for each assignment will be provided on the exam date (for the two exams) and four weeks before the final paper's due date, along with detailed instructions.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and significant analytical skills. Goes beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Demonstrates a strong knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, along with the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Shows high motivation to learn.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of the core subject matter, along with some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Demonstrates an effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Possesses limited knowledge of the core subject matter and the ability to make basic judgments.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter, with limited ability to think critically or analytically, and shows minimal effort toward achieving learning goals.

Course AI Policy

The use of Generative AI in the project is permitted to assist students with brainstorming the subject area, as well as drafting and proofreading their final paper. Students are solely responsible for the content of their paper, and must verify the accuracy of AI-generated content. Hallucinated or inaccurate references will be treated as failure to properly adhere to academic integrity standards.

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 on strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

Baylis, John, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens. Eds (BSO). 2021. *The Globalization of World Politics. Third International Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parsons, Craig. 2021 (Parsons). *Introduction to Political Science: How to Think for Yourself about Politics*. Second Edition. London and New York: Pearson.

Academic Integrity

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.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Feb 3, 5): Introduction

Reading: Parsons Chapters 1–2

Class 1: Introduction to course

Class 2: Understanding political science

Week 2 (Feb 10, 12): Theories and Ideologies

Reading: BSO Introduction; Parsons Chapter 3

Class 1: Key political philosophies

Class 2: Political ideologies

Week 3: Lunar New Year – No Class

Week 4 (Feb 24, 26): States

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 4

Class 1: Origin and role of the state

Class 2: Varieties of the state

Week 5 (March 3, 5): Political Regimes

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 5; Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "[Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices](#)." *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1): 5–34.

Class 1: Liberal democracy

Class 2: Illiberal democracy and authoritarianism

Week 6 (March 10, 12): Elections and Representation

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 7; Jennifer Gandhi, Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. "[Elections Under Authoritarianism](#)." *Annual Review Political Science*. 12:403–422.

Class 1: Election and voting rules

Class 2: From representation to policy: Branches of government; parliamentarism vs. presidentialism

Week 7 (March 17, 19): Political Transition

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 11: Stephan Haggard & Robert Kaufman. 2021. "[The Anatomy of Democratic Backsliding](#)." *Journal of Democracy* 32(4): 27–41.

Class 1: Transition from authoritarianism

Class 2: Transition from democracy

Week 8 (March 24, 26): CP Review and Exam

CP Exam on March 26

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 6

Class 1: CP Review

Class 2: CP Exam

Week 9 (March 31, April 2): Introduction to IR

Reading: BSO, Chapters 3–4;

Class 1: Introduction to IR

Class 2: Major IR thoughts

Week 10 (April 9): War and Security

Reading: BSO, Chapters 14

Class 1: War and Security

Week 11 (April 14, 16): Globalization

Reading: Parsons, Chapter 13; BSO, Chapter 16

Class 1: Globalization

Class 2: Globalization (cont)

Week 12 (April 21, 23): International Organization

Reading: BSO, Chapters 19–21

Class 1: International Law and Organizations

Class 2: The United Nations

Week 13 (April 28, 30): Global Political Economy

Reading: BSO, Chapter 27

Class 1: The global finance regime

Class 2: IR Review

Week 14 (May 5, 7): IR Exam and Conclusion

IR Exam on May 5

Class 1: IR Exam

Class 2: Conclusion

Finals Week

Final Paper due on May 26