

Introduction to Political Science: Comparative Politics

Political Science 11D

UC San Diego | Spring 2020 | Michael F. Seese

Last Updated: March 26, 2020

1 Spring 2020 Special Course Format

This course and syllabus have been adapted to reflect new teaching and learning protocols for Spring 2020, instituted by the University in response to the ongoing Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) **outbreak**. These protocols necessitate a transition to a strictly online format.¹ In practice, this means:

1. Physical presence on campus is not required of either students or the instructional team (i.e., *we will not meet in person for either lecture or section*),
2. All lectures will be recorded and made available via **Canvas**,
3. Discussion sections will utilize **Zoom**,
4. Written assignments will be submitted digitally through Canvas,
5. Office hours and one-on-one meetings with the instructional staff will take place over Zoom (or, by mutual agreement, some other platform such as Skype, WhatsApp, or FaceTime).

Because the transition to the online format was fairly sudden, it is possible that the quarter may get off to a rocky start, particularly as we all get used to digital lectures and the Zoom platform. Please check Canvas frequently for announcements, as we may need to clarify certain instructions, or to tweak the course format in response to students' feedback and the incredibly fluid nature of the current public health setting. Naturally, you should all feel free to reach out to the instructional team with questions and concerns.

It is *unlikely*, but not out of the realm of possibility, that either students or members of the instructional team will fall ill during the quarter. If you do fall ill, please try to keep your TA apprised of your situation, so that we may arrange for an incomplete, or enact other policies as mandated by the University or the Department of Political Science. If members of the instructional team fall ill, we will try our best to maintain the continuity of course by assigning alternate TAs to facilitate lecture or discussion.

The health and safety of our students remains a priority. The instructional team will carefully monitor the COVID-19 situation, and adapt the course structure and policies as necessary to accommodate any developments, and to maintain compliance with all University and departmental guidelines.

¹Under guidance from the Department of Political Science and the **Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor**, we will plan to hold *all* lectures and discussion sections online for the *entirety* of the Spring Quarter, and transition back to in-class lectures and discussion sections if and only if the University updates its policies.

You can find the latest information and updates regarding the Novel Coronavirus at the [UC San Diego Information Center](#). This website also contains a section on the [CDC's](#) recommendations to help prevent the spread of viruses, such as [SARS-COV-2](#). If you develop symptoms consistent with the flu, or are concerned that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, please reach out to [Student Health Services](#). Additionally, we understand that many students may be worried about the virus and the general atmosphere of uncertainty, and may experience heightened feelings of anxiety. If you would like access to counseling services, there are resources available through UC San Diego's [Counseling and Psychological Services](#).

2 Instructional Team

Michael F. Seese, Course Instructor
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Email: mseese@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: Online, by appointment
Zoom Sessions: Mondays, 11:00am (Optional)
Zoom ID: 946-971-4335
Zoom Meeting Link: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/9469714335> (Office Hours)

Teaching Assistants

Name	Email	Section(s)	Office Hours	Zoom ID (OH)
Adam Fefer	afefer@ucsd.edu	15, 19, 20	Online, by appointment	739-830-8255
Lauren Garvey	lgarvey@ucsd.edu	17, 18	Online, by appointment	774-927-6352
Gregoire Phillips	giphilli@ucsd.edu	14	Online, by appointment	725-843-0004

3 Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics, a diverse and vibrant subfield of political science that utilizes the comparative method, and other empirical methods, to study political institutions, processes, and outcomes both within and across individual countries. We will cover a range of topics, including:

1. The origins of the state,
2. Democracy, autocracy, and transitions,
3. Political violence,
4. Politically marginalized groups, and
5. Governance and government performance.

The course is divided into three units, the first of which provides an overview of the scope and methods of comparative politics, and examines the foundations of the state—the primary unit of analysis of comparative politics. The second unit provides an overview of the two main forms of government that exist in the world today: democracy and autocracy. We explore the varieties of democracy, and learn how democratic

states are organized and how preferences are aggregated through the use of elections. We then look at autocracies and the various constraints faced by autocratic leaders. We discuss how these leaders attempt to maintain power in light of their constraints. We then consider transitions to and from democracy—the processes of democratization and democratic backsliding. The third unit surveys various outcomes, or “dependent variables” of interest to scholars of comparative politics. The list of topics covered in this final unit is somewhat aspirational—we may not get through all of them. The intent is to provide students with an overview of the major research programs in the subfield.

4 Assignments & Grades

4.1 Readings

All of the assigned readings are available on [electronic reserve](#) through the library. There are no required textbooks, though we will read quite extensively from the second edition of Arend Lijphart’s *Patterns of Democracy*. This book costs about \$18.00 (new on Amazon), and may be worth the investment for political science majors. Throughout the quarter, we will also read from Macartan Humphreys’s *Political Games: Mathematical Insights on Fighting, Voting, Lying, and Other Affairs of State*. This book runs about \$38.00 (new on Amazon), and is a fairly easy, non-technical introduction to basic political games. I highly recommend this book for all social science majors interested in [game theory](#) and [formal modeling](#).²

Typically, students will need to read between two and four papers or book chapters per week. These are not textbook readings, but rather academic works that require close attention and thought. Some of these readings are in fact quite difficult, though students are not expected to understand every reading prior to lecture. We will spend a great deal of time in both lecture and discussion section identifying and analyzing the authors’ main points. Additionally, *please pay attention to the assigned pages and sections*. Occasionally, only a portion of a paper or book chapter will be assigned; we will try to skip over some of the more technical details of these pieces, and instead focus on the authors’ theories and conclusions.

4.2 Written Exams

There are two scheduled exams:

1. One midterm (tentatively scheduled for Monday of Week 6), and
2. One final (essay format, due during finals week).

The midterm will consist of both multiple choice and short answer identification questions. The multiple choice questions will test your knowledge of important facts from the lecture material and readings. For the short answer identification questions, students will be asked to identify and explain several key concepts from the course. This exam will be administered through Canvas, and will have a strict 50 minute time constraint. The exam will be open book and open note, but designed in such a way to discourage the use of these materials. We ask that you complete the exams *individually*, and refrain from working groups and discussing your responses with other students in the course.

For the final essay, students will select one prompt (out of two or three options) to write a four to five page paper on. Final essay prompts will be distributed on Monday of Week 10 (at the latest). A digital copy

²Note that copies of both of these books have been ordered through the [UC San Diego Bookstore](#).

of your papers will be due through the Turnitin link on the course website. More detailed instructions for both of these exams will be provided over the course of the term.

These exams are not designed to trick you; there will be no “gotcha” questions on either the midterm or final. Instead, these exams are designed to assess your understanding of the course material covered in lectures, sections, and readings. We will provide a study guide prior to the midterm exam. This guide is not meant to limit the potential topics on the exams (i.e., the midterm may include questions on topics not listed on the study guide), but rather to focus your attention on some of the more important concepts from the course (i.e., the study guide will cover the topics most likely to appear on the midterm).

4.3 Grading

Your overall grade for this course is calculated as the weighted average of your midterm, final, and participation grade. The weights are as follows:

Midterm Short Answer	35%
Final Essay	45%
Discussion Section	20%
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	100%

5 Course Policies

5.1 Lectures and Zoom Sessions

One of the advantages of this quarter’s digital format is that the class is not constrained to an 8:00am lecture slot. Students will *not* be required to log into lectures at a specified time. Rather, pre-recorded lectures will be posted to Canvas. These videos will drop on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8:00am, which is our normally scheduled lecture time, though students are free to view them at their leisure.

Because of the flexibility allowed by video lectures, some of the posted lectures may be longer or shorter than the regular 50 minutes, though we will ensure that the total length of lecture content does not exceed the 950 minutes of lecture time allocated to us this quarter (i.e., 19 lectures × 50 minutes per lecture). Note that some lectures may be broken up into shorter videos due to file size and upload constraints. In addition to these pre-recorded lecture videos, all lecture slides will be posted to the course website.

While recorded lectures offer some convenience and flexibility, they also prevent engagement and dialogue between students and instructor. To make up for this “Socratic deficit,” we will host a 30 minute Zoom session each week on Mondays at 11:00am (beginning in Week 2). This session is strictly optional, and will not contain any new lecture material. These sessions are an opportunity for students to engage directly with the course instructor, to ask questions, and to seek clarification on lectures and other course material.

5.2 Discussion Sections

In addition to lecture, students are required to attend a weekly discussion section, facilitated through Zoom. These sections will take place during the time slot listed on the [UC San Diego schedule of classes](#), and will provide you with an opportunity to discuss the assigned readings, current events, and other relevant topics

with your peers and TA. These sections are also an opportunity for you to ask your TA for further help and clarification on lectures and other course material.

Participation in discussion sections will be graded. Note that grading policies may differ by TA. Please “attend” (i.e., “log on to”) the discussion section for which you are registered.³ If you have an unavoidable conflict, encounter technical difficulties, or are unable to regularly participate in your registered section due to health concerns or other reasons, please contact your TA (preferably prior to missing section).

5.3 Late Work, Make Ups, Regrades

Late papers will not be accepted without a legitimate, documented excuse, such as extreme illness or family tragedy. Similarly, make up exams will not be provided without a legitimate, documented excuse. However, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate students that have genuine religious conflicts with scheduled exams. Additionally, an alternative due date will be offered for the *final essay*, prior to finals week (ideal for students who plan to leave town prior to the scheduled final exam period).

Regrade requests must be made to the instructor *in writing* in a timely manner. Written regrade requests should not exceed two paragraphs, and should outline any errors that you believe occurred in the grading process. Note that regrade requests are intended to correct grading errors, *not to negotiate a higher grade*. When submitting work for a regrade, the entire work will be evaluated, which may result in a lower grade.

5.4 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is expected of all students (and faculty) at UC San Diego. Lying, cheating, and dishonesty will not be tolerated, as these actions undermine learning and inhibit the university’s ability to certify students’ knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to enhance your grade (or anyone else’s) by lying, cheating, or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result in sanctions. Sanctions may include a failing grade in the class *and* suspension or dismissal from the university. You can read more about academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu>.

Because of the special online format of this course, it will be difficult for the instructional team to monitor individual behavior during exams. We ask that you complete your scheduled midterm exam *individually*, and report instances of suspected cheating to your TA or to the [Academic Integrity Office](#). If you witness cheating, or are asked to engage in cheating, you can contact the Academic Integrity Office at aio@ucsd.edu, submit an online report at [this](#) website, or submit an *anonymous* online report at [this](#) website.

5.5 Accessibility & Accommodations

Students with disabilities may request accommodations through the Office for Students with Disabilities, located in University Center, Room 202. Students must present their “Authorization for Accommodation” letters to the course instructor and the Department of Political Science *prior* to the midterm or final exam to receive accommodation. We are unable to accommodate students retroactively. More information is available online at <http://osd.ucsd.edu>.⁴

³Students in discussion sections with low enrollment *may* be given the opportunity to participate in a different discussion section, hosted by your assigned TA, *as long as all other members of your discussion section are willing to switch, and your assigned TA gives his or her consent*. More details on this particular policy will be provided by your TA during the first couple of weeks of the quarter.

⁴These policies may have changed over the past few weeks in response to the new online course format for Spring 2020. If you require accommodation, please coordinate with OSD and your TAs.

Students that require academic support should contact the [UCSD Teaching + Learning Commons](#), which offers tutoring and group study, supplemental instruction, and writing support. Non-native English speakers and those with limited academic writing experience are encouraged to reach out to the [UCSD Writing Hub](#), located in Geisel Library.⁵

5.6 Inclusion & Basic Needs

The instructional team is committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identity. Harassment of any form will not be tolerated. Any speech or act that is blatantly or implicitly discriminatory, intimidating, or predatory will be reported to the [UCSD Office of Student Conduct](#) and / or the [UCSD Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination](#).

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in this course, is encouraged to contact the [UC San Diego Basic Needs Center](#) or the [Triton Food Pantry](#).

We are cognizant of the fact that the unusual format for this class may impose undue burden on some students. If you have difficulty accessing the technology necessary to participate in, or to complete this course, please reach out the instructional team. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your particular circumstance.

5.7 Digital Course Presence

Online course materials, including lectures and announcements, are available through [Canvas](#). Additionally, weekly sessions with the instructor and all discussion sections will utilize [Zoom](#).

5.7.1 Zoom

Many, if not all of your courses this quarter will utilize Zoom. We will use Zoom primarily for required discussion sections, office hours, and an optional weekly chat with the course instructor. To ensure a smooth transition to this digital learning environment, please be sure to download and install the Zoom app *prior* to your first discussion section meeting. You may want to use the test call feature to make sure your setup works before joining your first few Zoom sessions.⁶ Below are a few general guidelines we would like to implement for both formal discussion sections, and the informal weekly Zoom sessions with the instructor:

1. Please keep your video feed / webcam *on* during discussion sections.
 - (a) Set up your camera view so that you are in the center of the frame with good lighting, and avoid bright backlighting (e.g., sitting in front of a sunny window).
 - (b) Be mindful of what is in the background of your video frame (family, roommates, pets, the espresso bar at the coffee shop you're sitting in, etc.), and try to avoid joining the meeting from a place with a lot of background noise and movement.
 - (c) Keep classroom standards of appropriate dress and behavior. In particular, please be fully dressed while attending section.

⁵Some of these resources may be unavailable during the Spring 2020 quarter, though my understanding is that students can set up online consultations with tutors and and writing consultants.

⁶The instructional team is *not* able to provide technical support. There are resources on campus, such as the [ITS Service Desk](#), that may be able to assist you with certain software issues.

- (d) To maintain eye contact in Zoom, look at your camera, not at your monitor.
- 2. Keep an eye on your mic status, and mute your mic when you are not speaking.
 - (a) To avoid disruptive feedback, always use headphones rather than the speakers on your device.
 - (b) Avoid asking “can you hear me?” or similar questions. Your TA will let you know if they think you may be mistakenly muted or if the video feed degrades.
- 3. Feel free to chime in if no one else is speaking. These sections are meant to facilitate discussion of course material. The digital format should not distract from this goal.
 - (a) If someone else is speaking, please raise your hand (or similar) and wait to be acknowledged (there is a button on Zoom that will allow you to digitally “raise your hand”).
 - (b) Use the chat feature, which the TA will monitor, rather than breaking into ongoing conversation with off topic questions.
- 4. Be prepared to be randomly called upon to contribute to discussion (e.g., do not hide the Zoom window to watch Netflix and / or **cat videos**).
- 5. If you experience a disconnection and miss content, please email your TA.
 - (a) Note that temporarily turning off your video feed may help improve your experience on a bad connection.
 - (b) Ensure your computer or device is plugged into power if it is portable; video chat consumes battery faster than many other apps.
- 6. Attend the meeting as you would attend a regular class. Please do not walk off with your AirPods on to use the restroom (you’re muted... right?).
- 7. Remember that you do not need fancy hardware to participate in these Zoom meetings; your device’s camera or a basic webcam and a set of inexpensive earbuds is more than adequate.
- 8. Exercise patience as we all explore and learn this new mode of interacting.

One final point: If you are attending online classes all day, be sure to practice self care. Get outside and walk around as you would if you were walking to class (though please follow all safety and social-distancing guidelines set forth by the University, local and state officials, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), fit some time in for exercise, and try to disconnect from your screen for a few hours each day.

Schedule of Classes and Reading Assignments

This schedule is tentative, and subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Unit 1 — Scope and Methods

Week 1: Introduction

- Monday, 30 March: Course Introduction
 - Acemoglu & Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, Chapters 1, 3
- Wednesday, 1 April: The Practice of Comparative Political Science
 - Lijphart, *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method*
 - * Read pp. 682–685, pp. 691–693; skip section “The Comparative Method: Weaknesses and Strengths”
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Games 1, 2, and 3

Week 2: The State

- Monday, 6 April: The Origins of the State
 - Olson, *Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development*
 - * Read entire paper, but focus on the following sections: Introduction, “The First Blessing of the Invisible Hand,” and “The Grasping Hand”
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Games 4, 5, and 6
- Wednesday, 8 April: Varieties of Democracy
 - Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapters 1 – 4

Unit 2 — Democracy, Autocracy, and Transitions

Week 3: Democracy

- Monday, 13 April: Presidential and Parliamentary Democracy
 - Moe & Caldwell, *The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Government: A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems*
 - Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 7
 - * Read pp. 105–123, 127–129; skip section “Cabinet Types and Cabinet Durability”
- Wednesday, 15 April: Electoral Rules and Party Systems
 - Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapters 5, 8
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Games 8, 9, 11, and 12

Week 4: Autocracy

- Monday, 20 April: Authoritarian Institutions
 - Gandhi & Przeworski, *Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats*
 - * Skim section on “Predicting Dictatorial Institutions” (pp. 1284–1287). This is not overly technical, so it should be fairly easy to pick up the main point; there’s no need to interpret the tables, or to learn what an ordered probit model is.
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Game 39
- Wednesday, 22 April: Authoritarian Elections
 - Gandhi & Lust-Okar, *Elections Under Authoritarianism*
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Game 20

Week 5: Transitions

- Monday, 27 April: Democratic Transitions & Democratic Backsliding
 - Geddes, *What do we Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?*
 - Waldner & Lust, *Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding*
 - * Skip section “Finding Backsliding: What are the Indicators?” (pp. 96–97)
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Games 42, 43, and 44
- Wednesday, 29 April: Ethiopia Case Study
 - *No Readings!*

Week 6: Midterm

- Monday, 4 May: Midterm Exam
 - *No Readings!*
- Wednesday, 6 May: Kenya Case Study
- *No Readings!*

Unit 3 — Survey of Topics in Comparative Politics

Week 7: Political Violence

- Monday, 11 May: Civil War
 - Fearon & Laitin, *Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War*
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Games 27, 30
- Wednesday, 13 May: High Risk Participation
 - Humphreys & Weinstein, *Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War*
 - * Try your best to interpret the tables, but don’t worry if you’re unclear on the math.

Week 8: Politically Marginalized Groups

- Monday, 18 May: Immigrant Exclusion
 - Hainmueller & Hangartner, *Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination*
 - * Skim the following sections: “Robustness: Private Information,” “Robustness: General Hidden Bias,” and “Robustness: Further Issues”
- Wednesday, 20 May: Female Participation
 - Beaman, et al., *Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India*

Week 9: The Lame Leviathan

- Monday, 25 May: Memorial Day Holiday
 - *No Readings!*
- Wednesday, 27 May: Order Without States
 - Skarbek, *Governance and Prison Gangs*
 - Bates, *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*, Chapter 1
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Game 1 (again), 31

Week 10: Governance

- Monday, 1 June: Corruption
 - Fried, Lagunes, and Venkataramani, *Corruption and Inequality at the Crossroad: A Multimethod Study of Bribery and Discrimination in Latin America*
- Wednesday, 3 June: Accountability
 - Grossman & Michelitch, *Information Dissemination, Competitive Pressure, and Politician Performance Between Elections: A Field Experiment in Uganda*
 - * Skip “Empirical Model” section
 - Humphreys, *Political Games*, Game 38

Finals Week

- Digital copy of final papers due to Turnitin by 11:00am, Friday, 12 June.

Bibliography

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