

# POLI 4063: Comparative Political Institutions

Fall 2014  
Tureaud 213  
Tu Th 3:00 - 4:20

Dr. Joshua D. Potter  
Office: 232 Stubbs  
Email: jpotter@lsu.edu

## Course Overview

This course is designed to give students an overview of the role of political institutions in democracies around the world. In particular, the course will focus on institutions in countries outside of the American context and topics will include: democratic theory, collective action, constitution writing, group decision-making, social identities and representation, elections, institutional checks and balances, and various economic, federal, and international policies.

## Course Structure

I will assume that all students have taken at least one introductory level course in political science. Each class will be heavily predicated on lectures, but will also rely on participation from students, class discussion, and in-class simulations to illustrate important concepts. Students will generally be responsible for 2-4 hours of reading in advance of each class meeting. I will be available throughout the semester for consultation with students, either via email or in-person during office hours.

## Requirements and Evaluation

**Examinations (40 points).** Each exam will be worth 20 points and there will be two in total; one during the midterm week and one during finals week. The exams will mostly be comprised of short essay questions, but will also include a shorter section of more objective multiple choice questions.

**Term Papers (50 points).** There will be two 5-page term papers; the first worth 20 points and the second worth 30 points. I will take the assessment of your written work very seriously. The specific requirements for each paper will be circulated at least three weeks prior to the due dates and I will be happy to read preliminary drafts and offer students advanced comments.

**Participation (10 points).** There will be a variety of opportunities to participate in class, whether through asking questions, engaging in discussion, or actively working on in-class simulations. My assessment of the student's overall participation level will account for 10 points of his or her final grade.

**Random Draws (Extra Credit).** Each day in class I will draw students' names at random. If his or her name is drawn, the student will be asked to answer a question either about the readings or the lecture content. If the student is present and answers correctly, she will receive 1/2 a point extra credit. If he is present and answers incorrectly, no penalty. However, if the student's name is called and he is not in class, then he will be assessed a penalty of *minus* 1/2 a point. In this way, the prepared student who attends class should have a nice, 3- or 4-point buffer by semester's end.

## Grading Scale

Final grades and evaluations of individual tasks will be assigned in accordance with the following distribution: **A** (90-100 or superior), **B** (80-89 or strong), **C** (70-79 or average), **D** (60-69 or below average), and **F** (59 and below or failing).

## Course Policies

Please note that by enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by these policies.

**Grade Appeals.** Across different types of evaluations, I will grade students' work carefully and without bias. When grading more subjective work, I read through all papers or all essay responses on exams before assigning a specific score to any individual paper or essay. This ensures that I am able to comparatively situate any given paper or essay score in the broader distribution of capabilities across all students. It also ensures that the student is not receiving an arbitrary or impressionistic assessment of his or her work. I enjoy grading and I am always more than willing to discuss my grading decisions with students, preferably in person and outside of class meetings. As a standing policy for this particular course, however, *I will not regrade work* under any circumstances. Because there is only one grader in the class and no teaching assistants, I can guarantee a very high level of care, fairness, and homogeneity in the grading process. In return, I ask that you respect the outcome.

**Late Work.** I do not accept late work. Please plan ahead!

**Attendance.** Highly recommended. Note that I will not circulate lecture slides outside of class, so you will have to rely on classmates for help with missed materials. Refer to the section on course requirements above to get an idea of how skipping class might adversely affect your grade.

**Special Accommodations.** In private consultation with me, special accommodations can be made for a variety of reasons: exams can be rescheduled if they fall during a particular religious observance, exams can be administered with provisions made for learning accommodations, students can sit closer to the front of the room in the event of hearing or sight impairments, personal tragedies can be taken into consideration, etc. Please meet with me as early in the semester as possible so that we can work together on these issues. Keep in mind that foresight is always better than hindsight. Where documentation is appropriate, I will ask that you provide it.

**Technology.** This course is a dialogue, not a monologue. Although I will do most of the talking, you will also be asked to join in and you may always feel free to ask questions or offer insights during the lecture. Just as browsing the internet, text messaging, or talking on a cell phone would be disrespectful during conversation, so too is it disrespectful during course meetings. Please help me maintain a quiet, thoughtful environment where you and your peers can focus rigorously on the materials at hand. Repeatedly disruptive students will be asked to leave.

**Safety.** I will maintain a safe environment in the classroom. This includes, pursuant to university regulations, enforcing the strictest of bans on firearms and other weapons. On the first day of class, we will review the university's safety policies related to inclement weather or other emergencies.

## Office Hours

In my experience, the best predictor of a student's success in an upper level course is the whether he or she spent time consulting with the teaching staff outside of the classroom. This is particularly helpful in advance of major exams or papers. That being said, I have also noticed that regularly scheduled office hours tend to be too constraining for students' (and my) busy schedules. Thus, I am happy to meet with students at any point during the week, *provided* they have contacted me ahead of time to schedule a visit. In general, I keep regular business hours in my office (Stubbs TBD) aside from the lunch hour and when I am teaching.

## Academic Honesty

The lifeblood and grounding principle of a college education is that each student is responsible for his or her own learning. Plagiarism, cheating, or misrepresenting one's identity on assignments or exams will not be tolerated. Students are encouraged to review the university's policies regarding academic honesty, which can be found at <http://saa.lsu.edu/academic-integrity>. Please note that I routinely make and retain copies of papers and exams to cross check their validity. I will refer all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Student Advocacy & Accountability Panel. If this panel's review finds a student guilty, then he or she will automatically fail the course.

## Course Readings

There are no required texts for this course other than what I circulate electronically to students. Typically, we will have 2-3 readings per class period and students are responsible for learning the material before coming to class. In the schedule below, those readings listed next to each calendar date should be prepared for that day.

We will not be relying on a textbook for reading assignments. This has both pros and cons. The benefits are that we will be reading several cutting-edge research manuscripts and these will represent several unique perspectives on each of our major topics. To that extent, I think the list of readings for this course should prove to be exciting. On the downside, because we're engaging primary documents rather than summaries of their content, the reading load will be slightly demanding and assigned manuscripts should be read carefully and in detail.

There are two primary types of readings for this course: **book chapters** (or review manuscripts) and **research articles** (or manuscripts that have been published in academic journals).

For book chapters, please read the entirety of the manuscripts closely, paying particular attention to the introductory and concluding sections (in fact, it might be a good idea to read both of these sections *first* before then reading the rest of the manuscript).

For research articles, be sure to pay similar attention to the introduction and conclusion, but also the "theoretical" or "argument" section. In most cases, there will also be "data" or "empirical analysis" sections. For the purposes of our course, you can safely skim over these sections; we will primarily be interested in theoretical concepts.

## Course Schedule

### Tuesday, August 26 / Introduction

- No required reading

### Thursday, August 28 / The Tragedy of the Commons

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. Chapter 8 in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 1997. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Ostrom, Elinor. Chapter 1 in *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. 1990. Cambridge University Press.
- North, Douglas. Chapter 2 in *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. 1990. Cambridge University Press.

### Tuesday, September 2 / Aggregating Group Preferences

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. Chapter 3 in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 1997. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Patty, John W. and Elizabeth Maggie Penn. Chapter 1 in *Social Choice and Legitimacy*. 2014. Cambridge University Press.
- Riker, William H. Chapter 1 in *Liberalism Against Populism*. 1982. Waveland Press.

### Thursday, September 4 / Institutions Solve Problems

- North, Douglas. Chapter 1 in *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. 1990. Cambridge University Press.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. Chapter 2 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

### Tuesday, September 9 / Constitutions

- North, Douglas. Chapter 4 in *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. 1990. Cambridge University Press.
- Hardin, Russell. Chapter 16 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, September 11 / Veto Players Theory**

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. Chapter 5 in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 1997. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Tsebelis, George. Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. 2002. Russell Sage Foundation.

**Tuesday, September 16 / Identities as Institutions**

- Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner, and Jeremy Weinstein. "Is Ethnic Conflict Inevitable? Better Institutions, Not Partition." 2008. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation" 1996. *American Political Science Review*.
- Penn, Elizabeth Maggie. "Citizenship versus Ethnicity: The Role of Institutions in Shaping Identity Choice." 2008. *The Journal of Politics*.

**Thursday, September 18 / In-Class Simulation 1: Manipulating Preferences**

- No required reading
- Circulate and discuss Paper 1 Prompt

**Tuesday, September 23 / Types of Democracy**

- Lijphart, Arend. Chapters 2 and 3 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 1999. Yale University Press.

**Thursday, September 25 / Why Parties?**

- Aldrich, John. Chapter 1 in *Why Parties? A Second Look*. 2011. University of Chicago Press.
- Janda, Kenneth. Chapter 7 in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. 1993. American Political Science Association.

**Tuesday, September 30 / Party Systems: Social Explanations**

- Boix, Carles. Chapter 21 in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. 2007. Oxford University Press.
- Hagopian, Frances. Chapter 24 in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. 2007. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, October 2 / Fall Holiday, No Class**

**Tuesday, October 7 / Party Systems: Institutional Explanations**

- Gallagher, Michael and Paul Mitchell. Chapters 1 and 2 in *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. 2005. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, October 9 / Paper 1 Due / Spatial Theories of Party Competition**

- Downs, Anthony. Chapter 8 in *An Economic Theory of Voting*. 1957. Harper & Brothers.
- Budge, Ian. "A New Spatial Theory of Party Competition: Uncertainty, Ideology, and Policy Equilibria View Comparatively and Temporally." 1994. *British Journal of Political Science*.

**Tuesday, October 14 / In-Class Simulation 2: Winning an Election**

- No required reading
- In-class examination review

**Thursday, October 16 / Midterm Examination**

**Tuesday, October 21 / Presidential Democracies**

- Lijphart, Arend. Chapter 7 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 1999. Yale University Press.
- Howell, William G. Chapter 16 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, October 23 / Parliamentary Democracies**

- Lijphart, Arend. Chapter 6 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 1999. Yale University Press.
- Rhodes, R. A. W. Chapter 17 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Tuesday, October 28 / Government Formation and Duration**

- Laver, Michael. "Models of Government Formation." 1998. *Annual Review Political Science*.
- Laver, Michael. "Government Termination." 2003. *Annual Review of Political Science*.

**Thursday, October 30 / Legislative Organization**

- Circulate and discuss Paper 2 Prompt
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. Chapter 12 in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 1997. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Cox, Gary W. Chapter 8 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Tuesday, November 4 / Institutions and Economic Performance**

- Persson, Torsten and Guido Tabellini. Chapter 2 in *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. 2003. MIT Press.
- Glaeser, Edward L. Chapter 34 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, November 6 / In-Class Simulation 3: Forming a Government**

- No required reading

**Tuesday, November 11 / Hybrid Political Systems**

- Shugart, Matthew Soberg. "Semi-Presidential Systems: Dual Executive and Mixed Authority Patterns." 2005. *French Politics*.
- Shugart, Matthew Soberg. "Electoral Efficiency and the Move to Mixed-Member Systems." 2001. *Electoral Studies*.

**Thursday, November 13 / Political Decentralization**

- Lijphart, Arend. Chapter 10 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 1999. Yale University Press.
- Rodden, Jonathan A. "Comparative Federalism and Decentralization: On Meaning and Measurement." 2004. *Comparative Politics*.

**Tuesday, November 18 / The Bureaucracy**

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. Chapter 13 in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. 1997. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kettl, Donald F. Chapter 19 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. 2006. Oxford University Press.

**Thursday, November 20 / Paper 2 Due / Central Bank Independence**

- Lijphart, Arend. Chapter 13 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 1999. Yale University Press.
- Rosas, Guillermo. "Bagshot or Bailout? An Analysis of Government Responses to Banking Crises." 2006. *American Journal of Political Science*.

**Tuesday, November 25 / Potter Out of Town, No Class**

**Thursday, November 27 / Thanksgiving Break, No Class**

**Tuesday, December 2 / Domestic Institutions and International Cooperation**

- Putnam, Robert D. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." 1988. *International Organization*.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley. "Domestic Political Institutions, Credible Commitments, and International Cooperation." 1999. *American Journal of Political Science*.

**Thursday, December 4 / In-Class Simulation 4: Capstone Activity**

- No required reading
- In-class examination review

**Tuesday, December 9 / Final Examination**

- Test period from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
- Final grades submitted by 12:00 PM on December 11