

Comparative Politics

Last Updated: Sat, 08/02/2025

Course prefix: INTA

Course number: 3203

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
82098

Instructor First Name: Kirk

Instructor Last Name: Bowman

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

Comparative Politics is both the most interesting field in social science and a method that helps us understand causation and make comparisons with inference. The comparative method is the core of comparative politics and what appeals to so many of us that make this our passion, interest, and career. It helps us develop and solve puzzles. It helps us to think critically about the role and potential of government, society, and power.

Comparative politics is a very broad field that includes international comparative research on democracy, gender, inequality, economic development, elections, authoritarianism, class, the state, comparative social policy, etc. Why is Costa Rica richer and more democratic than Honduras? Why are some countries parliamentary democracies with prime ministers while other democracies have presidents and senates? Does it matter? Why is 40% of the Argentine legislature made up of women politicians compared to only 8% in Brazil? Why did revolution spread across North Africa and the Middle East in recent years? How did Robert Mugabe get re-elected so often in Zimbabwe? What are the causes and effects of binomial voting districts? Why are populists so en vogue in 2020? Why do some governments do much better than others in dealing with Covid-19?

This class introduces the method and concepts and some cases of comparative politics. After mastering the method and concepts through a lecture and readings, we will take a deeper look at democracy and the current demise of full, liberal democracy around the globe. Then, pairs of students will develop comparative analysis and present to the class in the form of a TedX Talk.

Course learning outcomes:

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain a working knowledge of the comparative method, inference, variables, and will use scientific methodology to make claims about causation and inference.
- Student will demonstrate the role of institutions and electoral rules in political outcomes.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and theories of comparative politics.
- Students will demonstrate an advanced understanding of populism, authoritarianism, fascism, and democracy.
- Students will demonstrate the skill and ability connect linkages between an historical novel and concepts and theories of comparative politics.

Required course materials:

Doing Comparative Politics: An Introduction to Approaches and Issues, 3rd edition

Timothy C. Lim

Paperback: \$35.00

ISBN: 978-1-62637-450-8

Grading policy:

Grading:

Discussion Questions:	20%
Midterm	25%
TedX Talk:	20%
Final exam:	35%

Final exam is cumulative. I cannot stress enough that exam content will include reading not covered in class and class material not covered in reading. Lecture slides will NOT be shared.

Attendance policy:

There will be no attendance and no quizzes, but there are discussion questions for each session and those will be collected at **the beginning** of class on 7 random days (5 will count for 20 percent of your grade). If you turn in late during class, there will be a 20% deduction. Exams will be at least 50% from lectures. If you do not attend, make sure you have someone in class that you can get good notes from. Videos, podcasts, and short

timely readings will also be assigned along with the readings. The discussion questions, videos, and any additional short readings will be posted by Sunday of each week.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion