PLSC 502 Theories of Comparative Politics FALL 2021

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Office: Room 113-A, E-Block

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday from 2pm to 3pm (or by appointment)

Course Details

Room E-039, 4-6.45pm on Wednesdays. This course amounts to 3 credit hours and will be taught in a seminar format. It is therefore essential that students participate actively every class meeting, which is why **reading the assigned texts must be done before class begins each week**. Engaging in discussion about ideas and how they are communicated is fundamental to the academic enterprise. Students thus should view doing the assigned readings and being prepared to contribute to class discussions as a bare minimum of what is expected of you. In order to participate usefully in discussions you will not only have to read a great deal, but you absolutely must think about what you have read and communicate your thinking—arguments, conclusions, questions, and criticisms.

Course Description

This is a core course for the M.Phil program in Political Science. Rather than being a current events course, it is designed to introduce incoming graduate students to many (but not all) of the major topics of study, theories and debates in Comparative Politics, one of the three major sub-fields in Political Science. As such, it does not, nor is it in any way intended to, focus on conveying detailed information about politics in different countries or even thematic areas of interest. Because Comparative Politics is a broad subfield, no single course could possibly cover it all. Hence, the intent here is to open the doors to how and why scholars "do" Comparative Politics. Your focus in class discussions and as you read thus should be on ideas, arguments, and evidence — i.e., research design, broadly construed — with an eye to discerning how an idea fits into the landscape of the literature in the subfield, whether arguments are "good" and to what extent they contribute to our ability to understand the world, and the degree to which the evidence brought to bear in support of arguments and explanations is relevant, useful, or otherwise illuminating. Ultimately, the goal is teach graduate students how to think rigorously and systematically about social science research.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- understand basic concepts related to Comparative Politics

- Analyze the theoretical underpinnings of important political phenomenon, such as political parties, elections, institutions, and policy formation

- Identify and discuss solutions to problems identified with theoretical concepts

- Communicate effectively through discussions and written responses

- Apply methods, theories, and concepts covered in the course to their own research interests

Required Readings

The readings for this course will be distributed by the instructor through Moodle. No other textbooks are required. Students are only responsible for reading the required texts; suggested texts are listed to provide additional resources.

Course Assessment

This course will assess the students through six different instruments. The breakdown for the course's assignments is given below.

Assignment Name	Marks Percentage	Mode
Participation in weekly discussions	15%	In-person
Seminar Leadership	15%	In-person
Response Papers (4)	20%	Online
Take-home Midterm	15%	Online
Term Paper	25%	Online
Term Paper Presentations	10%	In-person

1. **Weekly Class Discussions & Participation:** Each week students will participate in class discussions when they are on-campus. These discussions will be held on Moodle through a discussion forum for students who have permission from the Vice Rector's Office (VRO) to take the entire course online. Excluding any special weeks listed in the Reading Schedule, all other weeks will have class discussions that will be graded. Reading the assigned texts before coming to class is required, and students are expected to take part in class discussions based on their understanding of the readings. Before each class, the instructor will ask students to provide questions they have for the week's readings individually, which will be subsequently addressed during the lecture. Students can also post questions in a separate 'Questions' thread on Moodle.

   Students' Responsibilities:

   Each student must have questions ready that pertain to the week's readings. The instructor may ask each student individually to provide her/his questions before the start of each class. Each student must participate in class and respond to discussion questions (in-person or online on Moodle if semester is being taken completely online). **Completely online students are responsible for participation through Moodle discussion forums only; blended mode students will get their attendance and discussion graded in-class only**. If course switches to fully online instruction for some reason, then discussions will be held through Moodle forums. The expectations for each mode of learning are listed below.

   For blended-mode students: In-class participation will be graded.

For completely online students: Students following along online will have discussion questions posted online as a forum post on Moodle. These forum posts will be online during the entire corresponding week, but will be taken down after the Friday class of each week. Before this deadline, each online asynchronous student must respond at least once to the instructor's original question. Replying to other students' replies is encouraged but is not mandatory. Online students can also ask their own questions in the Questions thread.

2. **Seminar Leadership:** Each student will serve as seminar leader at least once during the semester. The seminar leader will come to class prepared to present (1) a brief review of the main points of the readings, (2) critical commentary on the readings, and (3) questions for discussion. Furthermore, the student will be responsible for guiding the class discussion during the seminar. Each performance as seminar leader will constitute 15% of the course grade. In case of there being more students than weeks in the semester, some weeks will have two seminar leaders. Seminar leaderships will be assigned in the first week, and being absent from class when a student is supposed to be the seminar leader will be treated as a serious offense and will incur additional penalties.

3. **Response Papers:** Students will write **four (4)** response papers in total in the specified weeks (see Response Paper Schedule section below). Students must write a **two-page, double-spaced, size 12 font** response paper for each of the chosen weeks. Response papers must be submitted online through the relevant submission links on Moodle. Submissions after the start of the class will be considered late and will result in penalties (described below in the course policies section).

A response paper is a student's reaction to the week's assigned readings, and must include a demonstration of the student's understanding of the text. Students can choose to write a response paper on only one of the week's readings, or they can choose to combine two readings with a similar topic; if writing on two readings, students must still write only **one** response paper per week. The response paper should not be a summary of the reading; rather, it should contain the student's critique of the material and ways to overcome said shortcomings.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must write four response papers during the semester. Response papers must be submitted before the start of the respective week's class on Moodle. For example, if you choose to write a response paper for Week 4's readings, then your response paper is due at the start of the Monday class in Week 4.

4. **Take-home Midterm:** The instructor will assign a question for a take-home midterm exam, and submission deadlines will be intimated later on. The take-home midterm exam will make students answer a question based on applying a concept that they would have covered in their readings. The answer to the midterm exam should not exceed **six (6) double-spaced pages with size 12 font**. This paper must be submitted online through Moodle; no other modes of submission are allowed. The grading rubric for the research paper is available on Moodle.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must complete and submit the take-home midterm exam through Moodle, keeping in mind the parameters mentioned above.

5. **Term/Research Paper and Presentations:** Instead of an in-person exam, this course will have a term paper that will be due during the exams week (specific deadlines will be communicated later on). This paper must be submitted online through Moodle; no other modes of submission are allowed. In order to ensure a continuous focus on the research paper, the paper's total grade is divided into three portions: introduction, literature review, and main theory/analysis. Each component will be due at a different time

(see the Reading List for more details). The introduction section will be due in Week 10, the literature review will be due in Week 12, and the final paper draft - combining all previous work - will be due in the finals week. **Each student must also present a summary of their research in a presentation to the entire class in week 14.**

This paper must at least be **ten (10) double-spaced pages with size 12 font**; longer research papers are allowed but students are encouraged to write within the instructed parameters. Students are to pick their research paper topics earlier on in the course and discuss them with the instructor. They will be given guidance on how to conduct research, and will also be directed towards useful research resources. The grading rubric for the research paper is available on Moodle.

The research paper should extend a specific topic related to the readings in a scientific manner. Statistical and archival research are both accepted methods, but students must apply the skills they gain throughout the course in their research paper. In other words, the research paper should provide an interesting and insightful extension of a topic from the readings, which can be anything from applying a concept to a new context, to providing an alternative way to pursue a research agenda already identified by the readings. **The term paper must cite each referenced source properly in the Chicago citation format, and failure to do so will automatically result in a failing grade.** If a student is unsure about proper citation methods, s/he should consult the instructor as soon as possible to get guidance in this regard.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must complete and submit the term/research paper through Moodle, keeping in mind the parameters mentioned above.

Grading Legend

Below is the grading legend of FCCU (published in all catalogs and available on the FCCU website) as approved by the Academic Council and applies for Fall as well.

Grade	Point Value	Numerical Value	Meaning
A	4	93-100	Superior
A-	3.7	90-92	
B+	3.3	87-89	Good
B	3	83-86	
B-	2.7	80-82	
C+	2.3	77-79	Satisfactory
C	2	73-76	
C-	1.7	70-72	
D+	1.3	67-69	Passing
D	1	60-66	
F	0	59 or below	Failing

Important Course Policies

- **Mode of Instruction:** This course will be taught **in-person**, and will heavily make use of Moodle. Students will require access to internet and access to a PC for successful completion of assignments.

- **Asynchronous Online Notification:** If you have permission from the Vice Rector's Office (VRO) to attend the course online asynchronously for the entire semester, please contact the course instructor immediately.

- **Contacting the Instructor:** The best way to reach the instructor is through email. During the scheduled office hours, the instructor will respond within 45 minutes of the query being sent; response time outside of office hours is 16 hours max. If a student is participating in the course online, individual meetings can be arranged online via email. The instructor will be readily available for such meetings during office hours (listed above) and all a student needs to do is send a request for an individual meeting through email. The meeting link will be provided shortly afterwards, via Microsoft Teams. Online meetings outside of office hours will depend on instructor availability.

- **Response Time for Emails:** The instructor will **only communicate with students on their official FCCU email addresses**, and respond to all emails during 9am to 5pm during Mondays to Fridays, with a maximum reply time of 16 hours. If you have urgent matters that need discussion, try to participate during scheduled office hours. The instructor is not responsible for responding to queries between Friday evening after 5pm and Monday morning before 9am.

- **Submission of Assignments and Plagiarism:** All written assignments must be submitted through Moodle, and will be checked for plagiarism via TurnItIn. This software ensures that the work submitted is the student's own, and plagiarism and cheating in any class discussion or assignment will be dealt with a failing grade, and further disciplinary action will be taken according to FCC policies. Please read the relevant sections in your Student Handbook for further details.

- **Late Submissions:** Late submission of the midterm exam and research paper will result in automatic penalties. Each day that passes after the deadline for submission will result in a 5% overall grade reduction. Submitting an assignment at 12.01am when it was due at 12.00am will be considered to be late by a full day. No late submission for class discussions (if class held asynchronously) or response papers is allowed in any case.

- **Re-take Policies:** Absolutely no re-takes for any assignment are allowed, and no extensions will be given for any assignment as well. Under extreme circumstances beyond the student's control - such as electric or internet outages - s/he should inform the instructor. Retakes may be allowed in such cases, but will be subject to reduced grades/penalties. For instance, if a student requests a retake for a quiz, the total grade for the quiz will be reduced by 30%, i.e., no student will be able to retake the quiz with the assignment counting as 100% towards the course grade.

- **Extra-credit:** Absolutely no extra credit assignments will be given.

- **Participation Etiquette:** Students are expected to come to class on time; failure to do so will result in reduced points for participation. Personal attacks on other participants - including the instructor - through class discussions or other means will garner strict punishments. A written warning will be issued after one transgression, and further transgressions will result in an automatic failing grade in the course.

- **Electronics Policy:** Usage of cell phones and other electronic or recording devices is strictly prohibited in class. If you need to use your laptop or tablet to take notes, please see the instructor to obtain permission beforehand.

- **Language of Instruction:** The language of instruction for the course is English, as required by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). As such, the instructor is not responsible for delivering the lecture or disseminating class-related reading materials in a language other than English; however, reasonable accommodations can be made on an individual basis. All assignments are to be completed and submitted in English as well. Students facing difficulty with the medium of instruction should contact the instructor and seek help during office hours (or by appointment).

- **Accommodation for Disabled Students:** If a student is facing difficulty in the course due to a disability or handicap, please contact the instructor immediately to arrange for an appropriate instruction method.

- **Health Emergencies:** If a student or a student's family member encounters a health emergency that can have significant impact on the student's performance in the course, s/he should immediately inform the instructor. Failure to do so will result in absolutely no accommodations being made towards the course assessments.

- **Modifications in Syllabus:** This syllabus was designed to convey course information and requirements as accurately as possible. It is important to note however that it may be subject to change during the course

depending on the needs of the class and other situational factors. Such changes would be for the students' benefit and they will be notified of them as soon as possible.

Strategies for Success in the Course

- This course is reading-intensive. This means that students are expected to do the readings for each week beforehand, and engage in class discussions. In order to get a reasonable grade, students must do the readings regularly, and not fall behind. The readings for each week are listed in the Reading Schedule, and the instructor will upload each week's readings beforehand on Moodle. You are only responsible for doing the Required readings; the Suggested readings are there to provide useful insight in case a student wants to do a research paper on the respective topic.

- Participating in class discussions is a major chunk of the grade for this class. Therefore, students are expected to contribute to these discussions and demonstrate their understanding of the course material. Regular participation in class discussions is definitely a good way to go for this course. Be mindful of other participants' viewpoints during class discussions (see penalties related to class discussions in the above section).

- Ask questions and engage with the instructor over the course material. As no prior knowledge of the course material is required, students are bound to get confused from time to time. A good way to gain clarity is to ask questions from the instructor. The instructor's contact details and office hours are mentioned at the top of the syllabus. Students are advised to communicate with the instructor with respect in a formal manner.

- Try to work in a smart manner: focus on the key themes for readings and ask yourself if you understand what is being discussed. Your focus should be on understanding the concepts being discussed. Always ask yourself, "What is the puzzle/thesis being discussed?" when doing reading for each week.

- If you find yourself stressed out due to the course's workload, discuss the difficulties you are facing with the instructor.

Response Paper Schedule

- Response 1 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 2.
- Response 2 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 6.
- Response 3 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 8.
- Response 4 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 10.

Reading Schedule

Week 1 - Social Science and Comparative Politics

Seminar leaders to be decided this week

- Mathew D. McCubbins and Michael F. Thies. "Rationality and the Foundations of Positive Political Theory". *Leviathan* 19 (1996): 7–32

- Ronald Rogowski. "How Inference in the Social (but Not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly". In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, ed. by Henry E. Brady and David Collier, 75–83. Rowman / Littlefield, 2004

- Adam Przeworski. "Is the Science of Comparative Politics Possible?" In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, 7–32. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007

- Gerardo L. Munck. "The Past and Present of Comparative Politics". In *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, ed. by Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, 32–59. New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007