

PSCI 2320: Introduction to Comparative Politics
University of Central Arkansas
SPRING 2026

Instructor: Prof. Hyo-Won Shin (she/her)

Email: hshin@uca.edu

Lecture:

- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9-9:50 AM Irby Hall 211

Office Hours:

- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 2:00 – 3:00 PM Irby Hall 217H
 - Sign up: <https://calendly.com/hyoshin/officehours>
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Course Description

Comparative Politics refers to the comparative study of how political systems differ or resemble one another across countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this course, we will adopt a comparative perspective to address questions such as: *Why are some countries orderly, while others on a brink of failure? Why are some countries democratic, while others are autocratic? Why are some countries ethnically more diverse than others? Why are some countries poor and others rich?* We will explore these questions through theories and hypotheses that we evaluate using a variety of empirical evidence.

Course Goals

The course has *three* central objectives. The first is to familiarize students with comparative politics as a subfield of inquiry and with four of its central questions: the emergence and evolution of the state, the regime, identity, and development. The second objective is to acquaint students with competing theories of the state, the regime, identity, and development so that they can critically evaluate these perspectives. Finally, the third objective is to deepen students' critical thinking skills by strengthening their understanding and use of social scientific methods for making causal inferences.

By the end of the semester, students can expect to have developed the following skills:

- Understand what comparative politics is and be familiar with its main *dependent variables*;
- Recognize and *critically evaluate* existing theories of the state, the regime, identity, and development; and
- Know and apply the methods of *social scientific inference*.

Course Requirements and Assignments

In this course, the maximum points you can receive is 1000 points. This course will consist of the following components:

- **Exams** (100 points each; 300 points total)

There will be **four exams in total**. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions worth 2 points each. Exams are not cumulative; each one will cover only the material from the units immediately preceding it. All exams will take place during class time, except for the final exam. The final exam be administered during final exam week at the university's assigned exam time.

Before each exam, Prof. Shin will upload a study guide to Blackboard, and we will have an in-class review session during which Prof. Shin will answer questions prepared by the students. Please refer to the schedule below for exam dates. Prof. Shin will drop the *lowest* exam score.

- o **Exam #1: February 2 (Monday)**
- o **Exam #2: February 23 (Monday)**
- o **Exam #3: March 16 (Monday)**
- o **Exam #4: April 29 (2-4PM, Wednesday)**

- **Writing Assignment** (300 points total)

Students will turn in a writing assignment (about five pages) at the beginning of Week 12. This is a *critical essay* that will ask students to use course materials (from lectures and readings) as well as outside materials to make a critical argument. The assignment will be uploaded on Blackboard under the “Writing Assignment” tab on March 20th (Friday) and will be due on March 29th (Sunday) by 11:59PM.

- **Weekly Journals** (20 points each; 200 points total)

Except for Week 0, Week 1, Week 11, Week 15, and Week 16, students will be asked to turn in a paragraph long weekly journal. This will ask students to engage with what they have read, with the goal of deepening their understanding of the materials as well as developing their analytic skills. Weekly journal entries should include the following:

- One paragraph long (8-11 sentences)
- Brief summary of academic articles (4-5 sentences)
 - o What are key concepts discussed in this article? Please connect it to the definitions found in the Orvis and Drogus book chapter.
 - o What is the author’s main argument and what do they find?
- Something interesting you found while reading the articles (e.g., connections to previous readings, connections to current events, connections to other classes) (2-3 sentences)
- Something confusing you found while reading the articles (e.g., argument of the author, author’s choice of variables, author’s evidence supporting the theory) (2-3 sentences)

The reflections will help students engage in discussion during lecture. Satisfactory composition of the weekly journals will form the bulk of students’ final grades, so it is important they write it with care, even though they are short.

Weekly journal entries should be uploaded as a .pdf or doc* (.doc or .docx) file to Blackboard by **11:59PM** on **Sunday** each week. With the exception of Week 0, 1, 11, 15, and 16, you will be asked to write weekly journal entries. *I will count the 10 highest scores out of 12.*

Please note:

- o Journal entries must be completed **individually**. Group work will not be accepted.
- o Save your assignment as a .pdf or .doc* (.doc or .docx) file on your personal computer and then uploaded to Blackboard.

A journal entry is worth **20 points** and is graded using the following rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Needs Work
Completion	Journal entry includes all of the required components. (10 points)	Journal entry includes most of the required components. (8 points)	Journal entry is missing most of the required components. (6 point)
Analytic Skills	Arguments are well made. Sentences flow logically from one to the next. No grammatical or spelling errors, and language is clear. (9 points)	Arguments could be strengthened. Transitions between sentences could be improved. Few grammatical or spelling errors, but word choice or sentence structure is sometimes awkward. (7 points)	Argumentation is severely flawed. Sentences don't flow logically from one to the next. Numerous grammatical or spelling errors. (5 point)
On Time	Submitted on time (1 point)	Submitted late (0 points)	Submitted late (0 points)

• **Class Participation** (100 points; 200 points total)

Students are expected to attend lectures having done the assigned readings and prepared to discuss them. Regular attendance is required but does not constitute full participation. To receive full participation points, students should actively engage in small-group discussions and be responsive to questions asked during lecture and section. Students are encouraged to ask clarifying questions of the instructor and of each other.

Students who feel uncomfortable speaking up in large groups are encouraged to participate more actively in small-group discussions to compensate for being less active in big-group discussions during lecture.

Class participation will be evaluated twice in the semester; once at Week 8 and another at Week 16. This is to make sure that the instructor accurately evaluates the students' participation in class and a way for students to check whether they need to maintain or improve their class participation.

Grade	Evaluation
"A" Contributor	• Full attendance (exception of one self-care day). • Student's contribution in class discussion (small and/or large group discussions) reflects exceptional preparation as evidenced by frequent use of textual/material evidence. • <i>If this person were absent in class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished markedly.</i>
"B" Contributor	• High attendance. • Student's contribution in class discussion reflects preparation as evidenced by some use of textual/material evidence. • <i>If this person were absent in class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished.</i>
"C" Contributor	• Some attendance. • Student's contribution in class discussion reflects some preparation as evidenced by little use of textual/material evidence. • <i>If this person were absent in class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished somewhat.</i>
"D-F" Contributor	• Little or no attendance.

	Student's contribution in class discussion reflects no preparation as evidenced by no use of textual/material evidence.
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- Extra Credit: Assessment Exam (20 points)**

During the final exam period, students will be given an extra assessment exam, which comprises of 25 questions. These questions will include randomly selected questions from Exams #1 through #4. Students who get 80 percent or more questions correct, they will receive an extra credit of 20 points.

Assessment	Total Number	Points Per Assessment	Total Points
Exams	4	100	300 (lowest dropped)
Weekly journal entries	10	20	200
Writing assignment	1	300	300
Class participation	2	100	200
TOTAL POINTS			1000

To get an A in the class, you will need at least 900 points (90 percent of 1000 points). You will need at least 800 points (80 percent of 1000 points) to get a B, 700 points (70 percent of 1000 points) for a C, 600 points (60 percent of 1000 points) for a D, and anything below for an F.

Course Materials

The following textbook is required for the course and is available at the University of Central Arkansas bookstore. If you are buying it from somewhere else, be sure to check that it is the same edition. Either the paper or electronic edition of the textbook is fine.

Orvis, Stephen and Carol Ann Drogus. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context (6th Edition)*. SAGE/CQ Press. Sage Vantage Access book ISBN: 9781071914663.

Other readings will be made available electronically via Blackboard. The instructor will provide guidance on how to read an academic article, but should the student need more assistance in tackling these readings, please ask. They are very challenging.

Grade scale

90-100%	A
80-89.99%	B
70-79.99%	C
60-69.99%	D
<60%	F

Late Policy

Students are expected to complete all assignments by the dates and times specified on the syllabus. **Late assignments will NOT be accepted.** If a student anticipates being unable to complete an assignment on time, the student should contact the instructor *in advance of the assignment due date*.

Office Hours

Student office hours are generally first-come, first served opportunities to meet with the professor. The instructor will be available to answer questions via email, but do not expect a response for at least 24-36 hours. If the student wants to meet outside the instructor's office hours, please email me at hshin@uca.edu.

If you are unsure about how to word an email to your professor, read this blog post (be aware that it has some profanity): <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>

Academic Integrity

The work that you submit in this class must be your own. Unless an assignment is explicitly designed to be collaborative, you are expected to work independently of other students. When you make use of external sources, you are required to cite them. When in doubt about whether a citation is necessary or not, provide a citation.

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the *Student Handbook*. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Recommended Study Habits

All of the class assignments will draw on the material covered in the lectures. Therefore, it is important to attend class lectures and to interact with the material during lecture through careful note-taking and good question-asking. In the event that you are unable to attend a class meeting, it is highly recommended that you obtain notes from a classmate. (Hint: make sure you have the contact information for a classmate!) If there is material that you are struggling with, it is highly recommended that you meet with the instructor in order to seek clarification.

Diversity Policy

It is the instructor's intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that diversity within the classroom be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. The instructor will strive to present materials and activities in ways that respect and affirm such differences. The instructor expects the same from the students: while discomfort is an important part of the learning process, no one should feel unsafe in the classroom. The instructor will not create or allow space for offensive language or behavior related to differences in gender, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, intellectual and physical disability, sexual orientation, income, faith, socio-economic class, family status, primary language, military experience, and political identification.

Classroom Behavior

There are several ways in which students can help make the classroom conducive to learning. First, students should treat one another with respect during classroom discussion. We will discuss contentious issues in this class, and if you find yourself disagreeing with a claim made by someone else, you should work on expressing that disagreement in a constructive and impersonal fashion. Second, students using laptop computers should be using them for class-related purposes. Other uses are distracting to your fellow students and hinder overall learning in the classroom.

Preferred Pronouns

Please call me either **Professor/Dr. Shin**. My preferred pronouns are she/her/hers. In class, I will call you by the name that you use when introducing yourself to me. Over email, I will use the name that appears in

your email address. If you prefer I use a different name, please let me know and I will be happy to accommodate.

I will try to default to the they/them pronouns when referring to students, but if you have other preferred pronouns, please let me know and I will try my best to accommodate.

Family Care & Self Care Policy

If a student needs to miss a class or assignment due to family care or childcare arrangements, please contact me and let me know as soon as you can. If you have a consistent or recurring issue, meet with me individually to discuss potential or necessary solutions.

Each student is allowed *one* “self-care” pass per semester. These cannot be used on exams. They can be used to exempt you from class attendance and may turn in the weekly assignment a week late (please let me know that you are using your pass for this week’s journal entry assignment if you choose to turn it in). You do not need to tell me the reason for using your self-care pass, but I am here to talk and help you find resources if you need me to be. To use your self-care pass, please email directly at hshin@uca.edu.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services (OARS), 501-450-3613.

Building Emergency Plan

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS and Building Emergency Plan (BEP) documents for most buildings on campus are available at <https://uca.edu/go/bep-library>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972

In furtherance of its core values— academic vitality, integrity, and diversity—UCA is dedicated to promoting a campus community free from discrimination. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 requires all educational institutions to address gender-based discrimination on campus, and UCA implements these Federal requirements through a fair, consistent, and appropriate process of investigation and adjudication. Please see UCA’s Title IX website (<https://uca.edu/titleix/>) for the university’s policy, relevant forms, training opportunities, and related information.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment, including, but not limited to, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, unauthorized distribution of sexual images or recordings, or any crime that is based upon sexual acts defined at the adoption of this policy or later enacted by the State of Arkansas, by any faculty member, staff member, student, or a third party who is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity under substantial control of the University is a violation of University policy and will not be tolerated at the University of Central Arkansas. Further, the University of Central Arkansas is committed to providing ongoing sexual harassment primary prevention, awareness, and risk reduction programs and training for the entire UCA community. Sexual harassment of employees is prohibited under Section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and sexual harassment of students may constitute discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This policy seeks to comply with requirements mandated by the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013. The university considers sexual harassment a very serious issue and shall subject the offender to dismissal

and or other sanctions following the university's investigation and substantiation of the complaint and compliance with due process requirements.

Academic Policies

Academic Advisors

UCA places a very high priority on student advising and considers it an integral part of your academic success. UCA's team of academic advisors (Advising) are available to assist you during your stay at UCA. Prior to future semester course registration, all degree-seeking undergraduate students must declare a major after completing 27 credit hours. Students must also declare at least one minor field, subject to modifications noted for specific programs. Students will be assigned academic advisors specific to their declared major and minor fields of study. Students can find the name of their academic advisors in myUCA Self-Service and are encouraged to maintain contact with their advisors throughout their university experience.

It is the sole responsibility of the student to be familiar with and comply with all graduation requirements of the university listed in the applicable academic bulletin. Students must be familiar with and carefully monitor their academic progress toward the desired degree or certificate. To facilitate this, students are encouraged to use DegreeWorks which is available in myUCA Self-Service.

Attendance

A student's official program is regarded as his or her obligation to the institution, full performance of which requires regular and punctual class attendance and active participation. A student is responsible for coming to class prepared, completing any missed work if the student is absent, and knowing the dates and places of required course examinations. Attendance and tardiness are primarily a student-teacher-class relationship, but the university has a concern for the fulfillment of such obligations by the student. Absences that indicate negligence about class attendance may lead to cancellation of registration and a withdrawal grade (W) in the course. In flagrant cases, the student may be suspended from the university. Individual instructors may assign a withdrawal grade (W) for non-attendance to any student but must do so by the deadline date for a student to officially withdraw specified in the academic calendar for the semester. Make-up examinations and assignments are required only for valid absences as determined by the faculty member. Students who miss an examination or assignment without a valid excuse may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment. Faculty and students should work together to mitigate the impact of absences of those students who miss class while officially representing the university.

Course Evaluations

Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction [April 7th] through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

Course Schedule

The following is our course schedule. Please note that this schedule is subject to change by the instructor in accordance with students' needs or course progression. All materials listed are required of all students. Those students interested in further background on any particular topic are encouraged to ask the instructor for additional readings and resources.

IMPORTANT DATES		
Assignment	Due Date	Note
Weekly Journals	DUE on Sundays at 11:59PM	On Blackboard under "Weekly Journals" tab. Will grade 10 highest scores out of 12 journal entries.
Writing Assignment	3/29 (Sunday) at 11:59PM.	Upload on Blackboard under "Writing Assignment" tab.
Exam #1	2/2 (Monday)	In-class, closed-book exam.
Exam #2	2/23 (Monday)	In-class, closed-book exam
Exam #3	3/16 (Monday)	In-class, closed-book exam
Exam #4	4/29 (Wednesday) 2-4PM	In-class, closed-book exam

Week 0: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Friday, 1/9 – Introduction to PSCI 2320

- Hyo-Won Shin. 2026. "Syllabus for PSCI 2320: Introduction to Comparative Politics."

Week 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics & Scientific Research Methods

Monday, 1/12 – Introduction to the Comparative Method

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 1

Wednesday, 1/14 – Friday 1/16 – Introduction to Scientific Research Methods

- Amelia Hoover Green. 2013. "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps." Drexel University.
- Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan. 2011. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*, 10th Edition. Boston: Wadsworth. Chapter 2 ("The Elements of Science").

Week 2: The Emergence of State Order

Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (1/19)

Wednesday 1/21 & Friday 1/23 – The Importance of State Institutions

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 2
- Charles Tilly. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 169-91.
- **WEEK 2 Journal DUE: 1/18 (Sunday)**

Week 3: Nation, Societies, and Ethnicities

Monday, 1/26 – Nation and Society

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 4
- **WEEK 3 Journal DUE: 1/25 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 1/28 & Friday, 1/30 – National Versus Ethnic Identity

- Daniel N. Posner. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529-45.
- Friday (1/30): Exam #1 review

Exam #1: Monday 2/2

Week 4: Collective Action and Revolutions

Wednesday, 2/4 & Friday, 2/6 – Social Movements, Political Violence, and Revolution

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 7
- Timur Kuran. 1991. "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44 (1): 7-48.
- **WEEK 4 Journal DUE: 2/1 (Sunday)**

Week 5: Democracy (Week 1)

Wednesday, 2/11 & Friday 2/13 – Democratic Regimes & Theories of Democratization

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 3
- Robert A. Dahl. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 1-16.
- **WEEK 5 Journal DUE: 2/8 (Sunday)**

Week 6: Democracy (Week 2)

Monday, 2/16 – Democratic Systems

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 6
- **WEEK 6 Journal DUE: 2/15 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 2/18 & Friday 2/20 – Democratic Systems

- Juan Linz. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1): 51-69.
- Friday (2/20): Exam #2 review

Exam #2: Monday 2/23

Week 7: Non-Democracy and Autocracy

Wednesday, 2/25 & Friday 2/27 – Authoritarianism

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 8
- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 51-65.
- **WEEK 7 Journal DUE: 2/22 (Sunday)**

Week 8: Democratic Transition

Monday, 3/2 – Democratic Transitions

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 9
- **WEEK 8 Journal DUE: 3/1 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 3/4 – Democratic Transitions

- Seymour Martin Lipset. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 53 (1), pp. 75-84 ONLY.
- **Friday, 3/6 – No CLASS (Prof. Shin attends conference)**

Week 9: Political Economy

Monday, 3/9 – Political Economy

- Lopez, Matias and Joshua K. Dubrow. “Politics and Inequality in Comparative Perspective: A Research Agenda.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 64(9): 1199-1210.
- **WEEK 9 Journal DUE: 3/8 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 3/11 & Friday, 3/13 – Economic Development

- William Easterly and Ross Levine. 1997. “Africa’s Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112 (4): 1203-50.
- Friday (3/13): Exam #3 review

Exam #3: Monday 3/16

Week 10: Developing Countries

Wednesday, 3/18 & Friday, 3/20 – Developing Countries & Foreign Aid

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 11
- Christopher Blattman and Paul Niehaus. 2014. “Show Them the Money: Why Giving Cash Helps Alleviate Poverty,” *Foreign Affairs* 93 (May/June): 117-26.
- **WEEK 10 Journal DUE: 3/15 (Sunday)**

Week 11: Spring Break (3/23-3/27)

Week 12: Violence

Monday, 3/30 – Political Violence

- “ACLED Year in Review. Global Disorder in 2022” January 31, 2024. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data. <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/31/global-disorder-2022-the-year-in-review/>
- **WEEK 12 Journal DUE: 3/29 (Sunday)**
- **Writing Assignment DUE 3/29 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 4/1 & Friday, 4/3 – Factors of Conflict

- James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 529-45.

Week 13: Natural and Human Resources

Monday, 4/6 – The Resource Curse

- Micheal L. Ross. 1999. “The Political Economy of the Resource Curse.” *World Politics* 51 (2): 297-322.
- **WEEK 13 Journal DUE: 4/5 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 4/8 & Friday, 4/10 – Social Capital and Development

- Paul J. Zak and Stephen Knack. 2011. “Trust and Growth.” *Economic Journal* 111 (April): 295-321.

Week 14: Globalization

Monday, 4/13 – Globalization and the Future of Comparative Politics

- Orvis and Drogus, Chapter 10
- **WEEK 14 Journal DUE: 4/12 (Sunday)**

Wednesday, 4/15 & Friday, 4/17 – Globalization Paradox

- Friedman, Thomas. 2005. “It’s a Flat World, After All.” *The New York Times*.
- Florida, Richard. 2005. “The World Is Spiky.” *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Week 15: Conclusion

Monday, 4/20 – Catch up and wrapping up latter half of the semester

Wednesday, 4/22 – Final Exam Review

Friday, 4/23 – Study Day (No Class)

Week 16: Final Exam

Wednesday, 4/29 @ 2-4PM