

## SOSC3520: UNDERSTANDING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:30 – 11:50, Room 2504 (lifts 25-26)

Instructor	Teaching Assistant
James K. WONG, PhD ( <a href="mailto:jameskalei@ust.hk">jameskalei@ust.hk</a> ) Room 2387 (lifts 13-15) Office hours: One hour after class	Miss Nancy Sixin WU ( <a href="mailto:swuam@connect.ust.hk">swuam@connect.ust.hk</a> )

### Course Description

This course analyzes politics from a comparative perspective. The central theme is to demonstrate how political science understands and explains the variations of political phenomena across different countries. It examines the nature and methods of comparative politics, classifications of political regimes, and the key features of political actors, institutions, outcomes, and their interactions. Students benefit from building analytical knowledge and skills as well as cross-national sense and awareness for surviving in a 'politicized' world.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be better equipped to:

1. Explain the key methods, concepts, and theories in comparative politics.
2. Analyze the characteristics of the main political regimes, institutions, actors, interactions, and outcomes.
3. Apply concepts and ideas to discuss the major issues in comparative politics.
4. Exercise independent and critical judgments in the study of politics as well as communicate claims and arguments effectively.

### Required Textbook

[RT] Daniele Caramani (ed.) (2017) *Comparative Politics* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press. [[JA86 .C526 2017](#) / [JA86 .C526 2014](#) for 3<sup>rd</sup> edition]

### Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Guiding question(s)	Reading [RT]
<b>PART I: The Basics</b>			
Sep 4	Introduction	What is comparative politics?	pp.1-17
Sep 6	Comparative approaches	How do we approach comparative politics?	Ch. 2
Sep 11	Comparative methods	How do we conduct comparative research?	Ch. 3
<b>PART II: Political Regimes</b>			
Sep 13	Authoritarian regimes	What are authoritarian regimes? How are they governed?	Ch. 6
Sep 18	Democracies (1)	What are democracies? How are they developed?	Ch. 5 (3 <sup>rd</sup> edition)
Sep 20	Democracies (2)		
Sep 25	<b>** READING WEEK – Lectures rescheduled **</b>		
Sep 27			
Oct 2	<b>** University holiday **</b>		
<b>PART III: Political Institutions</b>			
Oct 4	Executives and bureaucracies (1)	What is a government? How do governments govern?	Ch. 8
Oct 6* (*make-up)	<b>Project Workshop 1:</b> Explaining democracy		[UT5], pp.171-263 (Optional)
Oct 9	Executives and bureaucracies (2)	What is a government? How do governments govern?	Ch. 8

Oct 11	Legislatures (1)	What are the roles and powers of legislatures within modern democracies?	Ch. 7
Oct 16	Legislatures (2)		
Oct 18	Electoral systems	What are the rules for elections and referendums? How do these rules shape political outcomes?	Ch. 10
Oct 23	Constitutions, judicial power, and federal governments	What are constitutions? How do judges shape political outcomes? How are states arranged territorially according to constitutions?	Ch. 9 & 11
Oct 25	<b>** Mid-term Revision **</b>		
Oct 30	<b>** TEST 1 ** (Parts I, II &amp; III only)</b>		
<b>PART IV: Political Actors and Processes</b>			
Nov 1	Political parties (1)	What are the roles of political parties in democracies? How are they organized, regulated, and financed?	Ch. 12
Nov 3* (*make-up)	<b>Project Workshop 2:</b> Explaining conflict management in divided societies		<b>[UT5]</b> , pp.788-805 (Optional)
Nov 6	Political parties (2)	What are the origins, format, and dynamics of party systems? How do they shape political outcomes?	Ch. 13
Nov 8	Interest groups	What are interest groups? How can interest associations be analyzed in theory and practice?	Ch. 14
Nov 13	Social movements	What are social movements? How can they be modelled?	Ch. 16
Nov 15	Political participation	What are the different modes of political participation? Why do people engage in particular forms of participation?	Ch. 18
<b>PART V: Political Outcomes – Public Policies</b>			
Nov 20	Policy-making	What is policy-making? What are the determinants of policy choices?	Ch. 20
Nov 22	The welfare state	What are the key issues of the emergence, expansion, variation, and transformation of the welfare state?	Ch. 21
Nov 24* (*make-up)	<b>Project Workshop 3:</b> Explaining fiscal policy		<b>[UT5]</b> , pp.766-788 (Optional)
Nov 27	The impact of public policies	What are the policies of regulation of the economy and the welfare system? What are their effects on economic performance and social equality?	Ch. 22
Nov 29	<b>** Final Revision **</b>		
Exam period	<b>** TEST 2 ** (Parts IV &amp; V only)</b>		

\* All 'make-up' sessions will take place from 6:00 to 7:30pm (venue TBC).

**Requirements and Grading** (NB: Failure to complete ANY ONE of the FIRST THREE items may result in a failure grade.)

- **Group project (30%)**
- **Test 1 (25%)**
- **Test 2 (25%)**
- **Case memo (10%)**
- **Pop quizzes (as class participation) (10%)**

Group project:

- Students will work in groups of 4 to 5. Each group will produce a paper which studies ONE major issue in comparative politics. Students may formulate their questions based on the lecture topics or design their own questions.
- The paper should address the chosen question from a comparative perspective. It should incorporate analysis of **at least TWO country cases** and apply relevant concepts/theories in comparative politics.

- **EACH student** in a group is expected to contribute about 1,200-1,500 words, such that a group of four students should write about 4,800-6,000 words; and 6,000-7,500 words for a group of five students.
- All students in a group must contribute reasonably to the project. **To avoid free-riding, each student is required to declare his/her contributions to the paper.** For example, if Section 1 is prepared by student A, the name of student A should appear next to the heading of Section 1.
- Students should submit their papers via. CANVAS. In case they encounter technical issues, they should seek assistance from the ITSC/CEI. **E-mail submissions are NOT accepted.**
- The deadline of submission is **23:59, December 4, 2017 (Monday)**. Marks will be deducted for late submission at 3% per day. Papers submitted 4 days after the deadline will NOT be graded.
- All papers will be checked by anti-plagiarism software. **For confirmed cases of plagiarism, severe sanctions – including but not limited to a failure grade – will be imposed.**
- All papers will be graded on the basis of: (i) interpretation of the issue; (ii) quality of argument; (iii) quality of evidence; (iv) application of relevant concepts/theories; (v) structure and clarity; and (vi) style and language.

#### Tests:

- Both tests are unseen and closed-book. Each test contains 15 MC questions (answer all questions – 15 points) and 5 short questions (answer any 4 questions – 20 points). Time allowed is 65 minutes.
- Test 1 covers all topics in Parts I, II, and III only (except materials from project workshops). It will take place in class on **October 30, 2017 (Monday)**.
- Test 2 covers all topics in Parts IV and V only (except materials from project workshops). It will take place in the **examination period in December** (date and time TBC). **Students are reminded NOT to schedule any travels for the entire examination period until the examination timetable is announced.**
- **No ‘make-up’ tests will be arranged except for medical or family emergency.** Students must present appropriate evidence within 3 working days to request for a make-up test. The format of the make-up test is likely to be different.

#### Case memo:

- Each project group will be ‘allocated’ a topic and write a short memo **based on a single country case.** For example, in what ways is China an authoritarian regime? Is India a democratic regime? What is the British Parliament? What is the political executive in Brazil? What is the bureaucracy in Japan? (and so on...)
- **Each memo should be about 2 to 3 pages, single-spaced, including tables/diagrams (if any).**
- Students should submit their memos via. CANVAS. The deadlines are as follows:
  - Topics in Part II: **23:59, October 6, 2017 (Friday)**
  - Topics in Part III: **23:59, October 25, 2017 (Wednesday)**
  - Topics in Part IV: **23:59, November 17, 2017 (Friday)**
  - Topics in Part V: **23:59, November 27, 2017 (Monday)**
- All memos will be published on CANVAS for students’ references.
- Each group is required to comment on a memo prepared by another group – **they should ask at least THREE questions about the memo within three days after the memo is published.**
- **All groups should respond to their corresponding commentators’ questions within three days.**
- Students can read the relevant ‘spotlights’ sections of Hague, Harrop and McCormick (2016) [UT1] and/or other useful texts (as included below, esp. [UT2] and [UT3]) to gather ideas.
- There will be a lot drawing on September 20, 2017 (Wednesday) to determine the ‘allocations’ of topics and commentators.

#### Pop quizzes (as class participation):

- There will be FIVE *open-book* pop quizzes which **may take place anytime in any lecture.**
- In each pop quiz, students will be asked to complete a short task, such as answering MC/short questions and/or writing a short reflection.
- For each pop quiz, as long as students are able to complete it, they will score at least 1%, and **up to 2% for answers with good quality.**

## Course Communication

All announcements will be made through CANVAS (<https://canvas.ust.hk/>). Supplementary course materials and other learning resources will be posted on the website.

Students may communicate with the instructor and the TA via e-mail. They should allow at least 3 working days for a reply. **All e-mail enquiries regarding both tests and the group project should be made at least 48 hours before the tests/project is due.**

## Class Rules

Students are expected to silence their mobile phones and avoid using them in class. **Video recording and photo taking are NOT allowed.** If there is a genuine need for sound recording, students must seek permission from the instructor *before* the class begins.

## Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offences, and are taken very seriously by the University. Students are reminded of the consequences for violating University's regulations governing academic integrity and honesty. For details of the regulations, please visit: <http://tl.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html>. For advice on avoiding plagiarism and copying, please visit: <http://libguides.ust.hk/writing>.

## Other Useful Texts

- [UT1] Rod Hague, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick (2016) *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (10<sup>th</sup> edition), Palgrave Macmillan. [JF51 .H28 2016]
- [UT2] Patrick H. O'Neil, Karl Fields, and Don Share (2013) *Cases in Comparative Politics* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), New York: W. W. Norton & Co. [JF51 .O538 2013]
- [UT3] G. Bingham Powell, Russell J. Dalton, and Kaare Strom (eds.) (2015) *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* (11<sup>th</sup> edition), New York: Pearson. [JF51 .C62 2015]
- [UT4] Charles Hauss (2015) *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges* (9<sup>th</sup> edition), Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. [JF51 .H33 2015]
- [UT5] William R. Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder (2013) *Principles of Comparative Politics* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. [JF51 .C53 2013]

## Sample Topics for Group Project

*Below is a selection of topics by students in the past – for reference only.*

Emergence and mobilization of social movements	Government structures and economic development
Politics of the welfare state	Democracy/electoral systems and welfare spending
Far-right movements	Path of democratization
Legislative systems	Democracy and corruption
Democracy and modernization/economic growth	Environmental groups in different political regimes
Comparative housing policies	Decentralization and separatism
Legislatures and LGBT rights	Electoral systems and party systems

## Quality Assurance

Students are welcome to offer comments and suggestions on the course. The principal concern of this course is students' learning, and therefore, the instructor may modify the schedule if this will facilitate their learning.

Last revised: August 30, 2017