

# POLS 225: COMPARATIVE POLITICS

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL 2021, 3 CREDITS

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## Basic Information

Professor: Dan Pemstein  
Class Location: Ag & Bio Sys 224  
Office Location: Putnam 12  
[Class Slack](#)

Email: [daniel.pemstein@ndsu.edu](mailto:daniel.pemstein@ndsu.edu)  
Class Time: TuTh 9:30-10:45  
Office Hours: [Schedule](#)  
[Virtual Office \(Zoom\)](#)

## Course Description

### Bulletin Description

Comparative analysis of contemporary political systems, practices, institutions, and actors.

### Course Overview

POLS 225 is an introduction to the field of comparative politics that is grounded in how political scientists organize theory and data to inform and persuade other scholars and policymakers. While this course will acquaint students with the politics of countries around the globe, the purpose of this class is not to simply provide a tour of the political world, but rather to introduce students to core concepts and methods that underpin the study of political behavior and institutions within states. That is, while we will engage deeply with the politics of numerous, diverse, states, we will structure our discussion in terms of general patterns across countries. Therefore, this course is organized around a small number of 'big' questions in comparative politics, such as why some countries have democratized while others have not, what determines the size and structure of political party systems, and how political institutions affect economic outcomes.

### Course Objectives

After completing POLS 225, students should be able to understand, criticize, and produce both abstract and empirically based arguments about how politics works within states around the world. They should also have a basic grounding in the structure of the modern state, various forms of democratic and authoritarian government, electoral and party systems, and the relationships between national politics, economic outcomes, and diverse global cultures.

## Required Student Resources

The following required textbooks are available for purchase at the University bookstore:

- William Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Ed.* Washington, DC: CQ Press. (2nd Ed. is fine)
- Bates, Robert. 2001. *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development.* New York: W.W. Norton.
- Rosenbluth, Frances McCall and Ian Shapiro. 2018. *Responsible Parties: Saving Democracy from Itself.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

You are expected to read all of the assigned material before the class meeting for which it is assigned!

## Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading
8/24, 26	Intro + What is Comparative Politics?	CGG Ch. 1
8/31, 9/2	Studying Comparative Politics	CGG Ch. 2
9/7, 9	Politics & Games	CGG Ch. 3
9/14, 16	The State	CGG Ch. 4
9/21, 23	Democracy & Dictatorship	CGG Ch. 5, 10
9/28, 30	Democracy & Development	CGG Ch. 6
10/5, 7	Prosperity & Violence	Bates
10/12	Review & Catch-Up	
10/14	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
10/19, 21	Democratic Transitions	CGG Ch. 8
10/26, 28	Democratic Government	CGG Ch. 12
11/2,4	Electoral Systems	CGG Ch. 13
11/9	Party Systems	CGG Ch. 14
11/11	<b>Veterans Day (No Class)</b>	
11/16, 18	Parties & Democracy	R & S Ch. 1–3
11/23	Big Strong Parties	R & S Ch. 4
11/25	<b>Thanksgiving (No Class)</b>	
11/30	Big Weak Parties	R & S Ch. 5
12/2	Small Strong Parties	R & S Ch. 6 + one of 7–10
12/7	Democratic Backsliding	R & S Ch. 11–12
12/9	Review & Catch-Up	
12/17	<b>Participation Papers Due</b>	
12/17	<b>Final Exam (8AM)</b>	

## Evaluation

### Summary

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Study Guides	20%
Participation	20%

### Exams

The midterm and final exams will each count for 30% of your total grade. Each exam will contain a mixture of multiple choice and short answer/essay questions. The final exam is non-cumulative and each exam covers about half of the course material. Exams are open book/note/Internet. You may not collaborate with others on your exams, make use of testing services, or use materials from previous iterations of this course.

### Study Guides

Students will use the exam review questions (available on Blackboard) to develop written study guides, on an ongoing basis, throughout the semester. Students have substantial leeway to develop guides that work for them, but they should address every question in the exam review documents. These guides will help students to distill key materials from readings and lectures and should help to reduce the temptation to cram for exams. Students will also be able to consult their guides during exams. While students can work together to develop guides, they should each produce a guide of their own. **Guide sections will be due every Sunday night—excluding exam and holiday weeks—at 11:59PM.** I will grade guide sections on a pass-fail basis. Students may drop 4 guide sections without penalty. There will be 14 guide sections, so each of the 10 required guide sections will be worth 2% of students' overall grades.

### Participation

Generally I expect you to attend every class and to participate in class activities and discussions. Participation is worth 20 percent of your final grade and will reflect your engagement in and contribution to class. Participation can take many forms, including—but not limited to—asking questions, answering my queries, engaging in class debate, organizing or participating in study groups, and taking an active role in group activities. Towards the end of the semester, each student will write a short (1-2 page) paper making an evidence-based case for the participation grade that she feels she deserves. These papers, and the persuasiveness of their arguments, will form the basis for students' participation grades. Although you have substantial leeway in how you make your case for your participation grade, your self-evaluation should follow this rough rubric:

- A Strong attendance, frequent and thoughtful verbal participation, active participation in group work
- B Strong attendance, regular and thoughtful verbal participation, active participation in group work
- C Strong attendance, some verbal participation, satisfactory participation in group work
- D Missed more than 3-4 classes, little to no verbal participation in class lack of engagement in group work
- F Frequently miss class, no verbal participation, leave your group members hanging

## Grades

I use a flat grade scale:  $A \geq 90 > B \geq 80 > C \geq 70 > D \geq 60 > F$ . If you have a complaint about an exam grade you must type a formal appeal describing the problem. Your appeal should clearly explain why you believe that your original work correctly answered the exam/quiz question and make a cogent argument for improving your grade. Attach a copy of the original exam to your appeal.

## Class Policies

### Make-Up Exams and Assignments

You may drop four study guides, so make-up assignments should only be an issue in exceptional circumstances. Please get in touch with the instructor if something exceptional comes up.

Students who miss an exam may take a thirty-minute spoken examination to replace the missed exam. If necessary, please contact the instructor to arrange a time. Please do not take this option unless you have a good reason to miss the written exam and notify the instructor in advance, if possible.

### Office Hours

Office hours are a time for students to discuss any aspect of the course, or related issues, with me. PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OFFICE HOURS! This is where you can get one-on-one help with aspects of the class that are difficult for you, but surprisingly few students take advantage of this resource. While I have set times devoted to office hours, students must **schedule appointments** using navigate. I will hold all office hours virtually, **using Zoom**, this semester, to better manage COVID-19 risk.

### Attendance

According to NDSU Policy 333 (<http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf>), attendance in classes is expected. In this course attendance is mandatory unless you have a valid reason to miss a session (but see COVID policy below).

Veterans and student service members with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible and are encouraged to provide Activation Orders.

## Academic Honesty

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. **NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct** applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the **Office of Registration and Records**. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at <http://www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty>.

Please make sure that you understand common standards of academic integrity and plagiarism and consult the instructor if you are ever in doubt. I have a no tolerance policy for academic misconduct and students who commit such misconduct should expect, at minimum, to receive a failing grade for this class.

## Students with Special Needs

Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services Office (<http://www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices>) as soon as possible.

## Discrimination and Harassment

NDSU is committed to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of its university community. NDSU's policy on discrimination and harassment is available at [here](#) and the equity office **provides information** about filing complaints. Any form of violence or harassment, including sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking is unwelcome at the University. NDSU provides a Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Sexual Assault **Resource Guide**.

Low-grade discrimination and harassment can be especially pernicious in a classroom setting. Please read the following Psychology Today **blog post** and work to avoid the behaviors that the post describes.

Please note that the instructor has a mandatory responsibility to report instances of discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and retaliation, as **described here**. What this means is that, as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of such misconduct that I observe, or that students or others report to me.

## COVID-19

NDSU policy requires students to wear masks during class. I will strictly enforce this policy. I will bring a few paper masks to each class in case you forget yours. While I do not anticipate any issues, please be aware that I will ask students who refuse to wear appropriate face coverings to leave class and will refer such students for code of conduct violations.

Please do not attend class if you feel ill or if you have a known COVID exposure. I will record every class session and students can request recordings of any class session that they miss. In general, I will be very lenient about attendance (and everything else) this semester.

Please talk to me as early as possible about your participation (paper) if you have to miss more than 3–4 class sessions this semester and we can work out a strategy to ensure that you participate in other ways to compensate for missed classes.

Please note that the University is giving students \$100 if they are fully vaccinated by October 15 (this means you need to get your first shot before September 15!). Please consider your responsibility to the NDSU and Fargo communities and get your shots, and enjoy the beer money. On a personal note, while I am vaccinated, I have two unvaccinated children under 12 at home and I am doing my best not to accidentally transmit COVID to my kids (e.g., through a non-symptomatic breakthrough infection) and, in turn, their classmates. Beyond the obvious wish for my kids not to get sick, keep in mind that our collective ability to keep Fargo Public Schools operating with as few students as possible quarantined is going to be a huge factor in how much time the typical NDSU faculty member will be able to devote to teaching this semester. If we're all stuck at home with quarantined kids your classes are simply not going to get the attention they deserve. I REALLY APPRECIATE your efforts to reduce COVID's spread in our community!

Finally, while I intend to provide a standard in-classroom course for the duration of the semester, I reserve the right to move to synchronous online delivery if COVID case rates in Fargo, at NDSU, or in our class become too high.