

COURSE SYLLABUS
Intro to Comparative Politics/Comparative Legal Systems
PSCI 313/PLGL 497
Web Based Class
SUMMER I 2026
June 1 through July 2, 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: **Dr. Robert G. Rodríguez**
Professor of Political Science

Office Location: Ferguson Social Science Building 149 (Not Applicable during Summer I session)

Office Hours:
None. Zoom chat sessions may be arranged by appointment.

Office Phone: None. The ONLY way to contact me is via email.

University Email Address: **robert.rodriguez@etamu.edu**

Check this Syllabus to see if your question is answered FIRST.

****CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS DAILY****

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Book

ESSENTIALS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS WITH CASES- 8th AP Edition, by Patrick O'Neil, ISBN (for Digital Version): 978-1-324-10098-0

Note: You can purchase the digital or printed version of this book, but in any case, make sure to purchase the "8th AP Edition". Do not be thrown off by the "AP"-- all of the chapters in this version of the book are (literally word-for-word) the exact same text as the "college" version that I have used many times at ETAMU, however this edition includes case studies, which is sold as a separate book in the college version (i.e., by selecting the AP version, I am saving you the cost of having to purchase two books).

Course Description:

Welcome to Intro to Comparative Politics/Comparative Legal Systems! The purpose of this course is to study the dominant issues in comparative politics. We will analyze important concepts, theories, and debates in the field, in addition to the underlying structures and processes of institutional design in major types of political systems throughout the world. **NOTE:** This course will have a particular emphasis on the legal aspects of political systems, including constitutions, the legislative and judicial branches of governments, legislative-executive relations and concepts such as the rule of law, legitimacy.

Format:

This is a fully ONLINE course. **Exams and assignments** are ONLY accessible by logging in through **D2L Brightspace** on your **MyLEO** account. **Lectures and PowerPoint slides are also on D2L.** **Class discussions** for each unit will be announced and held on **Zoom**.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course is divided into FOUR units. Each unit contains lectures and PowerPoint slides for each chapter covered. There will be four examinations, one for each unit. A writing assignment will be required during the final day of the course.

- **Unit 1: Introduction; States (June 1-June 8)**
 - *Student Statement of Personal Responsibility DUE on D2L ONLY-WEDNESDAY, June 3*
 - *UNIT 1 Exam ONLINE MONDAY, June 8*
- **Unit 2: Democratic Regimes; Developed Democracies (June 9-June 15)**
 - *UNIT 2 Exam ONLINE MONDAY June 15*
- **Unit 3: Non Democratic Regimes; Developing Countries (June 16-June 22)**
 - *UNIT 3 Exam ONLINE MONDAY June 22*
- **Unit 4: Globalization (June 23-June 29)**
 - *UNIT 4 Exam ONLINE MONDAY June 29*
- **Final Day of Class-Writing Assignment DUE (June 30-July 2)**
 - *Writing Assignment Due ONLINE on THURSDAY July 2*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade will be comprised of:

- A) Four Examinations (worth 22% each, 88% total),**
- B) One Writing Assignment (12%)** during the FINAL day of class, and
- C) Your submitted Student Statement of Personal Responsibility (1% Extra Credit--** IF submitted to me by the deadline).

Each element of your grade is described below.

A) Examinations: In this course, **all students are required to take FOUR exams**, each of which will consist of 25 questions in a multiple-choice format. Exams are “open book,” HOWEVER, you **MUST NOT RECEIVE ASSISTANCE IN ANY WAY FROM ANYONE WHILE COMPLETING THE EXAM**. You will have 25 minutes to complete each exam online. Together, these exams will comprise **88%** of your grade (each exam is worth **22%**). The exams are NOT comprehensive. There is NOT a final exam in this course, but you will have to complete a writing assignment during the Final day of class.

You will have a 24-hour window to complete each exam. **If you do not complete an exam during the designated 24-hour period, you will receive 0% for that exam.**

If you have a **legitimate reason** for not completing an exam during the designated period (e.g. severe illness or injury *requiring professional medical care*, emergencies in your *immediate* family, participation in *official* university activities, legal *obligations*) **AND** you have **supporting documentation** for your inability to take the exam, then you may **request** an extension of the period to take the exam. Note: Taking a vacation, traveling, being on a cruise are NOT legitimate reasons for not completing an exam during the designated timeframe. It is YOUR responsibility to ensure you have a strong internet connection and necessary computer equipment as a condition of taking this online course.

Requests for taking the make-up exam must be **submitted in writing VIA EMAIL WITHIN 24 HOUR of the missed exam date and include SCANNED documentation** explaining and substantiating why your inability to take the exam during the designated period was legitimate. An approval to extend the period for you to complete the exam **will be based solely upon the professor's evaluation of your request and any supporting documentation.**

Note: *Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.*

IF YOU HAVE A TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEM DURING AN EXAM YOU MUST FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES LISTED HERE!!

Should you encounter D2L Brightspace based problems while submitting exams, the following procedure must be followed:

Students must report the problem BOTH to the help desk AND to your professor. You may reach the helpdesk at 1-866-656-5511. Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please. Other support options can be found here:

1. FIRST Contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778 AND <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>
2. SECOND Send me an email IMMEDIATELY to advise me of the specific problem.
3. I will confirm your problem and follow up with you on how to proceed.

PLEASE NOTE: Your personal computer and internet access problems are not legitimate excuses for making up an exam. Only Brightspace-based problems are potentially legitimate reasons to get an extension to complete your exam.

IF YOU RECEIVE ASSISTANCE ON THE EXAM FROM ANYONE IN ANY WAY, THIS CONSTITUTES ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND YOU WILL RECEIVE AN AUTOMATIC “F” IN THIS COURSE AND POTENTIALLY FACE FURTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTION. (SEE “POLICIES” SECTION IN THIS SYLLABUS)

EXAM DUE DATES - ONLINE ONLY:

- UNIT 1 Exam Monday, June 8
- UNIT 2 Exam Monday, June 15
- UNIT 3 Exam Monday, June 22
- UNIT 4 Exam Monday, June 29

B) Writing Assignment: You will have **ONE** required writing assignment that is worth a total of **12%** of your grade. The writing assignment will be a 4-page (900-1100 word) paper due on the **FINAL DAY of class** (on **July 2**) and requires you to compare the legal systems of one of the case studies included in the textbook (United Kingdom, Russia, China, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria) with the case study of the United States **USING ONLY THE INFORMATION IN THE TEXTBOOK**. Detailed instructions on how to complete the writing assignment will be provided to the class one week before the case study is due. Your assignment will be scanned by Turnitin.com, a plagiarism and AI detection software. **NOTE: Since the Writing Assignment is due on the final day of the course, if you do not submit it by the deadline, you will receive 0% and only be allowed to make it up in the most extraordinary of circumstances, with a legitimate reason AND supporting documentation (same policy for making up missed exams).**

**** DO NOT EMAIL ME YOUR WRITING ASSIGNMENT- IT WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED THROUGH D2L****

WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE DATE – ONLINE ONLY:

- o *Writing Assignment Due Online by 11:59pm on THURSDAY, JULY 2 (the final day of this course)*

C) STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

YOU MUST SUBMIT A STATEMENT ONLINE ON D2L ACKNOWLEDGING YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3 by 11:59 p.m. This is a requirement to remain enrolled in this course and **1% extra credit** will be added to your total grade in this course **IF** you submit it to me by the deadline.

****DO NOT EMAIL YOUR STATEMENT TO ME- IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. I WILL PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CLASS ON HOW TO SUBMIT A FILE ON D2L****

Statement: I have read the syllabus in its entirety, and understand the guidelines and agree to the policies detailed therein as a condition of being enrolled in this course. I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this course, and that failure to do so may result in serious consequences, including (but not limited to) being dropped from the course, and/or receiving a grade of "F" in the course.

STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY DUE DATE:

- o *Wednesday, June 3, by 11:59pm*

D) CLASS DISCUSSIONS ON ZOOM: The dates and times of class discussions to go over the course material will be announced throughout the summer.

Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following scale and criteria:

Exam 1:	22%
Exam 2:	22%
Exam 3:	22%
Exam 4:	22%
Writing Assignment:	<u>12%</u>
TOTAL:	100%

Submit Statement of Personal Responsibility on D2L: 1% extra credit if submitted on or before Wednesday, June 3 by 11:59pm.

A 90-100%; B 80-89.9%; C 70-79.9%; D 60-69.9%; F Below 60%

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

June 1-June 8

Unit 1: The Introduction; States

Required Reading:

Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 1
Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 2

Required Activities:

- **Purchase** your required book
- **Submit acknowledgment ON D2L** that you have read and agree to the Student Statement of Personal Responsibility (By 11:59pm, **Wednesday, June 3**)
- *Take **UNIT 1 Exam** on D2L **Monday, June 8** (This exam will cover ch 1 and 2)*

June 9-June 15

Unit 2: Democratic Regimes; Developed Democracies

Required Reading:

Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 6
Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 7

Required Activities:

- *Take **UNIT 2 Exam** on D2L **Monday, June 15** (This exam will cover ch 6 & 7)*

June 16-June 22

Unit 3: Non Democratic Regimes; Developing Countries

Required Reading:

Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 8
Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 10

Required Activities:

- *Take **UNIT 3 Exam** on D2L **Monday, June 22** (This exam will cover Chapter 6)*

June 23-June 29

Unit 4: Globalization

Required Reading:

Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases 8th AP Edition, CHAPTER 11

Required Activities:

- *Take UNIT 4 Exam on D2L **June 29** (This exam will cover Chapters 8 and 10 **AND** the video on Elected Judges on D2L)*

Final Day of Class: Thursday, July 2

Writing Assignment

Required Activities:

- *Submit your Writing Assignment on D2L by 11:59pm on **THURSDAY, July 2** (the designated date for the final exam in this course)*

Learning Outcome:

Students will understand the dominant issues in contemporary comparative politics, including a comparison of legal systems and important concepts, theories and debates in the field.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technology Required

USE CHROME OR FIREFOX BROWSERS WITH D2L—DO NOT USE Microsoft EXPLORER or EDGE as these tend to have bugs when using this learning platform

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Using the learning management system, using Microsoft Word and uploading digital images.

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced.

Email

Before you ask me a question in an email, check to see if the syllabus answers your question FIRST. I generally reply to emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday. Emails sent to me over weekends will be replied to on Mondays. I do not reply to emails that ask questions about items covered in the syllabus, such as what chapters are covered on an exam or what the assigned readings are for a given class session.

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the University attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Code of Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook:

http://www.tamuc.edu/student_guidebook/Student_Guidebook.pdf

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me prior to submitting any assignments.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

<https://www.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campusservices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/default.aspx>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

TAMUC Counseling Center Statement

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.