

Comparative Political Behavior

Ph.D. Seminar

PSCI-5615

Spring 2024

Tuesdays 6:30PM - 9:20PM, Wooten Hall 111

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Office Location: Wooten Hall 138

Office Hours: Mondays: 2:00PM-3:20PM; Wednesdays: 2:00PM-3:20PM; and by appointment

Course Overview

This is a Ph.D. seminar in comparative political behavior. As such, this course will familiarize you with various concepts, theories, data and methods essential to studying public opinion and political behavior in a comparative perspective. More generally, this seminar will prepare you to not only be an astute consumer of political science research, but to also make your own contribution to the academic literature.

We will start with the essential building blocs of comparative political behavior: political sophistication, public opinion, and voting. Then we will move to voter-party and party-party interactions. Finally, we will end the semester by discussing cutting-edge work in several substantive areas of comparative political behavior.

Course Structure, Requirements, and Strategies for Success

This class meets once a week on Tuesdays from 6:30PM to 9:20PM. There will be no lectures – only discussion. Thus, please come to class having done all of the readings, and ready to raise questions, critiques, ideas, and implications. As an initial guide, I recommend you consider the following evaluative framework when thinking about how to discuss any given article:

1. The dependent variable (conceptually)
2. The theory (mechanisms and independent variables, conceptually)
3. How the article is situated within the literature (contribution and criticism)
4. Data and operationalization
5. Methods
6. Findings
7. Implications (substantive and academic)

This class has three requirements with the following grade breakdowns:

1. **Participation - 20%** – This is a discussion-based class. Thus, I expect you to contribute to the conversation by raising questions, critiques, or by discussing points that you found convincing. Do not worry about making the “right” comment; as long as your contribution is thoughtful it adds value to our learning. I realize that, for various reasons, verbal participation may not be easy for many of you. If this applies to you, please come see me in office

hours during the first or second week of class. Together, we can work out alternate strategies for participating or techniques that help you verbally participate in class.

Importantly, we will be discussing a variety of controversial issues that may hold special significance to students. It is important to discuss ideas in a supportive and respectful manner, acknowledging that others may have different opinions. I encourage you to see things from a different point of view and use feedback from each other to augment your ideas. And while I encourage debate and disagreement as a productive aspect of classroom discussion, you are expected to act in a respectful manner at all times.

2. **Short Responses 30%** – For six out of the fifteen weeks in the semester, you will be responsible for writing a critical summary of the assigned readings. You can choose which weeks you write for. In no more than two double-spaced pages, you will synthesize and summarize the readings, analyze their strengths and shortcomings, discuss their substantive implications for the “real world” and for future research, and raise at least three clearly defined questions that the readings left unanswered. **Responses must be submitted by email on the Sunday before the class you have chosen to write about.**
3. **Research Paper - 50%** – You will be responsible for producing an article-length research paper for this class. **The paper is due on Canvas, May 5th at 11:59PM.** It can be on any topic related to comparative political behavior (and that’s a lot of topics). I expect – and I am excited for – you to talk to me about your ideas. Make sure to do so early on in the semester so that you can set yourself up to produce a great paper. I am not requiring a rough draft or scaffolding this assignment because you are an adult and can handle your own writing schedule. That being said, I am happy to look over any writing – not matter how rough or polished – at any point in the semester.

Grading Scale:

Grade	%
A	89.50 - 100
B	79.50 - 89.49
C	69.50 - 79.49
D	60.00 - 69.49
F	59.99 and below

Attendance Policy: Attending class is mandatory. That being said, unforeseen circumstances arise, and I understand that you may have other things going on in your life that cause you to miss class. In other words, let’s talk if you have to miss class. Finally, please do your best to arrive to class on time.

Religious Observances: By university policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss an assignment in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Office Hours: I have scheduled office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays between 2:00PM and 3:20PM. I am also available by appointment. In addition, I am usually working in my office and have an open-door policy. If you come by and my office door is open, feel free to knock and come on in. Also, we do not have to meet in my office, if you feel more comfortable meeting elsewhere, let me know. Coffee shops are great for this! Two more things. First, you do not have to come to office hours alone. If your peers have similar questions, or if you feel a group discussion would be more useful for you, by all means come to office hours with your classmates. Second, I encourage you to come by office hours during the first couple weeks of class and introduce yourself. Learning about your interests and goals helps me tailor the class and make it more useful for you.

Late Assignments: Assignment deadlines are not just for you. Deadlines give me sufficient time to provide you with thoughtful and thorough feedback on each of your assignments, and to return graded assignments to you in a timely manner. Thus, no late assignments will be accepted in this class. Yet, sometimes, life rears its ugly head, making it difficult for us to complete our requisite responsibilities. So, if you anticipate being unable to meet an assignment deadline, let me know in advance so we can work together.

Appeals: If you believe a grade does not reflect your performance, you are welcome to dispute the grade. I ask that all grade appeals be made in writing. In the memo, explain why you should receive a higher grade on the assignment. This should be done within a week after the grade is announced and submitted after class or in office hours. After I read your memo, we will schedule a meeting to discuss why the grade does or does not warrant a change.

Academic Integrity: Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of North Texas' Student Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found [here](#). If any of the policies therein are unclear to you, or if you have any others questions, please come see me during office hours. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UNT. Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

Policies and Resources

To meet the learnings goals of this class, every student should have equitable opportunities in the classroom. Likewise, every student should feel comfortable engaging with the material, their peers and their instructor. To ensure that this is the case, I outline some policies and resources that help achieve this goal.

Statement on Learning Success: Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UNT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Names and Pronouns: At UNT, we aim to facilitate advocacy, dialogue, and learning around issues related to gender equity. The ways in which we choose to address one another, through the use of preferred names and pronouns, can be a strategy that fosters an inclusive learning environment. Each of us will honor and respect an individual's request to be addressed according to their preferred name, with correct pronunciation and pronoun.

Triggering and Challenging Material: In this course, we may discuss material that can be triggering or emotionally challenging. Each of us brings to class our unique personal experiences, making it difficult to predict how the material will affect you. If you anticipate that certain material might be triggering, please come meet with me so that we can discuss possible strategies to put in place that will allow you to engage in the course to your fullest potential.

Services for Students with Disabilities: This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Counseling and Mental Health Center: All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>.

The UNT Care Team: The UNT Care Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that meets regularly to provide a response to students, staff, and faculty whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or others. To learn more about the Care Team go to: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>. If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, let the Care Team know. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded

educational institutions. UNT is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can: (1) Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating; (2) Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation; (3) Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/16-005>).

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one on one conversations) must be reported.

I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one on one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee.

If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, see here for a list of resources marked confidential <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/survivor-advocate/get-help>.