# PSCI 3600
# Governments and Politics Around the World

**Fall 2026**

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| **Class Meetings** | Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:45-14:05 |
| **Location** | Wooten Hall 115 |
| **Instructor** | Sezen Tunali |

## Instructor Information


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| **Email** | SezenTunali@my.unt.edu |
| **Office** | Wooten Hall 131 |
| **Office Hours** | Tuesdays, 2:30-5:30 PM; via Zoom, and by appointment |


## Course Description and Overview

Comparative politics is the study of different forms of government and political systems around the world. Comparativists ask questions such as: Why are some countries democratic while others are governed by authoritarian regimes? Why do some democracies have two major parties while others have multiparty systems? How do different electoral rules shape political competition? Why are some countries relatively stable and secure while others experience recurring conflict? These questions are inherently comparative because answering them requires examining political systems in relation to one another.

In this course, we will examine major concepts and theories in comparative politics while comparing and contrasting political systems across a range of countries. Students will develop a basic familiarity with the historical context of several states, their political institutions, major parties, patterns of political behavior, and contemporary political challenges. Through these cases, we will explore both the similarities and the important differences in how politics is organized and practiced around the world.

By the end of the course, students should be able to use the concepts and comparative tools introduced in class to understand and analyze political events and debates around the world and to think more critically about their own experiences as citizens.

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the major concepts and theories of comparative politics.
- Apply concepts and theories of comparative politics to contemporary political issues and country cases.
- Develop basic knowledge of the historical context, institutions, parties, political behavior, and contemporary challenges of political systems around the world.
- Understand and compare key differences among democratic, authoritarian, emerging democratic, and communist/post-communist political systems.

## Required Materials

O'Neil, Patrick H. Essentials of Comparative Politics. 8th ed. W. W. Norton.

O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. Cases in Comparative Politics. 8th ed. W. W. Norton.

Additional required readings and course materials will be posted on Canvas.

This course has digital components. To fully participate, students will need internet access to reference course content and complete assigned activities on the Canvas Learning Management System.

## Course Structure and Strategies for Success

Class meetings will generally combine lecture, discussion, and comparative application. Students should complete assigned readings before class and arrive prepared to engage with the major concepts and country cases. Lectures will clarify and extend the readings rather than simply reproduce them. Regular attendance, careful note-taking, and consistent engagement with the readings will therefore be important for success.

In Week 4, we'll run a short in-class simulation: the same set of vote totals, tallied first under majoritarian (winner-take-all) rules and then under proportional representation, to see firsthand how electoral rules alone can produce very different governments from identical votes.

Office hours are an opportunity to ask questions about course material, discuss assignments, review concepts, or simply talk about comparative politics. Students are encouraged to use office hours throughout the semester rather than waiting until immediately before an exam.

## Course Requirements and Grading

| Assessment | Percentage |
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| Quiz 1 (Canvas) | 10% |
| Midterm Exam (in class) | 20% |
| Quiz 2 (Canvas) | 10% |
| Final Exam (in class) | 25% |
| Group Project | 25% |
| Participation & In-Class Activities | 10% |

**Total: 100%**

## Assessment Overview

### Quizzes (10%+10%)

Two quizzes will be administered through Canvas. Each quiz will be available on Canvas for a 24-hour period. Students are expected to attend both regular class meetings during quiz weeks; the quizzes do not replace class meetings. The quizzes are intended to assess comprehension of assigned readings, key terms, concepts, and material covered in class.

### Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will be administered in person during our regular class meeting on Thursday, October 8, from 12:45–2:05 PM in Wooten Hall 115. Students will have the full class period to complete the exam. Tuesday, October 6 will be a regular in-person class meeting devoted entirely to midterm review, including clarification of key concepts, review of course material, and exam preparation. The midterm will assess students' understanding and application of all course material covered through the class meeting preceding the review session.

### Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be administered in person during UNT's official final-examination period, December 7–11, 2026. The final exam will assess students' understanding and application of the course material covered after the midterm exam. The exact date, time, and location will be added once the official UNT final-exam schedule is confirmed.

### Group Project (25%)

#### *Presentation (20%)*

Students will work in groups of 4–5 to analyze the domestic political system of a country outside the United States. The project will require students to apply concepts covered in this course, such as states and regimes, nationalism and political culture, democratic or authoritarian institutions, political competition, and other course themes relevant to their selected country. Presentations will take place during the final week of regular classes (Week 15) and will be split across both class meetings, with the exact number of groups per day depending on final group sizes; a day-by-day presentation roster will be posted on Canvas ahead of time. Each group will have 10 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A.

Each group's own presentation will conclude with a brief, one-paragraph prediction: using the concepts developed over the semester, what do you expect this country's politics to look like in five years, and why?

#### *Discussion-Starter Questions (5%)*

Each presenting group will post their presentation materials on Canvas approximately one week before their scheduled presentation date. Each group will be assigned one other group's presentation to prepare for (assignments posted on Canvas before Week 15): using the posted materials, the assigned group will prepare a few discussion-starter questions and submit them on Canvas before the start of class on the day of that presentation — this submission is the assigned group's full grade for engaging with another group's project. Both the presentation (including the prediction) and the discussion questions submitted for the assigned group will be factored into each group's Group Project grade.

### Participation & In-Class Activities (10%)

Regular attendance and active engagement are important components of this course. Participation may include contributing to class discussion, responding to questions, engaging in comparative activities, and demonstrating preparation for class.

## Course Policies

***Attendance.*** Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. It is important that you communicate with the professor prior to being absent, so you and the professor can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor if you are unable to attend class meetings because

you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community. If you are ill, or came into contact with someone who is, please let the instructor know in a timely manner.

***Lecture slides.*** I will not be distributing lecture slides for the class. It is important that you come to class and take careful notes, as this is the best way to prepare for the exams. The slides are simply a basic outline and are not sufficient for understanding the course material. That said, if you have a legitimate, documented, and excused reason to be absent, I will send you the slides upon request. Students with an ODA accommodation may request a copy of the slides.

***Use of Electronics.*** Use of cell phones in class is strictly prohibited; please turn off or silence your phones. If you have an emergency and must make a call, please leave the classroom quietly. Use of laptops or tablets to take notes is permitted, but highly discouraged. Research has shown that students retain information better if they take hand-written notes. In addition, screens can be disruptive to other students in class. If you still choose to use a laptop or tablet, please use them exclusively for note taking. If your use of electronics becomes disruptive or is used for purposes other than taking notes, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

***Academic Dishonesty.*** The Political Science Department adheres to and enforces UNT's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage). Students in this class should review UNT Policy 06.003. Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the penalties and procedures laid out in this policy. Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Policy Manual Section 06.003.

***Disability Accommodation.*** 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 Accommodation (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, see the Office of Disability Accommodation website. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

***Student Conduct.*** Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

***Late Work & Makeup Policy.*** If you know in advance that you will be unable to submit an assignment or attend a quiz/activity on time, you must notify the instructor prior to the deadline.

***Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use.*** Students may use generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in this course only in a responsible and ethical manner, and only with full transparency. If you use an AI tool for any assignment or project work, you must disclose which tool you used and how you used it (e.g., brainstorming, checking grammar, drafting). Undisclosed or non-transparent use of AI will be treated as a violation of academic integrity and may result in a grade of zero on the assignment in question.

***Changes to Syllabus.*** The syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the instructor. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. Please consult the course website for the most current syllabus.

# Course Schedule

| Week | Dates | Topic / Assessment | Readings |
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| Week 1 | Tuesday, Aug. 18 | Introduction and Course Preliminaries | No reading required. |
| | Thursday, Aug. 20 | Introduction to Comparative Politics | Essentials, Chapter 1 (Canvas) |
| Week 2 | Aug. 25 & 27 | States, Regimes, and Governments | Essentials, Chapter 2 (Canvas) |
| Week 3 | Sept. 1 & 3 | Nationalism, Ideology, and Culture | Essentials, Chapter 3 |
| Week 4 | Sept. 8 & 10 | Politics in Democracies<br>Group Project: Country Selection Due (Canvas)<br>*In-class activity: electoral systems simulation* | Essentials, Chapter 5<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>**Brookings (2026).** "From Martial Law to Democratic Renewal in South Korea." Read online |
| Week 5 | Tuesday, Sept. 15 | The United Kingdom | Cases, Chapter 2<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **Menon, Anand (2026).** "Back to the Future? British Politics in 2026." Brookings. Read online |
| | Thursday, Sept. 17 | Germany<br>Quiz #1 due (Canvas) | Cases, Chapter 5<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **Flint Global (2026).** "German State and Local Elections in 2026: A Super Election Year with National Implications?" Read online |
| Week 6 | Tuesday, Sept. 22 | Emerging Democracies | Essentials, Chapter 10 |
| | Thursday, Sept. 24 | Case Study: Military Rule in the Sahel | Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger (West Africa) – military juntas that seized power promising security, now consolidating through repression rather than delivering it.<br>• **Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2026).** "As Security Deteriorates, Sahelian Juntas Further Stifle Civilians." Read online |
| Week 7 | Tuesday, Sept. 29 | South Africa | Cases, Chapter 11<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **CBN Business Advisory (2026).** "2026 Municipal Elections: A Key Test for South Africa's Government of National Unity." Read online |
| | Thursday, Oct. 1 | Mexico | Cases, Chapter 13<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) (2026).** "Mexico Country Report." Read online |
| Week 8 | Tuesday, Oct. 6 | Midterm Review | Midterm Review – clarification of key concepts, review of |

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| | | | course material, exam preparation. |
| | Thursday, Oct. 8 | MIDTERM EXAM | MIDTERM EXAM – in class, full class period. |
| Week 9 | Tuesday, Oct. 13 | Authoritarian Regimes – Concepts and Global Trends | Essentials, Chapter 6<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) (2026).** "Global Report: Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding Worldwide." Read online |
| | Thursday, Oct. 15 | Comparative Case Studies (Turkey, Hungary) | *Comparative case studies (two regions, two different paths into and through authoritarianism):*<br>• Turkey (Middle East/Eurasia) – competitive authoritarianism, still consolidating. **Freedom House (2026).** "Turkey," Freedom in the World 2026 Country Report. Read online<br>• Hungary (European Union) – "illiberal democracy" inside a democratic bloc, and its reversal at the ballot box in April 2026. **House of Commons Library (2026).** "Hungary: Developments under Viktor Orbán and the 2026 Parliamentary Election." Read online |
| Week 10 | Oct. 20 & 22 | Communist and Post-Communist Systems | Essentials, Chapter 9 |
| Week 11 | Oct. 27 & 29 | Russia and China | Cases, Chapters 7 and 8<br>*Current-events supplement:*<br>• **NPR (2026).** "Xi and Putin Meet to Reaffirm China-Russia Ties." Read online |
| Week 12 | Tuesday, Nov. 3 | Islam and Politics | • **Goddard, Hugh (2002).** "Islam and Democracy." The Political Quarterly. (Canvas)<br>• **Hamid, Shadi and Rashid Dar (2016).** "Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism: A Primer." Brookings. Read online |
| | Thursday, Nov. 5 | Discussion: "The Empty Quest for Muslim Democracy"<br>Quiz #2 due (Canvas) | *Current theoretical touchstone:*<br>• **Kilinc, Ramazan, Turan Kayaoglu, and Etga Ugur (2026).** "The Empty Quest for Muslim Democracy." Journal of Democracy 37(1). Read online |
| Week 13 | Tuesday, Nov. 10 | Iran | Cases, Chapter 10<br>*Current-events supplement (regime succession/survival):* |

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| | Thursday, Nov. 12 | Egypt | *Current-events supplement:*<br>• **Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) (2026).** "Egypt Country Report," BTI 2026. Read online<br>• Continued military control over the economy under el-Sisi: **The National (2026).** "El Sisi Grants Army-Linked Future of Egypt Authority New Powers to Run Economy." Read online |
| Week 14 | Nov. 17 & 19 | Political Violence | Essentials, Chapter 7 |
| Thanksgiving Break | Nov. 24 & 26 | NO CLASS — Thanksgiving Break | — |
| Week 15 | Dec. 1 & 3 | Group Project Presentations | Group presentations will take place during both class meetings.<br>*Format: 10 minutes per group, plus 5 minutes of Q&A (using the discussion questions submitted in advance by the assigned group). Number of groups per day depends on final group sizes; class may end early on lighter days.* |
| Finals Week | Dec. 7–11 | FINAL EXAM | In class during the official UNT final-examination period. Exact date, time, and location to be added once confirmed. |

The course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.