

# Political Science 140: Introduction to Comparative Politics

140:006 – Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:00 – 409 West Hall  
140:008 – Tuesday / Thursday 1:00-2:00 – 1636 Chemistry

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
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Welcome to your PS 140 section! Over the course of the semester, I have several goals for our section:

- To learn about other parts of the countries and political systems
- To clarify any questions students might have regarding lectures and readings
- To encourage critical thinking about class topics and politics in general
- To improve students' writing and discussion skills
- To help students prepare for professional careers, whether in politics, law, or elsewhere

I anticipate that these sections will serve as supplements to lecture, not as substitutes. You are expected to attend lecture. While I will answer any clarifying questions you may have about something Professor Markovits said, I will not simply repeat the lecture. The focus of our discussion is the reading material, but we may draw on lecture to help elucidate the readings further. This means you are expected to do the readings ahead of time. Careful consideration of these readings is the best preparation for our discussions.

Meeting these goals requires your active participation in these discussion sections. My hope is that you set the agenda for most of our sessions. After all, discussion section is intended to serve you.

## Course Evaluation

The break down of your course grade is as follows:

Paper 1 (Thursday, September 27) . . . . .	20%
Paper 2 (Thursday, October 25) . . . . .	20%
Paper 3 (Thursday, November 15) . . . . .	20%
Take Home Final (Tuesday, December 18) . . . . .	30%
Section Evaluation . . . . .	10%

I will be the sole grader for each paper that you submit. You must submit both a hardcopy and an electronic copy of your paper via the Ctools drop box. I will not accept late work. Your paper is late if you turn it in during or after lecture. I will check the timestamp on Ctools to determine if the paper is late. Please be mindful of the time it takes to save and upload your papers.

You will be allowed to rewrite one of your papers. However, this does *not* mean you can simply submit a rough draft on the due date and expect to rewrite it after receiving my comments. Any

paper you submit should represent your best effort. The quality of what you submit will determine the quality of the feedback I provide you.

Learning how to write well is possibly the most important skill you will learn in college. You should try to write as clearly as possible for any assignment you submit for this class. We will spend one section discussing advice for academic writing the week before the first paper is due. In addition, if you do not feel confident about your writing skills, I encourage you to consult the University of Michigan Sweetland Writing Center.

Please refer to Professor Markovits' syllabus for more specific paper and take-home final instructions.

## Section Evaluation

As per Professor Markovits' syllabus, section lends itself to 10% of your final course grade, as follows:

**Attendance** will make up 2.5% of your overall course grade. You will be allowed two “no questions asked”, unexcused absences. Each subsequent absence will reduce your grade by 0.5 points. Please note: you cannot participate in section unless you are present. Therefore, you cannot earn participation points in any missed sections. These cannot be made up. Excused absences need proper documentation.

Additionally, I appreciate promptness. We will start on “Michigan Time” (10 past the hour), but no later. If you do not make it to class by ten past, you are late. Repeated tardiness will be noted and result in a reduction of the attendance portion of your participation grade.

**Participation** makes up 7.5% of your section grade. These points come from critical comments made during discussion, showing general interest in class, taking good notes, and coming to office hours. Engaging in critical discussions is an important part of professional life. Moreover, if students do not volunteer, I will feel free to call on somebody at random. Even if you are normally shy, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the discussion section as a relatively safe venue.

Each student must post three discussion questions *about the readings* by 12:00 a.m. the night before section. I have set up a forum in Ctools, so please post the question under the appropriate folder. You can ask for clarification about a specific point or you can challenge the author's argument. While I might not be able to discuss every single question during our discussion section, the questions will hopefully guide our discussion.

## Contacting Me

I am happy to field questions regarding the course via e-mail. However, please be aware that more in-depth questions are better addressed during office hours. Also, please allow me a reasonable time to respond. During the week, I will respond within 24 hours. Please anticipate any questions about papers or the exam so that you are not sending me e-mails about a paper or

exam at 2 a.m. the preceding evening. It is unlikely that I will respond rapidly, if at all. Please include “PS 140-[your section number]” in the subject of all e-mails you send regarding the course.

## Classroom Environment

This section is a safe space for open and lively discussion. With that in mind, it is important to note that we will be discussing contentious political issues. I encourage students to treat these discussions as intellectual exercises and not be offended by differences of opinion. That said, I will not tolerate personal attacks on any member of this section. Insulting and threatening comments will result in a lowering of your participation grade. Should you ever feel threatened or insulted, please contact me immediately to resolve the situation.

## Cell Phones and Laptops

Cell phones are not allowed during discussion. This includes text messaging. In addition to being rude and distracting, it is obvious when you use your phone during class. I ask that you turn phones off or on silent during section. If you are expecting an *important* call during class time, please clear it with me ahead of time, sit near the door, and place your phone on vibrate to minimize classroom disturbance. If your phone rings during class and we haven't discussed it ahead of time, I reserve the right to answer the phone and speak with the caller. It will not be pleasant.

Laptops are allowed and encouraged for all students. You are free to use the internet for purposes directly related to the class, such as looking up information related to the discussion or e-mailing me information I request. However, please do not use your laptop to read unrelated articles, play games, chat, watch movies, or engage in other activities not directly related to our discussion. Remember, I might call on you, so it is to your advantage to pay attention.

## Grade Grievances

While everybody wants an “A”, not everybody will get one. It is important to understand a few aspects of grading. First, while grading the quality of papers requires some judgment, in many ways my discretion regarding your grade is limited. If you do not demonstrate knowledge of the core concepts or make mistakes, your grade will reflect that fact.

If you believe I made an error in grading your assignment, please write a one-paragraph explanation of your argument and e-mail it to me within 36 hours of receiving your grade. If I did indeed make a *mistake*, I will revise your grade. However, I will not revise judgment calls. Moreover, begging, bribes, and threats will not convince me to raise your grade.

You should view your grade as constructive feedback about the quality of your work and as an opportunity for improvement. In the real world, you will not receive a grade on your work – you are either promoted or fired.

## Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is not allowed. You will receive no credit on anything you plagiarize. It is also at my discretion whether or not to bring this matter to Professor Markovtis, who will then report the incident to the dean. When it comes to citing other people's works, if you are in doubt, cite it! If you have specific questions regarding how to cite academic texts, please ask me ahead of time.

While I encourage students to discuss course topics outside of class, you are not allowed to work on assignments with anybody else. This includes, but is not limited to, asking family or friends to read a draft of your paper and provide comments. While in a work environment such feedback is often permitted, in this class our focus is on improving *your* writing skills.

## Special Assistance

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. We can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.