

PISc 350
Theories of Comparative Politics¹
MW 11:30-12:45, 280 SWKT

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Office hours: MW 9-11 or by appointment

Objectives
For more information on Political Science learning objectives, visit https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Political_Science

PISc 350 is designed to build your toolkit of *theories* for carrying out research in political science, particularly comparative politics, and to teach you the basic principles and debates of the philosophy of science. It will also help you improve your reasoning and writing. In particular, the course helps you learn several major theoretical approaches—especially rational-choice, cultural, and structural—and shows you a variety of applications of these theories in actual research, as well as standard critiques of these theories. The course will help you achieve these objectives through regular readings (including written daily summaries), class discussions, group presentations, and two short papers leading up to your final paper, which applies several of these theories to a current topic or problem of political science. There will also be a final exam to test your understanding of basic concepts. Note that the course is built around the idea that theories in abstraction are not very useful, and we will emphasize the application of theory to the study of real-world problems.

Required texts (available in bookstore)

- Little, Daniel. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- All other required readings are found on Blackboard under Course Materials (see “BB”).

Prerequisites

PISc 200, PISc 150

Assignments

Reading summaries 20%
Group presentation 20%
Short papers 20% (10% each)
Final paper 25%
Peer Review 5%
Participation 5%
Final Exam 5%

Assignments and grades, in detail

All written assignments are due **at the beginning of class on the day scheduled** (an additional electronic copy of your reading summary is due one hour before class). Reading summaries and written assignments may be turned in late, but they will lose a **full** grade for each 24 hour period they are late. Any missed assignment with a legitimate excuse can be made up without penalty.

Readings and summaries – 20%

A schedule of readings follows this section. Your reading is the foundation for learning in this class. In addition to actually reading the material, you must write at least a half-page, single-spaced summary of **each** chapter and article you read, including at least one good paragraph of summary and one of critique. You will turn in two copies: an electronic one you send to me at least one hour before class, and a hard copy handed in at the beginning of each class. Each summary is graded pass/fail. Spelling/grammar/punctuation are not crucial, but if they are especially bad you will be graded down. In exchange for your

¹ Significant portions of this course design and some of the text in the syllabus are borrowed from Prof. Jay Goodliffe’s PISc 310. My thanks to him for sharing this.

doing the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester, I will let you skip two days of readings (or three selections, if you spread them out).

Group presentation – 20%

You will be assigned to a group during the semester, and during the latter half of the semester when we pursue various topics of comparative politics, your group will direct the class discussion on that topic for 45 minutes one day. The format and subject of the presentation will be presented later, although you should be aware that the standard of quality that I expect is very high (after all, each presentation takes up almost a whole day of class). Once you are assigned to a group, be aware of the order of presentations and work with the members of your group so that you are prepared to start at the beginning of class on your assigned day. Material from these presentations will be included on the final exam.

Short papers – 20%

During the semester you will write two 1500-word papers that synthesize and apply the readings up to that point in the course. The first will apply arguments about scientific progress to an actual, published political science article; the second will apply two of the main theories of comparative politics to a problem of current interest that I will choose during the semester. More details will follow during the semester.

Long paper – 25%

On the last day of class you will turn in a 2500 to 3500-word paper applying the theories you studied for your group presentation to a current topic of comparative politics of your own choosing. You must turn in a rough draft of this paper about 10 days early so that the members of your group can review it; this draft will count for 10 percent of the total paper grade. Details will be given later.

Peer review – 5%

During the semester, you will write a critique of the rough drafts of each of your group member's final papers. You will need to write up to one, single-spaced page of typed comments. You will provide me a grade of your peers' papers (not shown to them), and they in turn will grade the quality of your peer review. Details on this assignment will be forthcoming.

Participation – 5%

Although I will not formally grade attendance, there is a heavy emphasis on discussion in our class. Come prepared to ask questions and to participate.

Final exam – 5%

The final exam is comprehensive and will be administered in class on the date and time scheduled by the university.

On-line course evaluation

The university asks that you fill out the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester. The results of this evaluation are very important to me and my department, and I use your written comments to improve the class. I will compensate you by dropping two days of reading summaries if you do the evaluation on time.

**Extra credit
and
making up
assignments**

I accept legitimate excuses for tardiness and absence and allow you to turn in papers or summaries late but only for legitimate excuses. These generally include illness, conflicting school assignments, and other events beyond your control, and I require that you tell me your excuse in person, not by email. Please don't plan on attending weddings, trips, family reunions, etc. on days that assignments are due or during the exams. You have the assignment schedule and are responsible for knowing it.

There is no extra credit, but if you do the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester, I will let you skip up to one week of reading summaries without penalty. You should save these free days for personal matters that may arise. You may also turn in papers—but not readings summaries—early.

University

The office of the dean has asked that following be included in this syllabus:

Policies

While all students sign the Honor Code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the Internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. See <http://www.byu.edu/honorcode> for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at D-282 ASB (367-5689 24 hours); or contact the Honor Code Office in 4440 WSC (422-2847).

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, you should get in touch with the University Accessibility Center (2170 WSC, 422-2767). This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

My own policy on honesty and plagiarism

Dishonesty is offensive and a violation of the Honor Code. Do your own work except on assignments where group work is allowed. Cheating on assignments or exams will be punished as I feel is appropriate, including failing you in the course.

Plagiarism—unacknowledged borrowing of other people's creative work—is a particularly pernicious form of dishonesty at a university. Please remember that plagiarism may get you failed, even if it results from carelessness. Always provide references to the sources of your ideas and data, and never reprint large pieces of published material without using appropriate punctuation (quotation marks or, for more than a few lines of cited text, indentation). Even properly cited material is inappropriate (not to mention bad writing) if it constitutes the bulk of your assignment. Note that this applies to material you find on the Web and not just traditional published material.

Date	Topic	Assignments
Philosophy of Science		
Sept 3	Introduction	
8	Philosophy of Science I	--Popper, "Science: Conjectures and Refutations" (BB) --Kuhn, "The function of dogma in scientific research" (BB)
10	Philosophy of Science II	--Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes" (BB) --Laudan, "A Problem-Solving Approach to Scientific Progress" (BB)
15	Progress in Political Science	--Ball, "Is There Progress in Political Science?" (BB) --Ordeshook, "Engineering or Science" (BB)
17	Philosophy of Social Science	--TBA --TBA
22	Causality and explanation	--Little, Chapters 1-2, 8
Basic Theories/Approaches in Political Science		
24	Behavioralism	--Dahl. 1961. "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science" (BB) --Easton. 1967. "The Current Meaning of 'Behavioralism'" (BB)
29	Rational-choice	--Little, Chapters 3 and 7
Oct 1	Cultural theory/interpretivism	--Little, Chapter 4 --Bevir and Rhodes, "Interpretive Theory" (BB) Paper #1 due
6	Marxism	--Marx, "Preface" --Little, Chapter 6
8	Structuralism	--Little, Chapter 5
Examples from Comparative Politics		
13-15	Democratization	BLipset, APolitical Man: Chapter 2 Economic Development and Democracy@ (BB) BBoix, Chap. 2 in <i>Democracy and Redistribution</i> , AA Theory of Transitions@ (BB) BInglehart and Weltzel, AModernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy@ pp. 15-76 (BB)
20-22	Islam and democracy	--Richards, "Democracy in the Arab Region: Getting there from here" (BB) --Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries" (BB) --Donno and Russett, "Islam, authoritarianism, and female empowerment" (BB)
27-29	Politics of economic development	--Valenzuela and Valenzuela, "Modernization and Dependency" (BB) --Granato, et al., AThe effect of cultural values on economic development@ (BB) --Mauro, "The effects of corruption on growth, investment, and public expenditure" (BB)
Nov 3-5	Ethnic conflict and genocide	--Kalyvas, "Wanton and senseless? The logic of massacres in Algeria" (BB) --Hinton, "Why did you kill? The Cambodian genocide and the dark side of face and honor" (BB) --Mueller, "The banality of 'ethnic war'" (BB) Paper #2 due
10-12	Social movements	--McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social

		Movements “ (BB) --Piven and Cloward, “The Structuring of Protest“ (BB) --Walzer, <i>The Revolution of the Saints</i> , Chapter 1 (BB)
17-19	Institutional choice/change	--Greif and Laitin, “A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change” (BB) --Cusack Iversen, and Soskice, “Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems” (BB) --Weyland “Toward a New Theory of Institutional Change” (BB)
24-25	Voter turnout	--Jackman, APolitical Institutions and Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective@ (BB) --Blais et al., “Where does turnout decline come from?” (BB) --Geys, “Explaining voter turnout” (BB)
1	Critique	--Lichbach, “Social theory and comparative politics” (BB) Peer draft of final paper due
3	Critique	--Little, Chapter 11 Peer review due
8	Critique	--Shapiro, “Problems, methods, and theories in the study of politics” (BB)
10	Critique	--Diamond, “Necessity’s mother” (Chap. 13 in <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i>) (BB) Final paper due
12-13	Reading days	
Tuesday, Dec. 16, 3-6 p.m.	Final exam (in class)	