**PlSc 350**

**Theories of Comparative Politics**

**MWF 9-10:50, 3718 HBLL SWKT**

Prof. Kirk Hawkins

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Office hours: MW 11-1 or by appointment

**Objectives**

PlSc 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 theories—especially rational-choice and cultural—and shows you a variety of applications of these theories in actual research, as well as standard critiques. The course will help you achieve these objectives through regular readings (including written daily summaries), class discussions, group presentations, and two papers. There will also be midterm and final exams to test your understanding of basic concepts.

**Required texts**


All other required readings are found on Blackboard under Course Materials (see “BB”).

**Prerequisites**

PlSc 200, PlSc 150

**Assignments**

Reading summaries/critiques 30%  
Papers 40% (20% each)  
Group presentation 10%  
Peer Review 5%  
Participation 5%  
Midterm and Final Exam 10%

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 – 30%**

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. For background readings, I will provide you with a list of questions to answer. For substantive chapters or articles, you will follow a standard template that I will present on the first day. 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 check/plus/minus. Spelling/grammar/punctuation are not critical, but if they are especially bad you will be graded down. In exchange for your doing the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester, I will let you skip one full day of readings (or three selections, if you spread them out).

**Paper – 40%**

During the semester you will write a 10-12 page (double-spaced, not include title or
works cited pages) literature review that presents and critiques the most prominent
theories on a research question we cover in class, then presents a series of potential
hypotheses to test it. (You will get choose which topic/question you address.) In your
review, you should include the sources mentioned in class, as well as at least two other
seminal works. While you should summarize and critique the theories, the point is to
arrive at a conclusion about which theory is right so that you can then spell out some
observable implications for testing. You will submit early proofs of your work (topic,
some initial literature), as well as a complete rough draft of the paper several days before
it is due. The rough draft is graded check/plus/minus, the final draft is graded on a regular
grade scale. More details will follow during the semester.

Group presentation – 10%
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 50 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
period 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.

Peer review – 5%
You will write a critique (one-page, single-spaced) of the rough drafts of two (2) of your
group member’s final papers. Each peer review is graded check/plus/minus. Details on
this assignment will be forthcoming.

Participation – 5%
Because this course is only partially a lecture course, discussion is a crucial component of
our learning. You will need to come prepared to participate in our discussions each day,
and I will keep track of your participation.

Midterm/final exam – 10%
Because there is a heavy emphasis on higher-level learning objectives in this class
(critique, synthesis, application, etc.), the midterm and final exam will necessarily be a
little shorter and less weighty than you are used to. But we do learn some important
concepts and skills that can only be evaluated on an exam. Exams will be administered in
class; see dates listed in the syllabus. The final exam is comprehensive.

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 one
day (two periods) 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. Please come speak
with me right away if you end up in this situation. If you need to miss a class for personal
reasons such as a wedding or family vacation, you should use the free day you receive by
completing the online evaluation. You may also turn in papers early.
The office of the dean has asked that following be included in this syllabus:

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.

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). And even if you properly cite material, it is inappropriate for this to constitute the bulk of your assignment. Note that this applies to material you find on the Web and not just traditional published material.
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<td>Introduction</td>
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| 29       | Causality and explanation; the paper assignment | --Waltz, “Theories and Laws,” Chapter 1 in *Theory of International Relations* (pp. 1-11 only)  
--Little, Chapters 1-2, 8 (in Chap. 8, pp. 159-60 only) |
| May 2    | Philosophy of Science I                    | --Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations” (BB)                         
| 4        | Philosophy of Science II (plus some application) | --Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes” (pp. 91-180, *selections only*)  
--Ball, “Is There Progress in Political Science?” (BB)  
--Alma 34 |
| 6        | Philosophy of Science III (more application); how to search the literature | **Statement of Paper Topic Due**  
--Boix, “A Theory of Transitions,” Chap. 2 in *Democracy and Redistribution* (BB)  
--Inglehart and Weltzel, “Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy” pp. 15-76 (BB) |
--Kuhn, “The function of dogma in scientific research” (BB) |
| 11       | Rational-choice                            | --Little, Chapters 3 and 7                                                   |
| 13       | Cultural theory/interpretivism             | --Little, Chapter 4                                                          
--Bevir and Rhodes, “Interpretive Theory” (BB) |
| 16       | Marxism                                    | --Marx, “Preface”                                                            
--Little, Chapter 6 |
| 18       | **Midterm Exam (in class)**               |                                                                               |
| 20       | Functionalism; Structuralism; Comparative Historical Analysis | **Description of Additional Sources Due**  
--Little, Chapter 5  
--TBA |
| 23       | Islam and democracy                        | --Tessler, “Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries” (BB)  
--TBA |
| 25       | Political economy (subject)               | --Valenzuela and Valenzuela, “Modernization and Dependency” (BB)              
--Mauro, “The effects of corruption on growth, investment, and public expenditure” (BB) |
| 27       | Populism                                   | --Conniff, *Populism in Latin America*, “Introduction” (BB)                  
--Hawkins, *Chavismo and Populism*, selections |
| 30       | **Memorial Day—no class**                  |                                                                               |
| Jun. 1   | 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) |
<p>| 3        | Social movements                           | --McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements “ (BB)       |</p>
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| 6          | Voter turnout                              | --Jackman, “Political Institutions and Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective” (BB)  
              |                                            | --Blais et al., “Where does turnout decline come from?” (BB)                     |
|            |                                            | --Geys, “Explaining voter turnout” (BB)                                          |
|            |                                            | **Rough Draft of Paper Due**                                                      |
| 8          | New Institutionalism                        | --Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, selected chapters (BB)                      |
|            |                                            | --Selway and Templeton, “The Effect of Democratic Political Institutions on Political Violence in Different Societal Settings” (BB) |
| 10         | Historical Institutionalism                 | --Pierson, “The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis” |
|            |                                            | --Hawkins, “Sowing Ideas”                                                        |
| 13         | Some fun but relevant topic                 | **Final Paper Due**                                                              |
|            |                                            | --Ordeshook, “Engineering or Science” (BB)                                       |
| 14         | Reading day                                | **Final exam (in class)**                                                       |

Wed., Jun. 15, 9-10:50