

Spring 2020 | TR, 9:30 – 10:45 pm | Classroom: CTL 210

POLS 320: Comparative Political Institutions

Sergio J. Ascencio

Email: sergioascencio@unm.edu

Office: Social Science Building, 2074

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00pm (and other times by appointment)

Course Description

This course is intended as an introduction to the study of political institutions. We will focus on the origins, functioning, and political consequences of modern democratic institutions. The first part of the course will provide an overview of the role of institutions in solving a variety of problems in democratic governance, such as preference aggregation, collective action, resource allocation, and delegation. The rest of the course will emphasize both theoretical ideas and empirical research on political institutions and consider some of the core topics of inquiry in the comparative study of institutions. These include, among others, electoral systems and party systems, legislatures, parliamentary and presidential institutions, courts and judicial power, and federalism.

Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) from the department of Political Science can be seen [here](#). In addition, upon completion of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the importance of formal and informal institutions in constraining and shaping human interaction.
- Display an in-depth understanding of the functioning of key political institutions, with an emphasis on democratic institutions, such as electoral systems, party systems, legislatures, parliamentary and presidential institutions.
- Demonstrate comprehension of the social, political, and economic effects of different political institutions, as well as some of the challenges associated with empirically identifying and quantifying these effects.
- Conduct theoretically informed and empirically based analysis of real-world conditions and events, and present the results of that analysis persuasively in written and oral forms.

Course Requirements

Readings

In this course, we will read a combination of book chapters and journal articles. Students are expected to attend class and keep up with the readings. The course schedule indicates the required readings; you are expected to do these *before* coming to class. All required readings will be available through UNM Learn. *If you have any problems accessing the readings please let me know.*

Grading

- Class performance (20% of final grade). This part of the grade has two components: in-class participation (15%) and attendance (5%). An important part of class time will be devoted to discussing the readings; regular and active participation is expected. *Students who do not feel comfortable speaking in class should contact me. Please do not wait until the last week of classes.*

Attendance will be taken each day. I understand that students might miss class for “legitimate” reasons (e.g., holidays, sickness, emergencies), and thus each student will be allowed four absences without penalty. Starting with the fifth absence, the attendance grade will be lowered from 100 by ten percentage points per absence.

- In-class writing points (15% of final grade). At the beginning of class, students will be asked to write a short paragraph synthesizing the readings for a given prompt. Submitted responses that make it clear that the reading was done will get one point; in order to get full credit for this portion of your grade, you must get 8 points throughout the course of the semester.
- Exams (65% of final grade). Throughout the semester, there will be two exams. A midterm exam (30%) will be held during class time on Thursday, March 12, and the final exam (35%) will be held during class time on the last day of classes, Thursday, May 14.
- Throughout the semester, each of the components listed above will be graded on a ten-point scale. Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A+	9.7–10	B+	8.7–8.99	C+	7.7–7.99	D+	6.7–6.99
A	9.3–9.69	B	8.3–8.69	C	7.3–7.69	D	6.3–6.69
A–	9.0–9.29	B–	8.0–8.29	C–	7.0–7.29	D–	6.0–6.29
						F	Less than 6.0

Course Expectations and Policies

1. Reading. Students must complete the readings prior to coming to class. I encourage bringing in not only thoughts on the readings but also questions based on parts of the readings that seemed unclear, difficult to grasp, or that you found interesting.
2. Participation. There *is* such a thing as bad participation. Students are encouraged to learn how to both be good listeners and good speakers—a balance between both promotes good participation. Some of the topics in this course can be sensitive or controversial; while engaged discussion is encouraged any language that is disrespectful will result in dismissal. *If anyone feels they are unsafe or disrespected in the classroom they should report to me immediately.*
3. Academic honor and respectful behavior. All activities associated with this course must comply with University policies regarding academic integrity, honesty, and discrimination. The University’s full statement on academic honesty and the consequences for failure to comply is available in the [Pathfinder](#). Violations of these policies will be handled with the utmost seriousness.
4. Name. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. If you have a preferred name or gender that is different as to what will be listed in the roster, please email me so that your preferences can be respected. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.
5. Disabilities. Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you need alternative accessible formats for undertaking

and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner.

6. Subject to Change Statement. Information contained in this syllabus is subject to change (with advance notice) as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Course Schedule

Note: Readings listed under specific dates (marked with a ★) are mandatory and must be completed before coming to class.

Week 1. Introduction

January 21. Introduction – No required readings.

January 23.

- ★ Shepsle, Kenneth. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. 2nd edition. W.W. Norton & Company. **Chapters 2 (pp. 13-34) and 3 (pp. 41-50).**

Week 2. Why Institutions? Preference Aggregation, Collective Action, and Delegation

January 28 and 30.

- ★ Shepsle, Kenneth. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. 2nd edition. W.W. Norton & Company. **Chapter 4 (pp. 53-86).**

Week 3. State, Democracy, and Rule of Law

February 4.

- ★ Shepsle, Kenneth. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. 2nd edition. W.W. Norton & Company. **Ch. 8 (pp. 231-259) required; Ch. 9 (pp. 262-292) suggested.**

February 6.

- ★ Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 1 (pp. 13-30).**
- ★ Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." 1993. *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 567-576.

Week 4. Electoral Systems I: Typology

February 11. No class.

February 13.

- ★ Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Second Edition. **Chapter 1 required; Chapter 8 (pp. 143-157) suggested.**
- ★ Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. **Chapter 13**

Week 5. Electoral Systems II: Duverger's Law, Normative Implications

February 18.

- * Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. **Chapter 14 (pp. 611-667)**.

February 20.

- * Norris, Pippa. 1997. "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems." *International Political Science Review* 18(3):297-312. **Only pages 304-312.**
- * Powell, G. Bingham and and Georg S. Vanberg. 2000. "Election Laws, Disproportionality and Median Correspondence: Implications for Two Visions of Democracy." *British Journal of Political Science* 30(3):383-411.
- Blais, André and R. Kenneth Carty. 1987. "The impact of electoral formulae on the creation of majority governments." *Electoral Studies* 6(3): 209-218.

Week 6. Presidentialism and Parliamentarism I

February 25.

- * Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. **Chapter 12 (pp. 457-499)**

February 27. We will discuss reading assignments in class

- * Strom, Kaare , Ian Budge and Michael J. Laver. 1994. "Constraints on Cabinet Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 38(2): 303-335.
- * Warwick Paul. 1992. "Economic-Trends and Government Survival In West European Parliamentary Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 86(4): 875-887.
- * Smith, Alastair. 2003. "Election Timing In Majoritarian Parliaments." *British Journal of Political Science* 33(3): 397-418.

Week 7. Presidentialism and Parliamentarism II

March 3.

- * Linz, Juan. 1996. "The Perils of Presidentialism" in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 124-142.
- * Horowitz, Donald. 1996. "Comparing Democratic Systems" in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 143-149.
- Cheibub, José Antonio . 2007. *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*, New York: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 1**

March 5.

- * Cheibub, José A. 2002. "Minority Governments, Deadlock Situations, and the Survival of Presidential Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (3): 284-312.
- * Mainwaring, Scott. 1993. "Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination." *Comparative Political Studies* 26(2): 198-228.

Week 8. Exam week

March 10. Review session.

March 12. **Midterm exam**

Week 9. Spring break – no class

Week 10. Federalism and Decentralization

March 24.

- ★ Norris, Pippa. 2008. *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 7 (pp. 157-179)**
- ★ Brancati, Dawn. 2006. “Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?” *International Organization* 60(3): 651- 685.

March 26. Federalism/decentralization II

- ★ Chhibber, Pradeep and Ken Kollman. 1998. “ Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States.” *The American Political Science Review* 92(2): 329-342.
- Wibbels, Erik. “Federalism and the Politics of Macroeconomic Policy and Performance.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (October 2000): 687-702.

Week 11. Bureaucracy

March 31.

- ★ Huber, John D., Charles R. Shipan and Madelaine Pfahler. 2001. “Legislatures and statutory control of bureaucracy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): 330-345.

April 2.

- ★ Gulzar, Saad and Benjamin Pasquale. 2017. “Politicians, Bureaucrats, and Development: Evidence from India.” *American Political Science Review* 111(1): 162-183.
- Brierley, Sarah. “Unprincipled Principals: Co-opted Bureaucrats and Corruption in Ghana.” *American Journal of Political Science*. Forthcoming.

Week 12. Authoritarian Institutions

April 7.

- ★ Malesky, Edmund and Paul Schuler. 2011. “The Single-Party Dictator’s Dilemma: Information in Elections without Opposition.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36(4): 491-530.
- ★ Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. 2007. “Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats.” *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (11): 1279-1301.

April 9.

- ★ Boix, Carles Milan W. Svulik. 2013. “The foundations of limited authoritarian government: Institutions, commitment, and power-sharing in dictatorships.” *Journal of Politics* 75(2), 300-316.

Week 13. Consequences: Institutions, accountability, and corruption

April 14.

- * Hellwig, Timothy and David Samuels. 2008. "Electoral Accountability and the Variety of Democratic Regimes." *British Journal of Political Science* 38(1) 65-90.
- * Tavits, Margit. 2007. "Clarity of Responsibility and Corruption." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(1): 218-229.

April 16. No class.

Week 14. Consequences: Institutions, accountability, and minority representation

April 21.

- * Carey, John M. and Matthew S. Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to cultivate a personal vote: A rank ordering of electoral formulas" *Electoral Studies* 14 (4): 417-439.
- * Wagner, Patrick and Michael Plouffe. 2019. "Electoral systems and trade-policy outcomes: the effects of personal-vote incentives on barriers to international trade" *Public Choice* 180 (3-4): 333-352.

April 23.

- * Roberts, Andrew, Jason Seawright and Jennifer Cyr. 2013. "Do Electoral Laws Affect Women's Representation?" *Comparative Political Studies* 46(12), pp.1555-1581.
- * Bhavnani, Rikhil R. 2009. "Do electoral quotas work after they are withdrawn? Evidence from a natural experiment in India." *American Political Science Review* 103(1): 23-35

Week 15. Origins: Institutional choice and change

April 28.

- * Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review* 91: 1369-1401.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2002. "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 107: 1231-1294.

April 30.

- * Boix, Carles. 1999. "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 93(3): 609-624.
- * Meinke, Scott R., Jeffrey K. Staton, and Steven T. Wuhs. 2006. "State Delegate Selection Rules for Presidential Nominations, 1972-2000." *The Journal of Politics* 68(1): 180-193.

Week 16. Exam week

May 5. Institutional choice and change + Review session.

- * Binder, Sarah A. 1996. "The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990." *American Political Science Review* 90: 8-20.

May 7. **Final exam.**