

Occidental College

2023 Fall General Course Evaluations

Course: POLS222_0: Comparative Electoral Systems

Instructor: Isaac Hale *

1 - 1. How would you describe your level of engagement in this course? How did you engage in class? For example: Did you come to class prepared? Did you seek help from the instructor, peers, or other supports when needed?

Response Rate 18/24 (75%)

- I was very engaged in this course. I really enjoyed doing the readings and setting questions aside to discuss with Professor Hale. I also found myself talking about the subject matter in my other classes as well, and with my friends outside of class. I was probably a little insufferable but this class was great.
- I feel I was decently engaged throughout the course by asking questions in class, going into office hours with questions about homework, and spending a great deal of time per week working on the homework worksheets.
- I answered questions regularly and tried to ask my own when I thought they'd add to the conversation.
- I came to class prepared, asked questions, and completed all assignments on time.
- My level of engagement with this course was high. I always came to class prepared and completed all readings and assignments on time.
- I was pretty engaged, I definitely didn't do every reading but the lectures were super interesting and engaging so I was certainly focused there.
- I engaged with this course by coming to class everyday on time and completing the readings. I never felt the need to come to office hours, but I knew that, if I needed it, Prof. Hale was there to help.
- My level of engagement in this course was high since the class was comfortable and office hours was welcoming.
- I engaged in this class by coming to class having the readings done, asking lots of questions to clarify material, and answering Professor Hale's questions. I completed every worksheet on time. On numerous occasions, I went to office hours to seek help on the worksheet, advice on the essay, or general major advising.
- As always with Professor Hale's courses, the level of engagement is fantastic. He frequently is a good professor: First, he understands that attendance is not always necessary for every single class and that we don't have to tell him about being absent unless it would be a lot of time. Second, he always makes many jokes in every presentation and is fun to learn from. Third, he is an excellent explainer of the content. He should teach this class again and ones similar to it.
- I came to class prepared, and the class structure was very much conducive to engagement.
- I believe I was very engaged in this course. I did all of the readings and was always prepared for class. I participated in class discussions most days and actively listened/ took notes. I attended office hours several times.
- I was somewhat engaged in the course in that I would volunteer answers in class lectures and engage with my peers. I did some of the readings but oftentimes they weren't directly related to the content of the lecture and were oftentimes examples of the electoral system we would go for.
- I was very engaged and I participated very often.
- I felt super engaged with the topics presented. The instructor was very good at engaging the class
- I engaged in the class but honestly did not always come prepared with the readings. I enjoyed how they didn't feel world-ending if you missed the reading because professor hale would go over things in class. I did seek help as I feel like professor hale pushes people to go into office hours if they need support, which I really appreciated.
- I was strongly engaged in this course and felt comfortable seeking the help of my instructor. I attended office hours when needed and was prepared to contribute to class.
- I was super engaged in this course as all of the presentations and slides were very well put together and organized, on top of the fact that Professor Hale does an excellent job of making topics both easy to understand as well as interesting.

2 - 2. How did this course influence, change, or help shape your understanding of the subject matter?

Response Rate 17/24 (70.83%)

- This is the first comparative politics class I've taken at oxy, and it really opened my eyes to how important it is to study governments around the world. I will be taking comparative politics in the spring and am looking forward to continuing to explore in that regard. I had also never thought about reform to the actual way we elect people in the US, which I now cannot seem to stop thinking about.
- I have a more in depth understanding and appreciation for the intricacies of electoral systems. This is an entire aspect of political science that is often undiscussed and under appreciated, and I'm glad to have the context for what all the acronyms mean now!
- This course has been fundamental in expanding my understanding of elections in different countries and how not every system is the same as the US.
- I understood electoral politics so much better and now can contribute some issues to our electoral system, which i was very confused by before.
- This course discussed a unique subject which I had little knowledge about previously. Now, I feel like a fledgling electoral systems expert. I believe that this topic is under considered and is vital to understand given its potential to impact politics in any country.
- Pretty much taught me everything I could about electoral systems, maybe the most I've ever learned in an individual class. Super informative and I hope you'll let him teach it again.
- I knew practically nothing about electoral systems other than the one used in the US prior to this course. I now feel like an electoral systems expert, so this course clearly influenced my understanding of the subject matter.
- I was not aware of any other electoral systems before taking this class and I now understand the importance and vast number of systems used around the world.
- This course was incredible at teaching me so much about electoral systems. I came into this class knowing but left with a completely new worldview on elections from a global perspective.
- It greatly improved it. I didn't really completely understand how different parts of the world elected people and now I do.
- This class gave me a fascinating look at electoral systems and how they shape party structures and policy outcomes. Professor Hale has a really interesting perspective on solutions for poor governance that elevated my understanding of global politics GREATLY.
- I knew very little about different electoral systems before taking this class. It was very interesting to learn more.
- I think this course was hugely educational for anyone who has any remote interest in international elections and any electoral system.
- This course was very influential in my understanding of electoral systems. I learned a lot about the topic and I thought it was explained very well.
- I knew pretty much nothing going into the class and while some of the material was confusing, I know infinitely more than when I started!
- This was a topic that I was extremely unfamiliar with upon registration, but I now feel much more competent in this line of study. I feel comfortable explaining concepts from this class to other people and look forward to incorporating this research into my future studies.
- I learned so much not only factually about electoral systems but about how they can impact politics so greatly. This is what I think was the greater takeaway of the class and I'm happy to say that I have had multiple conversations and educated people about the takeaways from this class.

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3 - 3. What skills or capacities did you expect to gain from this course? How and to what extent did the course help you to develop those skills or capacities?

Response Rate 18/24 (75%)

- Ability to analyze the actual processes by which votes are turned into seats. This class certainly met that goal / expectation.
- Understanding how to allocate votes using different electoral systems, and when I read political journals, articles, and books, I actually somewhat understand what electoral experts are talking about.
- I did not expect to learn new math but that was fun and possibly helpful in the future!
- The worksheets helped me understand the material and Hale was very engaged with all of our questions, no matter how stupid.
- I expected to learn more about electoral systems and elections. This course taught me exactly this, I even learned about a wider variety of electoral systems than I even knew existed.
- Analyze and understand electoral systems, I doubt there is an electoral system in the world that I couldn't do that for now. It taught me so much.
- I expected to gain knowledge of the electoral systems used around the world and I did! I also learned how to predict the number of parties a legislature might have with math and formulas, which I wasn't expecting!
- I learned how to calculate expected and observed vote/seat winning parties in a given election and I understand all popular electoral systems used around the world today.
- Besides literacy and understanding of the various electoral systems, I learned the various calculations about calculating expected/observed seat/vote/disproportionality values.
- It helped me develop the skill of what electoral reform to propose in real life when I work in government some day.
- I learned to look deeper into the power structures at play when analyzing the efficacy of a political system. Mad at the two party system? Don't be mad at voters, or even politicians themselves. Look at the electoral system and how it forces voters and legislators to act accordingly.
- I did not know what to expect going into this course. Coming out of this course, my knowledge has greatly increased. I understand how to calculate expected and observed seat and course values and have a deep understanding of many different electoral system. This course helped me develop math skills with all of the calculations we did as well as reasoning skills.
- I expected to be able to understand international elections and how electoral systems actually function apart from the United States' elections. The course gave me an extensive knowledge of the most notable and common practices of electoral systems as well as the functioning of electoral reform.
- I expected to learn about all of the major electoral systems and ways to judge them and I got just that.
- I learned a lot about how election experts calculate stats like disproportionality and other things
- I did not know what to expect coming into the class because it was a subject matter I didn't know much about. I gained skills in understanding elections and how systems work and impact representation which was a really applicable to my political knowledge.
- I gained skills in analyzing election results from non-US elections, an area I had no experience with in the past. I now feel comfortable engaging with these topics and now have better tools to understand foreign elections.
- I expected to learn about different electoral systems and how they influence politics. I learned this and more.

4 - 4. What aspects/features of the instruction were particularly effective or ineffective? What aspects/features of the course facilitated or impeded your learning? For example: How well did the professor structure class periods (e.g., discussion facilitation, group work, in-class exercises, lectures, handouts, etc), reading questions, assignments, exams, community-based work, field work, laboratory work, studio work, etc.?

Response Rate 17/24 (70.83%)

- I came to really enjoy the worksheets, and I thought that the lectures were super informative. I learned a lot through doing, and professor hale was always available to help out with questions on the worksheets.
- Sometimes I wish we were able to have more discussions about our individual thoughts/the entire class's thoughts on the electoral systems we were analyzing. The constant lecturing could sometimes feel a little repetitive, and I found when we had class discussions about the systems towards the end of the semester, those talks were interesting and very engaging. Also, the day where we went to the bio building and listened to a talk about the Australian Vote to Parliament facilitated engaging discussions and questions from students.
- The slides were expertly balanced between examples and material, but the readings being very disconnected led to a feeling that they weren't necessary, so when they were brought into in class discussions people sometimes felt surprised.
- i love prof Hale. no complaints. keep doing exactly what you are doing.
- Prof. Hale's lectures in this course were engaging and interesting. Worksheets also offered good practice for understanding and grappling with complex formulas and systems. I would be interested to see more opportunity for extensive debate between students on one or two class days, perhaps an extended debate about electoral systems for example. Overall Prof. Hale always facilitated an exciting course that engaged students.
- I mean no one was going to do that many readings and the lectures were so good I just didn't feel like I needed to. The in class worksheet things were really helpful to understand the actual worksheets so I'd keep doing those as well.
- I think the worksheets were very helpful in forcing me to work through the calculations required when it comes to electoral systems. In terms of ineffective, sometimes votes from seats confused me too much.
- Lectures were well thought out and engaging. The homework and worksheets were always pretty straightforward and were easy to complete because after lectures. No issues
- Effective: formula cheat sheet, lending us calculators, office hour timings, class lectures were very engaging, blog post readings Ineffective: sometimes (rarely) Votes from Seats was more confusing than helpful, more often with some of the journal articles
- Everything about what the professor did was effective.
- Professor Hale is hilarious and a fantastic individual who clearly loves showing up to his job every day. It's contagious, and makes everyone want to be there and listen to what he has to say.
- the lectures were extremely clear and I felt I learned a lot. Handouts were understandable and I felt prepared for everyone. Professor Hale was always willing to help during office hours or after class. one thing that could have improved my learning would be a diversification of home work by swapping some readings for podcasts or videos.
- I think my professor's structure for the lectures were perfect! It gave very detailed information but still implemented exercises and examples that would make applying the information learnt easily applicable. The worksheets directly related to his lectures so I was never lost but also was challenged each time.
- I thought the lectures and worksheets were very effective and I thought it was nice how he called on students.
- I honestly really enjoyed the worksheets because if the class was only lecture, it would have been hard to understand. But because we had to apply what we had learned in class, it helped me retain a lot more information. I also liked how we had to explain our answers because although it was difficult, it made me dig deeper into the subject matter. I also loved additions of humor in lectures because it created a more comfortable learning environment.
- Lectures in this course were effective. There was less discussion in this course than I expected, but it is understandable given our unfamiliarity with these systems. There were plenty of opportunities for students to ask questions and these also contributed to my understanding of course material.
- I think the worksheets were very effective, they helped me learn the content at a deeper level while going at an easy pace to keep up with. I will say that although the class was easy for me which was nice, I could definitely see a Mid-Term shorter paper or project being added in to help the class prepare for the final paper.

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5 - 5. What aspects of the course or instruction helped or hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to, and promotes the success of, a diverse group of students?

Response Rate 17/24 (70.83%)

- The class sessions were really helpful to my understanding because despite it being lecture based there was also a lot of room to have discussions and ask questions throughout. I never felt uncomfortable changing the pace or direction of the conversation, which is hard to maintain when giving a deeply content-based lecture.
- I think we could have had more days where we practiced using the formulas for electoral systems. Even though we worked on practice sheets a few times, there were still weeks where I felt confused upon trying to complete certain worksheet problems.
- The diverse examples brought in a nice variety of viewpoints from around the world.
- no complaints Hale rocks
- Prof. Hale created a learning environment that was inclusive of all through a patient and understanding approach to teaching.
- None, Hale was amazing. I'm a CS major taking this as an elective so I was really scared of not being able to do it or fit in and that didn't end up being true at all. He seriously did a great job.
- Prof. Hale creates a very welcoming environment where everyone can raise their hands and questions are always encouraged.
- The lectures were gripping and the instructor fostered an inviting learning environment.
- Helped the environment: amount of time for each worksheet, practice problems in each class before a worksheet was assigned, office hours were very helpful
- There were no problems with diversity nor inclusivity. Professor Hale should continue doing whatever he is doing now.
- Professor Hale is just an extremely approachable, kind, and informed person. This allows for universal engagement in the classroom from students who might never say a word in a politics class otherwise. No one's afraid to speak from fear of judgement.
- Professor Hale was very kind and encouraging in class. He always helpfully answered questions, promoting a lively classroom environment. All students were encouraged to participate in class discussions.
- I think the course provided an inclusive learning environment as each lecture was planned and followed a specific structure that allowed students to create a structure to their studying and class preparation.
- I thought Prof. Hale did a great job of creating a conclusive environment and this class had the best community of all of my classes.
- None hindered to be honest.
- Our professor was very responsive to student questions and did his best to navigate us through very complex electoral systems.
- Nothing hindered, but nothing in particular helped in my opinion. The learning environment was always inclusive and promoted the success of a diverse group of students.

6 - 6. What other suggestions (if any) do you have for the next time the course is taught?

Response Rate 14/24 (58.33%)

- Maybe do the US reform slightly earlier.... if that could ever make sense. or like introduce it and then end the class in the same way that you did.
- Towards the end of the semester the worksheets were more challenging, and I would have liked a few more days/one more week to work on worksheets 5 & 6. Maybe the assignments could be spread out a little more towards the end?
- more discussion on the readings? I really didn't do very many readings, but it wasn't super necessary to get the material
- This course is excellent and very interesting, perhaps there could be a bit more in depth discussion.
- None, it was perfect. Make him teach this every semester.
- -
- None
- Maybe offer one 1-day hw pass for the worksheets, just to give us some wiggle room when life happens.
- Keep up the same routine as now (the first time it was taught for when looking back at this).
- None whatsoever. Great class. Great dude. Learned a lot. Wouldn't change a thing.
- I think it would be nice if this class counted as a math/science core requirement since we did a lot of math on the worksheets.
- Potentially slow down a little more on the slides as it was a little hard to digest days with 80+ slides.
- I enjoyed the structure of this class and would not make any major changes.
- N/A

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7 - 7. What else (if anything) would you like to share about the course or the instruction?

Response Rate 15/24 (62.5%)

- THIS CLASS WAS THE BEST THANK YOU PROFESSOR HALE!
- I'm glad to have the knowledge gained in this class, and look forward to taking more classes in the politics department.
- I love prof Hale
- Prof. Hale is excellent and provided a useful and enjoyable course, I certainly look forward to a course with him in the future.
- Fantastic course, engaging lectures. Seriously have him teach it as much as you can.
- Prof. Hale is the best!
- nothing. good course
- Professor Hale was a fantastic instructor and this is by far the best politics class I have taken at Oxy. Really enjoyed the mix of both calculations/worksheets as well as the final paper; I appreciated that my learning was being assessed throughout the semester and frequently.
- He is a great instructor and should continue teaching these types of courses, and also add another American-based one too like the one he proposed about teaching a course on the United States Congress (please do in Fall 2025 for this writer's purposes.
- Professor Hale is a GEM. Don't let him go!
- I really enjoyed this course, it was informative and fun!
- This was probably my favorite class I've taken at Oxy!
- I absolutely adore professor hale. He is a phenomenal professor who is able to both create a positive and inclusive learning environment while also explaining difficult subject matter. He is clearly knowledgeable in his field and it shows in his passion for teaching. I cannot stress enough how wonderful of a professor he is.
- This has been one of the most informative courses I've taken at Oxy and I had a great time during every class! Professor Hale's instruction did not get old.
- N/A