

Occidental College

2024 Fall General Course Evaluations

Course: POLS120_0: Intro to Comparative Politics

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 17/26 (65.38%)

- yes, I came prepared
- I was very engaged throughout the class and participated multiple times a class period. I never needed much help in understanding the course material.
- I would say that my engagement level was high. I found the topics interesting and sought to contribute where possible. I felt that the information was well presented and that help was there when needed.
- I felt relatively engaged throughout this semester. The class was well organized, and the lectures were engaging.
- I was decently engaged, I felt like the professor did a really good job of keeping us engaged though.
- I did most of the readings in advance, although some of the readings I ended up doing after the class period. I completed response papers on time. I used the writing center for planning and working on the final paper, but otherwise I did not really use peer tutoring. The response papers were short enough writing that I did not feel that I needed to use the writing center, although in retrospect that could have helped me focus and complete the papers in a reasonable amount of time.
- I would come to class prepared and I would try and get peer tutoring when I remembered. I feel like I understand things so I didn't need that much help. I would try and engage in class.
- I was generally engaged in the course. I did the assigned readings when relevant, and asked semi-frequent questions in class.
- I was engaged in the class. I would occasionally raise my hand and make a comment or pose a question to the class. However, it was not often. I was prepared for class. I would not do the readings for the class because I felt that paying attention in class was the best indicator of receiving a good grade. I did not seek help from any instructors.
- Came to class spoke in class did coursework
- I came to class well prepared having read the class material for the week, and contributed frequently in class discussions, in meaningful ways that I hope added valuable things to class discussions and talks.
- Always came to class prepared having done the reading and all assignments that were due. I attended office hours when needed and felt comfortable reaching out to professor Hale with any questions.
- I found the course very engaging! The course content was interesting to learn about and relevant to the class.
- I came to class prepared with the readings and ready to discuss the concepts that the reading covered.
- I seemed help from Professor Hale once during office hours and it was very helpful. I think he was very diligent and took his time, he really went out of his way to ensure I understood but not only walking me through the material but also having me actively apply it to the course material. It was a difficult for me to engage in class but it was a personal issue, I just didn't feel as comfortable because I was the youngest in the class and my peers seemed to be very well educated but that had nothing to do with Professor Hale.
- I came to class prepared everyday and ready to learn. I engaged in the course by doing the assigned readings and participating.
- I was interested in the material, and felt that I came to class prepared. I could have sought more help from the instructor.

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

Response Rate 16/26 (61.54%)

- helped me understand politics on a deeper level and current events in politics
- I was able to better understand a topic that I have no knowledge of and realized how much I enjoy it.
- I wasn't really familiar with the concept of comparative politics before this course, nor was I that familiar with the intricacies of certain systems and the ways in which some countries run those systems. Overall, I felt that this was arguably the class I learned the most from.
- It opened my mind to comparing politics of other countries and appropriate ways to do it.
- Institutional dynamics that I had not fully considered or understood Semi-presidential systems, and the difference between premier-presidential and president-parliamentary systems Gaining a more systematic/empirical view of revolutions and coups. Justifiable revolutions can fail for material reasons, and unjust coups can also succeed for material reasons. Analyzing coups and revolutions by the groups supporting, institutional powers, and the ability of the coup/revolution to control the media. Also understanding the methodology of comparative politics, and how to apply it as a science, rather than as a purely descriptive field.
- This helped me see governance better and it opened up my eyes to poli. sci.
- I learned a lot about the different systems of government that exist in countries outside of US influence. Spending a class or in certain cases an entire week on a specific countries was a useful way to dive fairly in-depth on the politics and institutions within that nation.
- The course greatly helped my understanding of the history of other countries and what situations they encountered. I also learned a lot about the U.S. election, which was very prevalent this semester.
- This course helped me to understand the how countries are compared and the different ways countries are studied.
- I had very little knowledge or understanding of comparative politics prior to this class, so it certainly influenced and enhanced my knowledge of the topic, by going in depth in specific country cases, and general political and electoral proceedings and systems.
- This course was extremely enjoyable as it provided facts and explanations as to why different countries with seemingly similar circumstances experience vastly different political results.
- This course made me knowledgeable about political structures around the world, giving me a framework to better understand how different systems operate.
- This course was a great intro to global politics and the core components of all governments. I think the course gave me a general understanding of politics and I am excited to continue with studying politics after taking this course.
- I wasn't too sure what to expect going into this course but it helped me understand the structure of government and electoral systems from other countries and how this differs and relates to the United States which I found very interesting.
- I learned a lot about the institutions of many countries through this course. I thought the themes of electoral systems, systems of government, democratic backsliding, and coups helped narrow the focus of the class. While country cases gave a practical application to the course themes.
- This course taught me more about examples of democratic backsliding in case studies of countries. It also showed the nuances in different forms and types of government.

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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	17/26 (65.38%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since I may pursue a politics minor, I wanted to further my understanding of politics • I expected to gain a better understanding on how nations and their systems work and I believe I obtained that. • I'm not 100% sure what I was hoping to gain. I mainly took this course due to it being recommended by a classmate. However, I would certainly say that my skills with regards to understanding political systems and applying that knowledge to other areas, such as different countries and even historical scenarios, has improved greatly. • I gained a more well-rounded understanding of world politics. I think I have a better grasp now of different forms of governments, and what countries fall into different characterizations. • A lot. • I expected to gain a better understanding of political science techniques I learned comparative political methods such as Small n and large n studies, most similar and most different methodology • I gained time mangament skill because I used to have horrible time management • I expected the class to be a good overview of the diverse political landscapes that exist outside of the United States. From that angle, the class was very useful in enriching my knowledge of the different types of political systems in other countries across the world. • I gained the ability to be more focused in class. The professor had a strict no laptop/phone policy and would lecture every class. So, I really had to work on adapting to his class and focus on his slides and what he was saying. I knew heading into each class what to expect. • I expected to learn about the field of comparative politics. I think this occurred. • I gained a lot of critical thinkings skills when it comes to politics, and being able to compare systems to one another, and understand how and why systems succeed or fail in certain circumstances. I also think that I gained the ability to look at political systems from a Birdseye and objective perspective through this course, and I think that focusing on that aspect of comparative politics in this class was extremely helpful to enchaining critical thinking skills regarding political and electoral systems. • I learned how to identify both electoral and legislative systems of countries and how the systems they chose impact their elections and policy making. These skills are helpful in understanding political outcomes and predicting behavior. I had no idea how to identify or characterize these factors in a country before, so I learned a lot! • I was hoping to gain a broad understanding of different political systems that vary between different countries. I found the country cases to be useful in applying the concepts were were learning to modern politics. • I expected to get an introductory opportunity to read critically and connect concepts across readings. This course provided readings that challenged my understanding of politics and allowed me to understand the larger concepts of comparative politics. • I expected to be able use understanding of electoral and government systems to explain the state countries ended up in. I think thus course did a really good job because Professor Hale ensures that you understand the course topics conceptually. • I expected to learn more about the field of comparative politics and I feel that Professor Hale has done a great job as an instructor in doing so. The class has taught me so much about international politics and Professor Hale did a great job of providing current events in the world of comparative politics. I also gained skills in how to read research papers and write about comparative politics, through the various readings and assignments assigned. • I expected to have a better grasp on the functions of political systems and how to analyze the international politics. These skills were developed through analyzing case studies in class, reading from scholarly sources and comparisons in different political systems. 	

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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	17/26 (65.38%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slides were helpful but sometimes repetitive. Readings were interesting I enjoyed the lectures thoroughly and believe that the response papers were a great way to build in understanding after classes. I felt that the presentation was engaging. The professor was clearly passionate about the subject and made learning about topics such as parliamentarianism shockingly fun. I think that, without his presentation, the class would have been far less interesting and engaging. For me, some of the small group discussions were helpful in discussing class material. I wish that sometimes the classes were less lecture based and more discussion based. I think the lecture based classes are really effective because his presentations are easy to follow. The response papers were effective, as were the lectures. In retrospect, some of the focus on US politics felt detached from the concepts. The focus on world politics was important, especially on governments with different systems(such as pure parliamentary, semi presidential, full presidential), as it applied the concepts to a real situation. I liked discussions and group work. He did a good job of having readings on par with course material! I enjoy Professor Hale's lecture style. He is very knowledgeable at answering student questions and keeps the class as engaged as possible. He is very friendly. A few students were very keen to participate in lectures, and Professor Hale seemingly did what he could to ensure that everyone in class felt like they could participate as much as they would like. The class structure was the same practically every time. This was boring at times, but I know it would of been difficult to tailor the class any other way. I enjoy the videos in class in the slidedeck because it is different than just the slides with just words. The class simply was the professor speaking to the class and at the end, asking if there were any questions. At times, I also felt that if I missed class, I would not be behind. The slides had everything I needed to answer the weekly responses. I thought the lectures were very engaging. I also thought the case studies were a fun way to apply the theory. I think that the country cases were extremely helpful to understanding comparative politics, as it allowed insight into how different political systems work in different areas of the world, and how that changes outcomes. I think that if there were slightly more in class activities (which I acknowledge is difficult with this subject matter) would be helpful to keep the content of the class engaging for the whole class. Weekly response papers were extremely helpful in keeping me on top of the reading and paying attention in each class. I also appreciated the different types of reading and how they showed several perspectives. I also enjoy Professor Hale's teaching style as he engages the class by asking many questions, providing both lectures and videos to keep our focus, and adds funny anecdotes into his lectures to make the course fun. I also REALLY appreciate the no technology rule as it is much easier to engage without my own laptop in front of me and I am not distracted by others on their electronics. I believe some of the readings were a bit challenging. I found it helpful when a few slides were dedicated to the reading to help me better understand the author(s)' main argument/ message. It was also helpful when the slides were posted before class which helped with my notes during class. Overall, I thought the lectures and discussions were very engaging and made the course content very digestible. The use of many examples was also helpful in understanding the course topics. I thought the course was extremely effective in explaining the comparative political landscape of today. The setup of the course provided an opportunity to complete the readings understand the concepts then discuss these concepts in our class discussions and lectures. The lectures provided a deep understanding of the concepts and varying types of politics. It was mostly a lecture based class which I thought was effective but I also think more group work, and in-class exercises would be beneficial we could actively practice what we were learning and class and understand perspectives from classmates. I thought the Professor put a ton of effort into our classes and effectively taught us through his lectures. He was always good about making sure questions on the response papers were things that we went over in class. If we didn't get to something he was very flexible and accommodating. I liked that there was room for participation during the lectures. I also found the style of teaching to be engaging and easy to learn from. 	

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	16/26 (61.54%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The slides were well structured but sometimes were not that engaging Nothing particularly hindered a part of the class. The professor was good about trying to encourage new voices to speak up when asking questions and presenting scenarios. He was also good about answering questions and not coming across as condescending. Literally nothing hindered it. Calling on people that did not ask questions as frequently was important. He tried to include everyone and get "new voices" when people weren't volunteering themselves. The structure of the class was fairly inclusive and was well thought out. Having the slides available post class was useful to students who were unable to make the lecture. I also liked the focused questions of the weekly assignments, as they almost exclusively asked questions relevant to that weeks material, while occasionally incorporating big ideas and systems we have learned throughout the semester. The class was very inclusive of a learning environment. Everyone had an equal opportunity to discuss what they thought in the class and the professor always allowed for questions and for people to speak out. I thought the learning environment was inclusive for a diverse group of students. The lecture structure of the class certainly helped massively to understand the overall subject of comparative politics and is absolutely necessary, however if there were a few more classes that involved actives or more class engagement, I think that the subject matter would have become even more interesting and engaging. Professor Hale included case studies and examples of the topics we learned from all around the world, showing how these ideas can be used to analyze any country for better understanding. I think the course structure helped guide students to success. For instance, the response write-ups were a way to engage with course content and makes sure you understand the big picture. The lecture-style course provided opportunities to ask clarifying questions and add points that people might have a direct opinion or connection to. I think a lack of group work made it difficult to feel comfortable participating at times. Professor Hale is really good at responding to students and creates a really welcoming learning environment for students. He did this despite some challenging students who didn't necessarily raise their hands before they spoke. Questions were frequently asked during the lectures, which allowed for diverse participation from the students in the class. Discussions in small groups also helped create a welcoming learning environment. 	

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

Response Rate 12/26 (46.15%)

- Course was good!
- Make Jeopardy the Final Quiz (jk)
- N/A
- For the readings that were longer and spanned multiple classes, listing what headings or pages we should read to would be helpful.
- I would say to try and not do the same "who can from a government" because that was like the same thing. It's good to have structure but it got a little old. Also it was kinda an easy class to skip, he would post the slides and everything which is good to an extent. I felt it hard to go to lectures sometimes.
- N/A
- n/a
- none that I have not already gone over.
- n/a
- :)
- I think some of the readings could have guided questions or be shortened, though they were also all necessary, so not entirely impossible to read them as is.
- None

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

Response Rate 10/26 (38.46%)

- It was great. Professor Hale is awesome.
- I would take this class again! It was fun!
- Thank you Professor Hale for a great semester!
- n/a
- Thanks for a great and informative semester, this course has sparked my interest in politics from an academic standpoint and I will be pursuing the subject possibly as a major moving forward.
- I really enjoyed this class and look forward to taking more courses with Professor Hale!
- :)
- I believe this class was a great start to the politics department in college and a great overview of the varying political systems.
- I really enjoyed this class, I think professor Hale did a good job at making difficult topics understandable and feel digestible and also pushed us to be active in politics
- Professor Hale is the best and I would absolutely take another class with him, especially another comparative class.