

Occidental College

2025 Fall General Course Evaluations

Course: POLS222_1: 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 16/25 (64%)

- I came to class prepared, but lost motivation due to the insane amount of work. Professor Sydney was so sweet and supported when needed.
- I was engaged in the course and completed all required readings and assignments before coming to class. I engaged in the class through smaller group discussions, as that is what I am most comfortable with. When I needed help, I reached out to Professor Hale via email as I could not always make his office hours.
- I would say I was very engaged, I came to class prepared and I did the readings
- I engaged with the course material by coming to class prepared, participating in class, and seeking help at office hours when I had questions.
- I came to class prepared, having completed all readings and homework assignments required for the class.
- I found it to be very engaging
- I was very engaged. I participated in discussions and did all of the readings.
- I was very engaged in this class as well as in his office hours for this class. I spent a lot of the class talking, doing the readings, engaging with other students and sharing out about my personal experiences in the class. I usually came to class prepared but toward the end of the year got a bit busy to do the readings.
- I think I was reasonably engaged with the course. I came to class with an understanding of the readings, and reached out for help through office hours when needed.
- My level of engagement with this course was high. Lectures were engaging and often prompted student participation to answer questions and offer conceptual feedback. Seeking help from the instructor was intuitive and I, as well as many of my peers, took advantage of it whenever necessary.
- I was very engaged in this course. I found myself participating more in this class than any, prepared with any homeworks and such. I was able to meet with Prof. Hale when needed and use my classmates for help as well.
- Yes, I came to class prepared. I completed the readings and worksheets on time for class. Additionally, when I struggled on one of the worksheets, I went to Professor Hale's office hours, where he was very helpful in answering the questions I had.
- I would say my engagement was pretty good, I tried to participate at least twice per class and did all of the readings. I went to office hours when necessary
- This class was incredibly engaging (as Professor Hale's classes are in my experience). Out of the three classes I have taken with him, I thought this one was especially engaging, doing worksheets and problem sets in class, as well as talking about the course material and lectures. I felt that it was really easy to be engaged with the class as there was many, many questions and places to contribute in the lectures and in class. I would say I maybe was less engaged outside of the classroom in terms of office hours or seeking support, but that was my own choice.
- I came to class prepared with notes and the readings. I often asked questions during class to improve my understanding.
- I came to class prepared and sought help when needed.

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

Response Rate 16/25 (64%)

- I learned so much about the culture and the language
- I knew some things about electoral systems, specifically the ones in the United States. It was interesting to learn about the other systems and the purposes they serve in their respective countries.
- I learned a lot about electoral systems and was able to apply them to real world scenarios
- I was not all that familiar with the course material coming into the class so this course was very influential in helping me to understand the various electoral systems used around the world. I also learned various formulas to evaluate the politics of a country.
- The course changed my opinions on the subject matter by making me more informed on different electoral systems used around the world and the pros and cons of each, as well as how this fits into modern politics.
- Helped me compare electoral systems and look at the impact of electoral systems more insightfully
- I learned a lot about electoral systems, I knew literally nothing about them before taking the course, and now I'm practically and expert:)
- This class was super informative to my work outside of school as well as my understanding of the possible reforms in the US. I have had many many conversations with coworkers, elected officials, and family members about the different political systems and feel very confident when doing so because I have the depth of understanding that this class has given me.
- I didn't know anything about electoral systems before starting this class. This class has given me a strong understanding of the importance of electoral systems, the types of electoral systems and electoral reform across the world.
- This course greatly increased my understanding of the subject matter. I was almost wholly unfamiliar with electoral systems before the course, and now consider myself more than proficient in knowing about various electoral systems used nationally and internationally.
- This course gave me an extensive overview of the different electoral systems around the world. I didn't know anything besides the american system, and seeing as this was comparative pols it gave me a great foundation in the subject matter.
- Before this course, I had very little understanding of how the world's elections worked. While I was familiar with some presidential elections and a few systems, this class gave me an understanding of global politics that I did not have before. The course material was relevant, and I now have much greater knowledge of the world's political systems and their electoral systems. I took this class specifically because I found the course description intriguing, and the class was very rewarding.
- I did not know practically anything about electoral systems before hand so this class did a great job in both introducing them and making me sort of an expert on them as well.
- I had very little knowledge of electoral systems before this (beside the US system) so I thought this class was incredibly informative. I am someone who is hesitant to take classes that look at global or world things (just from a lack of my own knowledge) but this class really made the information accessible and easy to understand.
- This course opened my eyes to just how different each country is with regard to its electoral system. I never could have imagined there being so many systems.
- I learned more about electoral systems thanks to Professor Hale. It is incredible how Professor Hale made hard topics easier to understand and like he said some of the things we learned in class put us with very few other people in the world who understand how things like Mixed Member Proportional or Single Transferable Vote systems work.

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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 | 16/25 (64%) |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think the biggest skill was perseverance, the subject is so dense so learning how to stay motivated was challenging. I did not have any skills that I expected to learn from the course. After the course finished, I learned a lot more about electoral systems around the world. I expected to learn about the electoral systems of the world, and the course helped me with this to a great extent I expected to learn about various electoral systems and I think this course did that. I expected to gain more information and knowledge of electoral systems used around the world and how they vary by country, as well as gaining strong ability to read and write in political science. Expected to learn about certain electoral systems, achieved this successfully I learned a lot about different electoral systems and their pros and cons, and about different reform efforts in various countries. I learned a lot about how to measure the success and proportionality of an electoral system, how to judge whether a system is good or not based on the things that I care about, and how to explain the different ways in which systems work across the world. I expected to learn how analyze the effectiveness of different electoral system and why the type of electoral system matters. I definitely think this class has helped me develop these skill and more. I expected to build on my political comparative capabilities by learning about electoral systems in a context of comparing them to core electoral system values/tenets and with other electoral systems, and this course was highly successful in going beyond what I expected to learn and gain. I expected to be able to discuss and analyze different electoral systems throughout the world following this class. I was able to achieve that, but also gained other skills such as the math involved in the class. The class helped me expand my ability to think and solve problems critically, as well as read and understand course material and apply it to real-world elections and situations. I learned how to do somewhat complex math, but as someone who is pretty bad at math I felt as though our professor did a great job explaining them to us in a simple way. I wasn't completely sure what to expect coming into this class but I definitely gained more skills than I thought in terms of equations, understanding different electoral systems, and just knowing more about global politics. I learned how to identify the electoral systems of different countries and the implications of each system. From this course I learned how to calculate the Seat Product Model and other equations like quotas' related to electoral systems. I think the course also did a good job of explaining the major electoral systems, rules, and procedures. It is remarkable to me how much I know about things like D'Hondt or LR Hare. | |

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 | 16/25 (64%) |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office hours and retakes were really helpful. However with peace and love Sydney the course work was insane and unrealistic. I personally thought that the way the class was structured was impossible, unless you were a language god. I think that it would've been more beneficial to have a big test rather than little chunks every week. Instead of having quizzes every Wednesday it should've been Friday because then at least we would have more time to study for them, then we would have time to actually absorb the material rather than just regurgitate it. It's hard to stay motivated when the class feels over-whelming rather than structured. Again I could not emphasize how helpful Sydney is however the class would be way more fun and I would get more value from it if it were organized in a way that promotes learning rather than regurgitation. The class's style worked well, as the expectations were clear from the start. The deadlines for the worksheets were spaced out enough, so I felt I had enough time. I was also interested in all of the readings and learned new things. The class periods were structured well, we went through a lot of content, but it was understandable I liked when lectures focused on case studies from real countries. The worksheets I made very effective and reinforced everything I learned in class, but I found the lectures somewhat straining for an hour and a half class at 4pm, so I think for future classes making it a 55 minute class MWF would be better for student engagement. I really appreciated the format of how class was taught along with how the readings backed up what we would learn the next day. This was very helpful in getting a clear understanding of what we were doing. I really liked the worksheets and they really helped solidify the more complex, theoretical concepts. Doing the readings wasn't the most necessary for participating in class. It was very effective to do the problem sets when they included math. The more essay-based answers they asked for the less I found it useful because I felt that those were things we could articulate in class discussions and less of something to be taken home and graded on our understanding of. But overall this class was really well taught. I think the worksheets were very helpful for learning how to do the math related to analysis. I do think for some of the other concepts that don't involve math, it would be nice to have some different writing assignments just to mix it up. The lectures were consistently entertaining and engaging, and I liked the Worksheet model for splitting work evenly throughout the semester while not being too relaxed of a workload. I did not find any aspect/feature of the instruction impeded my learning or was particularly ineffective. Professor Hale does a great job with his lectures. They are engaging and easy to follow. Additionally, having real world examples for each subject aided in my understanding as we could put everything into context. I also found the in-class worksheets to be extremely helpful. In preparing us for the actual worksheets. I liked the class structure of the class; I found the worksheets and readings to be easy and related to the course material. I found the practice worksheets in class to be especially helpful for understanding new topics, and I hope that Professor Hale chooses to keep them. I think sometimes the lectures were a bit dragged out and more group work and discussion might have been useful. I think the teaching of the equations was very effective, and the worksheets were a good way to showcase our understanding of the material. I would say it was ineffective to assign many of the early readings at that time before actually teaching them, as they were rather difficult to understand without learning about the concepts in lecture first. I think Professor Hale is a great teacher. He makes information easy to understand and I really have enjoyed every class I have taken with him. Despite most classes being lectures, he does not drone on for an hour and 25 minutes, he incorporates interesting questions, places for students to answer many many questions, and overall is just a very interactive class. I think his classes are fun, engaging, and I wish there were more I could take!! I thought the slides were very effective and the overall lectures. The professor did a great job of structuring class, I thought the lectures were very informative. I also felt like the in class worksheets were a great way of practicing before doing homework. | |

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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 16/25 (64%)

- Office hours really helped, and the ability to retake tests made it so I could have a buffer. I really loved the material and so that helped a lot to stay motivated.
- There were no aspects of the course that hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment.
- I thought the class was very inclusive; everyone was able to participate. We were invited to speak out and share our opinions, and I thought everyone was respectful. Professor Hale is also very fun and passionate about the subject so I thought that was nice and also translated to the classroom.
- I think the environment in this class was inclusive.
- The discussions for the lectures contributed to the success of an inclusive learning environment as well as the worksheets done throughout the course because they encouraged students to converse and check answers with each other.
- Not much, I thought there would excellent opportunities to get help when needed.
- Professor Hale is really chill and accepting.
- All of it was inclusive.
- I think professor Hale was very welcoming and often offered outside support for students.
- The instructor often prompted students to answer questions and offer their own feedback on various topics in the course, which helped the creation of an inclusive learning environment that was responsive to and promoted the success of a diverse group of students. No aspect of the course hindered the creation of that learning environment.
- This class I felt was very inclusive seeing as Professor Hale would always call on whoever hadn't spoken that day / usually in class. The mix of math and qualitative work too on the worksheets allows everyone to have a fair chance to succeed as well.
- none.
- I wouldn't say any.
- Professor Hale, in my experience, is an accessible professor who is easy to contact and connect with. I think he really tries to ensure everyone has a good sense of the material we are learning and creates an environment that is easy to ask questions in or clarify on class material.
- There was not an aspect of this course that hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment.
- Professor Hale did a great job of creating a learning environment that allowed all students to succeed.

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

Response Rate 13/25 (52%)

- Sydney is such an amazing professor however the class is just so overwhelming at times and just honestly unrealistic at times. I think that breaking it out in to more easier chunks would be more beneficial to student learning and student well being. I understand there is a jump from 102 and that the course work should reflect it, however keeping expectations reasonable for students will go along way.
- Lectures should be recorded if students cannot catch all the points made in class. It would be helpful to have videos on the math aspects of the worksheets.
- I would suggest including more varied class lectures and assignments across the class such as presentations, seminars, etc. because the lectures sometimes get rather draining at the end of day, so I think either incorporating a different and more consistent time throughout the week or offering varied assignments and in-class activities would benefit the students.
- I really appreciated the extra credit, I thought that it was super fun.
- I really liked the design of the course, and was one of the more manageable courses from this semester.
- I would have loved to have more writing prompts outside of the weekly worksheets, and a chance to explore and form our own opinions on electoral system outside of the day that we ranked the different systems.
- I have no suggestions for the next time the course is taught. I thoroughly enjoyed the course as-is.
- More practice in class to break up the lectures.
- I would have liked to see more class discussion. I understand that the class is mainly lecture-based, and while the lectures were very enjoyable, it would be nice every few classes to have more discussion in order to keep the class fresh and engaging.
- give more instructions for final essay!
- I honestly thought this was a really great course and my favorite out of the ones I have taken with Professor Hale (taken pols101, presidency, and this one!). I thought the workload was very fair for a 200 level class and I really enjoyed the content that was being taught, as well as the way it was being taught.
- Given how much information the course covers, I would find it helpful if there were a PDF with clear outlines of each electoral system's breakdown as a reference sheet.
- I think the class was really well designed!

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

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| Response Rate | 10/25 (40%) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sydney is the most kind and helpful professor ever, she is such a great teacher and really knows her material. She is amazing at what she does and is clearly passionate about what she does. But with peace and love please make 102 less overwhelming for students!!• It was a really good/interesting class to take for my math requirement!• I really enjoyed Hale as a professor.• This was my favorite class I've taken at Oxy. Professor Hale is hilarious and amazing at breaking down complex subjects that you would expect to be confusing and boring into entertaining and understandable lectures. I would recommend this class to anyone, even people who aren't interested in politics, due to Professor Hale's near perfect instruction.• n/a• Thank you for a great semester!• Professor Hale is a very passionate teacher who is dedicated and knowledgeable in his field. He comes to class prepared, engaged, and always makes my day. I found the class to be a highlight for me this semester. I think that I would highly recommend this course to anyone who is curious about the world and elections, specifically. I am very happy that I took this class, and I hope that others who follow will enjoy it as much as I have.• Again, I have really enjoyed Professor Hale's teaching and I hope he enjoys his sabbatical!!• I found the course insightful and enjoyed learning the nuances of electoral systems. The explanations and lectures were invaluable to my learning.• Professor Hale is really amazing and is so good at making learning fun and interesting. | |