

**POLS 2113:**  
**Introduction to Comparative Politics**

Spring 2020  
9-10:15 am TTh  
Classroom Building 207

### Contact info

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Office Hours: 4:30-7pm M,<sup>1</sup>  
9-11am & 1:30-2:30 pm F,  
or by appointment

### Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics, one of the major subfields in political science. Comparative politics analyzes domestic politics around the world. This is a task far too large for any single introductory course; nevertheless, students who successfully complete this course will have a far easier time understanding domestic politics outside the US and how these contrast with our own political system.

Quick Disclaimer: This course is **NOT** easy. Expect to read – A LOT! – and study for quizzes and exams. This is a class about teaching you how to think like a political analyst, which means we cover a lot of history, theories, and concepts. As social scientists course, we expect that good arguments are made with **evidence**, not opinion or ideology, and we judge the quality of our readings, my lectures, and your work based on what facts we can bring to bear.

By the end of this course you will have an understanding of:

- Various terms used in comparative political science such as political systems, regimes, governments, states, and ideologies;
- The basics of liberal democratic and authoritarian government;
- The opportunities for and challenges of economic development;
- The history, regimes, political competition, societies, foreign relations, economics, and the major political conflicts of six contemporary political systems: The United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, Iran, China, and India;

### Required Reading

The following book is required for the course, and is available for purchase from the university bookstore:

O'Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, and Don Share. 2017. *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

All other readings are posted on the course's webpage and on TopHat. Readings should be done by class time on the day it is assigned.

### About TopHat

We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in class. You will be able to read lecture notes, download study materials, participate in discussions, and submit

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<sup>1</sup> I am one of the volunteers for the Pete's Pet Posse Therapy Dogs program along with my dog, Cooper. As part of my volunteer activities, Cooper will be present during my Monday office hours. If you need to meet during this time and would prefer not to have a dog around, just let me know and I will make alternative arrangements.

answers to in-class quizzes using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or via text message (SMS). You can purchase this at the university bookstore or by going directly to the TopHat website.

You can learn more about using Top Hat with the [Student Quick Start Guide](#), which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

**Important note:** Oklahoma State University requires students use their official university email (e.g. name@okstate.edu) when signing up for TopHat. So, make sure you check your okstate email for my email invitation that will allow you to access our course. If you are already a Top Hat member, you can also use our join code: 123057.

Top Hat will require a subscription. There are [three options](#) to choose from:

- \$30 for 4 months (one term) of unlimited access
- \$48 for 2-year of unlimited access
- \$96 for 4-years of unlimited access

## Class Expectations

Make sure you are familiar with official university policy (consult the official OSU syllabus attachment at the end of this syllabus for more information), especially regarding academic integrity. And, a few quick highlights regarding policies relevant to this course:

- You are expected to **read** each assignment *before* class time the day it is assigned.
- You are welcome to use **cell phones or laptops**. Just make sure you are not using them in a way that is distracting to other students.
- I have an open **attendance policy** (see “Participation” in the grading section for more details), but be aware that it is exceptionally hard to pass this course if you regularly miss lecture.
- I allow students to take one “freebie” **late assignment** this semester, no questions asked. You will then have 3 days from the original deadline to get the assignment done. If you do not complete the assignment within that time, you are responsible for scheduling a meeting with me so we can discuss any issues you are having with the assignment and plan a strategy for completing the project.
- Cite things properly! **Plagiarism** is theft of another’s work or ideas, and is a violation both of the student handbook and academic ethics. Not only that, it’s a felony that violates US copyright laws.

In case you are wondering, plagiarism includes:

- 1) Claiming someone else’s work as your own.
- 2) Copying the exact phrase from a source *without giving the author(s) credit*.
- 3) Using data from a source *without giving author(s) credit*.
- 4) Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
- 5) Using an idea or concept from an author *without giving credit to the source*.

- 6) Giving incorrect information about the citation source.
- 7) Changing the words or phrasing of the sentence but still keeping the original meaning *without giving credit to the source*.

From this list, you might notice that most of the time, all it takes to **NOT** plagiarize is to properly cite and give credit to the people from whom you are borrowing information or ideas. When in doubt, cite it!

- This a political science course, thus, all your papers should use **APSA citation style**. Don't know what that includes? You can look it up at <https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/> (reference guidelines begin on page 42 of the PDF version)
- Regarding other **paper formatting**, all papers should be completed using Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Reference pages should be single-spaced with one line between each citation.

## Grading

Following university guidelines, our grading scale is:

%	Grade	Explanation
90-100	A	Exceptional & outstanding work
80-89	B	Very good work
70-79	C	Adequate work; superficial grasp on concepts
60-69	D	Very poor work; poor understanding of the material
Below 60	F	Failing; unacceptable work

Remember, "A" is a rare grade reserved for projects that demonstrate outstanding skill and effort.

Our class work includes:

% of Grade

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**Participation.** I will not be taking attendance, but will grade you for your overall quality and quantity of participation. Your participation score will be divided in the following ways: 20%

- The first 15%: Participate in-class **OR** through Top Hat's weekly discussion question. To receive full points, you need to contribute something of *substance*; one word answers will not net you any points. Likewise, asking or posting a question that can be easily looked up in the reading will also yield no points.
- The remaining 5%: At the end of the semester, I'll judge the overall *quality* of your participation. Students who regularly attend the course and actively participate will receive full points here...other students, not so much!

I will update the gradebook on Canvas every few weeks so you can see how you are doing in your participation.

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**Regular reading quizzes.** We cover A LOT of material in a semester, so it is important to keep up with reading and note-taking to be successful. Students should expect a short quiz (5 questions, multiple choice) on the readings at the start of many classes.

10% total  
(1% per  
quiz)

You are allowed to use any of your own notes or flashcards when taking the quiz, but not the reading itself.

We will be taking 12 reading quizzes this semester. **No quiz make-ups**, but I will drop your two lowest quizzes from your final grade. This gives you a chance to cover times when you are sick or when class conflicts with other activities.

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**Two in-class exams.** Our exams will be a combination of a “fill in the blank” (or “fill in the table”) and multiple choice. The exams are closed book *and* closed note.

40%  
(20% per  
exam)

If you need to schedule a make-up, please provide either a 24-hour prior notice of a scheduling conflict or a written / professional documentation excusing your absence.

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**Comparative Analysis Paper.** This 5-6 page paper asks students to compare and contrast two countries – one which must be from a chapter in our *Cases and Concepts* textbook. More details about this assignment are available at the end of the syllabus and online. We will be dividing this into two assignments to help make this project (and grade!) more manageable.

30%

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# Course Schedule and Readings

## **Part I: An Introduction to Comparative Politics**

This section covers the major goals, ideas, and terminologies common to comparative politics, and will provide a foundation for the rest of the course.

### Tues, Jan 14 – What is Comparative Politics?

- Buy the book, sign up for TopHat, & read the syllabus
- Take the online syllabus quiz (available on TopHat)

### Thurs, Jan 16 – An Introduction to the State

#### *Readings:*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 2, pp. 25-39

### Tues, Jan 21 – “Strong” versus “Weak” States

#### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 2, 39-50

#### *In class*

- Watch & discuss: Kirk, Michael, Mike Wiser, and Jim Gilmore. 2016. “The Secret History of ISIS.” *PBS Frontline*, May 17. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/the-secret-history-of-isis/>

### Thurs, Jan 23 – The Consequences of State Failure

#### *Readings*

- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2012. 10 Reasons Countries Fall Apart. *Foreign Policy*, 18 June. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/06/18/10-reasons-countries-fall-apart/>
- O'Neil et al., Chapter 3, pp. 55-65

#### *In class*

- Finish watching & discussing “[The Secret History of ISIS](#)”

### Tues, Jan 28 – Political Society & Culture

#### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 3, pp. 66-81
- Shrad, Mark Lawrence. 2014. Ukraine and ISIS are not justifications of a ‘clash of civilizations.’ *The Monkey Cage* [blog], September 22. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/09/22/ukraine-and-isis-are-not-justifications-of-a-clash-of-civilizations/>

#### *Optional Reading*

- Tatlow, Didi Kirsten. 2012. Can China Be Described as ‘Fascist’? *The New York Times*, October 31. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/01/world/asia/01iht-letter01.html>

### Thurs, Jan 30 – Why Economic Growth & Poverty Matters

#### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 85-88
- Kristof, Nicholas D. and Sheryl WuDunn. 2009. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. New York, NY: Knopf. Introduction & Chapter 7 excerpts.

#### *Optional Reading*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 83-85 (the intro about Venezuela’s ongoing crisis)

## Tues, Feb 4 – Political Economy: How the State and the Economy Interact

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 88-100, 102-111, 114 (first paragraph only!)

## **PART II: Liberal Democracy**

It might be said that no two democracies are the same! We will cover similarities that span different democratic regimes, but also consider how democracies vary and how these differences contribute to different political outcomes.

## Thurs, Feb 6 – What is Democracy?

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 145-148
- Shuster, Simon. 2017. Vladimir Putin Doesn't Understand the Limits of Donald Trump's Power. *Time*, August 2017. <http://time.com/4881972/vladimir-putin-donald-trump-executive-power/>

### *Optional Reading*

- Volchek, Dmitry. 2019. "Your Turn to Lie": Former Russian State TV Cameraman Describes 'The Business of Misinforming Viewers.'" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, January 23. <https://www.rferl.org/a/your-turn-to-lie-former-russian-state-tv-cameraman-describes-the-business-of-misinforming-viewers-/29726481.html>

## Tues, Feb 11 – Why and When Do Countries Democratize?

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 148-152
- O'Neil et al., United Kingdom, pp. 203-210
- O'Neil et al., Germany, pp. 293-301

## Thurs, Feb 13 – Democratic Differences: Executive-Legislative Relations

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 152-153, 155-159
- O'Neil et al., United Kingdom, pp. 211-215
- O'Neil et al., Germany, pp. 301-305

### *In class*

- Watch Prime Minister Question Time from the British House of Commons

## Tues, Feb 18 – Electoral Systems: How They Work

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 161-169
- Four reasons why Australian politics is so crazy. 2018. *BBC News*, August 24. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-45295667>

## Thurs, Feb 20 – Electoral Systems: Why They Matter

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., United Kingdom pp. 216-217, 218-222
- O'Neil et al., Germany, pp. 306-307, 308-313

### *Optional Readings*

- Reynolds, Andrew S. 2011. Egypt's Doomed Election. *The New York Times*, November 23. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/23/opinion/egypts-doomed-election.html>

## Tues, Feb 25 – Comparative Legal Systems

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 6, pp. 154-155
- O'Neil et al., United Kingdom pp. 215-216
- O'Neil et al., Germany, pp. 305-306

## Thurs, Feb 27 – First Exam

### **PART III: Non-democracy**

While there are more democracies today than ever before, the last few years has seen some democracies falling into dictatorship, and many non-democracies are becoming more repressive. Mass protests in places like Iran or even China, however, do suggest that nondemocratic government also has its limits. What factors reinforce non-democratic rule, and how do authoritarian leaders maintain their hold on power?

## Tues, Mar 3 – The Modern Non-democracy: The Rise of Hybrid Regimes

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 357-361, 370-377
- O'Neil et al., Russia, pp. 417-420

### *In class*

- Go over paper assignment

## Thurs, Mar 5 – The Path to Non-Democracy

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 361-365
- O'Neil et al., Russia, pp. 420-435

## Tues, Mar 10 – Tools of Non-Democratic Control

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 8, pp. 366-370
- Boghani, Priyanka. 2015. Putin's Legal Crackdown on Civil Society. *PBS Frontline* [website], January 13. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/putins-legal-crackdown-on-civil-society/>

### *In class*

- **Paper Assignment Part I due**

## Thurs, Mar 12 – How Oil Reinforces Non-democracy

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Russia, pp. 437-440
- O'Neil et al., Iran, pp. 563-565
- Larry Diamond. 2010. Why Are There No Arab Democracies? *Journal of Democracy*, 21 (1): 93-104.

## Mon, Mar. 16-Fri, Mar. 20: Spring Break

*No Class.*

Tues, Mar 24 – Iran: From Dynasty to Islamic Republic

*Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Iran, pp. 541-549

*Optional reading*

- Chenar, Ali. 2012. A Surprising Rehabilitation: The Shah in the Eyes of Young Iranians. *PBS Frontline: Tehran Bureau* [website], August 2. <https://www.pbs.org/wqbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2012/08/dispatch-a-surprising-rehabilitation-the-shah-in-the-eyes-of-young-iranians.html>

*In-class*

- Watch and Discuss *Persepolis*

Thurs, Mar 26 – Iran's Revolution: Why does radicalism so often win?

*Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Iran, pp. 549-556
- Bani-Sadr, Abolhassan. 2011. What I Learned from Iran's Failed Revolution. *The New York Times*, January 28. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/opinion/29iht-edbanisadr29.html>
- Optional "reading":
  - "Iran's Revolutions: Crash Course World History 226." 2015. *Crash Course World History* [video], February 26. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w4Ku6l7OEI>

*In-class*

- Watch *Persepolis*

Tues, Mar 31 – Political Instability and Revolution

*Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 5, pp. 119-121; 122-127; 138-139

*Optional Readings*

- Caryl, Christian. 2014. Remembering the Fall. *Foreign Policy*, November 5. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/05/remembering-the-fall/>

Thurs, Apr 2 – Iran's Struggle to Reform

*Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Iran, pp. 556-563
- Iran protests: Why is there unrest? 2018. *BBC News*, January 2. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42544618>
- Fassihi, Farnaz. 2019. Protests Incited by Gas Price Hike Grip Iran. *The New York Times*, November 16. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/16/world/middleeast/iran-gas-price.html>

*Optional Readings*

- Esfandiari, Golnaz. 2018. What We Know About Iran's Fresh Rash of Street Protests. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 6. <https://www.rferl.org/a/what-we-know-about-iran-s-fresh-rash-of-street-protests/29415851.html>
- Fassihi, Farnaz. 2019. Iran's 'Iron Fist': Rights Group Says More Than 100 Protesters Are Dead. *The New York Times*, November 19. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/19/world/middleeast/iran-protests.html>



## Tues, Apr 7 – Fighting Back Against Authoritarianism

### *Readings*

- Dobson, William J. 2012. *The Dictator's Learning Curve*. New York, NY: Random House. Chapter 7: The Professionals.
- The Hong Kong protests explained in 100 and 500 words. 2019. *BBC News*, November 28. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49317695>

### *In-class*

- Watch & discuss: Klayman, Alison. 2011. "Who's Afraid of Ai Weiwei?" *PBS Frontline* [video], March 29. <https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-whos-afraid-of-ai-weiwei/>

## **Part IV: Economic Development**

Countries in the "Global South" face many unique challenges, but some countries have seen amazing growth in recent years. China and India make an especially interesting comparison; it is hard to find two countries more different, but both have seen phenomenal growth – along with significant problems – in the last three decades. Can they maintain this growth into the future, and can other countries follow their path to growth?

## Thurs, Apr 9 – The Realities of (Modern) Global Development

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 10, pp. 484-500
- Cook, Steven A. and Amr T. Leheta. 2016. Don't Blame Sykes-Picot for the Middle East's Mess. *Foreign Policy* [website], May 13. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/13/sykes-picot-isnt-whats-wrong-with-the-modern-middle-east-100-years/>

## Tues, Apr 14 – Political Economic Theories in Competition: How Best to Achieve Growth?

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., Chapter 10, pp. 504-508
- O'Neil et al., Chapter 4, pp. 112-113
- "Foreign aid face-off: Can we end poverty with wads of cash?" 2006. *LA Times*, May 8. <http://www.latimes.com/la-op-sachseasterly8may8,0,1628034.html>
- O'Neil, Shannon K. 2012. Conditional Cash Transfer Programs: Worth the Price? Council on Foreign Relations [blog], June 12. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/conditional-cash-transfer-programs-worth-price>

## Thurs, Apr 16 – State Evolution in India and China

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., China, pp. 445-452; 453-456
- O'Neil et al., India, pp. 511-516

## Tues, Apr 21 – China's New Mercantilism: Reform & Opening

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., China, pp. 452-453, 456-461

## Thurs, Apr 23 – Neoliberalism & India: Growth despite Chaos

### *Readings*

- O'Neil et al., India, pp. 516-518, 533-536

## Tues, Apr 28 – The Limits of China’s Economic Model

### *Readings*

- O’Neil et al., China, pp. 474-478
- Albert, Eleanor and Beina Xu. 2016. China’s Environmental Crisis. *Council on Foreign Relations* [website], January 18. <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-environmental-crisis>

### *Optional Reading*

- Song, Sha. 2018. Here's how China is going green. *World Economic Forum* [blog], April 26. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/china-is-going-green-here-s-how/>
- Pei, Minxin. 2016. China’s Middle Class Is About to Demand Big Changes. *Fortune*, May 27. <http://fortune.com/2016/05/26/china-middle-class-changes/>

### *In Class*

- Watch: “The unprecedented aging crisis that’s about to hit China.” 2016. *PBS News Hour* [video], August 1. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/unprecedented-aging-crisis-thats-hit-china>

## Thurs, April 30 – India’s Development Problems

### *Readings*

- Coffey, Diane and Dean Spears. 2017. Caste is Stunting All of India’s Children. *Foreign Policy*, September 15. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/15/caste-is-stunting-all-of-indias-children/>
- Anand, Anu. 2012. Why India loves a good electrician. *BBC News*, November 7. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20170776>

### *Optional Reading*

- O’Neil et al., India, pp. 536-539

## **Tues, May 5 – Second Exam**

8-9:50 am

***Final paper also due; upload your file to the online Dropbox and bring a paper copy to class.***

## Comparative Analysis Paper

One career path for people who major specialize in Comparative Politics is to become a foreign policy analyst working for a government agency or a private consulting firm. Some analysts focus on a specific country or region of the world (e.g. Sub-Saharan Africa or Russia), others on global trends and broad patterns (e.g. economic development, human rights, state failure, or conflict).

Regardless of the level of focus, all analysts benefit from basic comparative analysis, often relying on the *comparative method* directly or indirectly. The *comparative method* is a social science approach that seeks to understand cause and effect by analyzing cases and contrasting their similarities and differences. For this paper, you will choose two countries and compare them using one of the two main approaches under the comparative method.

### Requirements for the Final Paper:

- 1) Select a specific factor in a country's *domestic* politics – no international relations topics allowed!

Comparative is a *very* broad subject, and you are welcome to compare any feature of these countries' political systems, economics, and/or society. To list just a few:

Democracy / Non-democracy	Electoral turnout
Political Party Systems	Civil War
Protests	Terrorism
Economic Growth & Development	Corruption
Women's representation in politics or economics	Environmental policy/investment

- 2) Summarize what previous academic research has argued are the major factors and trends (aka variables) that may cause this factor
- 3) Compares & analyzes 2 countries  
One of those countries must be a case chapter from the *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics* textbook
- 4) Engages in either a most similar **or** a most different systems analysis (see the next page)
- 5) Explain what is similar/different about these countries and WHY these similarity/difference leads to the specific outcome in this country's domestic politics.
- 6) Uses APSA Citation Style (Chicago style allowed with permission)  
In-text parenthetical citations + alphabetical reference list at the end
- 7) Formatting Rules for the Final Paper:
  - 6 pages maximum; 1 inch margins
  - All text should use Times New Roman, 12-point font
  - You are encouraged to use a title page; this page will not count towards your page limit. This page can be single-spaced.
  - Body of the paper should be double-spaced, with no extra spacing between paragraphs.
  - Reference list should begin right after the conclusion (no need to put it on a new page!), and it should be single-spaced with one blank line between each source. Again, the length of the reference list does not count towards your page limit.

This project is worth 30% of your final grade, but we will be breaking this assignment into the following parts:

10% Assignment I: Draft Outline + Bibliography

20% Assignment II: Final paper

### ***The Basics of the Comparative Method: Most Similar & Most Different Designs***

First, it's good to get make sure you understand some basic social science concepts down. Your **dependent variable** is the factor/trend you are trying to explain (aka, the "effect"). Your **independent variable(s)** is/are the major factors or trends you think led to the specific outcome we see in the dependent variable (aka, your "cause(s)"). The link between your independent and dependent variable is what should be the primary focus of your analysis.

**Control variables** are other factors that could cause your dependent variable (e.g. researchers have said they might also be important), so you want to make sure to account for them in some way in your paper. If you fail to address potential control variables, a smart reader might criticize your argument and argue that the controls – not your proposed independent variable – is really what might be explaining your dependent variable.

To understand why the types of comparative case methods are called most similar or most different, you look to whether these cases are similar or different in regards to the control variables.

- A **most similar design** would be selecting 2 countries who differ on your dependent variable, but who are really similar on potential control variables. Therefore, the main factor(s) they are different on – your independent variable(s) – must be what explains their difference in the dependent variable.
- A **most different design** would be selecting 2 countries who are similar on your dependent variable, but who are really different when it comes to potential control variables. Therefore, the main factor(s) where they are similar – your independent variable(s) – must be what explains their similar outcomes in the dependent variable.

To give an example, you might write a paper about the oil curse and how it increases the risk of non-democratic government. Your dependent variable is non-democratic rule, while the independent variable is an economy dominated primarily by oil production. As controls, you might select political culture and international relations as potential control variables.

A most similar system design might compare Tunisia (democracy) to Libya (non-democracy). These countries are similar regarding religion (both Islamic), and both have struggled with regional security and a history of domination by Western powers (including colonialism). However, Tunisia's economy is predominantly tourism and service sector based (with oil and gas extraction a small part of the economy), while over half of the Libyan economy is based on oil production.<sup>2</sup>

A most different system design might compare Iran and Russia. They differ in regards to religion, ethnic make-up, and their geopolitical relations (Russia is historically a regional hegemon, while recent Iranian history has seen them dominated by Western countries). However, both have oil as a significant proportion of their economy, and both are non-democracies.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on data from the *CIA World Factbook* (2019).

## Assignment I: Draft Outline + Bibliography

To help make sure you are on the right track with this project, students will first complete a 1-2 page paper outline detailing your proposed topic. This outline should cover what comparative factor you are going to explain (aka your *dependent variable*), discuss the major variables that previous scholars have argued could lead to this factor (aka your *independent* and *control variables*), introduce the countries you will study, what type of comparative method you are using (most similar / most different), and briefly highlight the basic comparisons you intend to draw between these countries.

For most similar systems, you should list the major similarities between the countries under one bullet point, and then talk about your 1-2 causal differences under a separate bullet point. For most different systems, do the reverse: you should list the major differences between the countries under one bullet point, and then talk about your 1-2 causal similarities under a separate bullet point.

For this assignment, you are required to have at least 5 properly cited sources in your reference list for this assignment. Keep in mind, I do expect you to add more sources to your final paper! This list is just a start to help us identify if you need research help on this topic.

As for what type of sources are acceptable, one of the sources can be our textbook, one of the sources **must** be an academic source, and the other 3 should draw from other academic or professional sources. Academic press books and articles are encouraged, but you might also make use of professional sources, such as working papers from the World Bank or analysis pieces by a reputable think-tank such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institute, or Stratfor.

**No news articles, encyclopedias, or blog posts allowed for this assignment!** I want to make sure you have enough sources that provide real substance to help you write your cause-effect arguments. You are allowed to use news articles and blogs for the final paper (still no encyclopedia, though!) as long as you use them as supplements to more detailed citations. News articles and blogs are good sources when you need quick facts, but academic sources and policy papers are going to be more helpful (and should be your main sources) when you need to explain a complex causal argument.

To evaluate this assignment, I will use a very basic grading scale:

- Students who put good effort into this assignment will receive 100% (even if the specific parts of the assignment require revising).
- Students who turn in incomplete work (missing information in their outlines, incomplete bibliographies, etc.) will receive a 50%.
- Students who turn in no assignment will receive a 0.

## Assignment II: The Final Paper

Students are welcome to make any changes to their previous topic before submitting their final paper. To help organize your research and writing, I provide a basic outline on the next page detailing how the most similar or most different systems paper should be structured.

## The Most Similar Systems Option:

You select countries that are alike on a lot of factors, but differ on some major effect or outcome. Since the only explanation for *why* they differ on this variable has to be their differences, your analysis focuses on how these differences cause diverging outcomes in your dependent variable.

### Basic Outline for the Paper:

Introduction (1 paragraph) Introduce the major factor you are looking to explain (your **dependent variable**) and discuss 3-4 major variables that past authors argue could potentially cause this factor (the **independent** and **control** variables). Be sure to cite one or more academic sources who study the causes of this factor. Introduce your 2 countries, and state clearly which major explanation you think led to their different outcome in regards to your dependent variable. This final sentence – the proposed cause-effect relationship – is the thesis of your paper.

### Body of the Paper

Paragraph 1 Describe how these countries **differ** in regard to your **dependent variable**. Provide specific evidence and details that helps the reader understand how different these countries really are for this variable. For instance, if you are comparing how repressive your cases are, you might discuss each country's Freedom House scores and/or recent reports from Amnesty International about human rights violations.

Paragraph 2 In regards to the **control variables** (the other possible theoretic explanations you introduced at the beginning of your paper), describe how these 2 countries are **similar** in regards to these potential explanations. In other words, by showing this similarity, we can eliminate them as possible explanations for the difference in the dependent variable outcome.

Again, provide specific evidence and details – with proper citations – about how these countries compare.

Paragraph 3+ Explain and analyze 1-2 major **differences** between these countries that help explain why their outcome (dependent variable score) are different. These are your main **independent variables**; the factors that cause your dependent variable to manifest in the form it does.

Again, go into detail here. Do not just tell me what these countries have in common – tell me *why* that difference leads to the differing outcomes in your dependent variable. Again, be sure to reference academic and professional sources to help support your analysis.

Conclusion: Spin it big! Tell us how your analysis teaches us something important. Maybe talk about possible policy recommendations we might take from your analysis, or suggestions for other ways we might study your topic to learn more about the main cause-effect relationships.

## The Most Different Systems Option:

You select two countries who are about as different as can be on a number of factors, but they are really alike on some major outcome (dependent variable). Since the only explanation for *why* they are similar on this variable has to be their similarities, your analysis focuses on shared patterns that explain why these two countries share the same outcome despite their differences.

Basic Outline for the Paper:

Introduction (1 paragraph) Introduce the major factor you are looking to explain (your **dependent variable**) and discuss 3-4 major variables that past authors argue could potentially cause this factor (the **independent** and **control** variables). Be sure to cite one or more academic sources who study the causes of this factor. Introduce your 2 countries, and state clearly which major explanation you think led to their similar outcome in regards to your dependent variable. This final sentence – the proposed cause-effect relationship – is the thesis of your paper.

Body of the Paper

Paragraph 1 Describe how these countries are **similar** in regard to your **dependent variable**. Provide specific evidence and details that helps the reader understand how different these countries really are for this variable. For instance, if you are comparing how repressive your cases are, you might discuss each country's Freedom House scores and/or recent reports from Amnesty International about human rights violations.

Paragraph 2 In regards to the **control variables** (the other possible theoretic explanations you introduced at the beginning of your paper), describe how these 2 countries are **different** in regards to these potential explanations. In other words, by showing this difference, we can eliminate them as possible explanations for the similarity in the dependent variable outcome.

Again, provide specific evidence and details – with proper citations – about how these countries compare.

Paragraph 3+ Explain and analyze 1-2 major **similarities** between these countries that help explain why their outcome (dependent variable score) are different. These are your main **independent variables**; the factors that cause your dependent variable to manifest in the form it does.

Again, go into detail here. Do not just tell me what these countries have in common – tell me *why* that similarity leads to the similar outcomes in your dependent variable. Again, be sure to reference academic and professional sources to help support your analysis.

Conclusion: Spin it big! Tell us how your analysis teaches us something important. Maybe talk about possible policy recommendations we might take from your analysis, or suggestions for other ways we might study your topic to learn more about the main cause-effect relationships.

## Some Tips for Completing “A” Quality Writing

On all assignments, students will be grade on their accuracy and detail in presenting the material as well as their ability to communicate this information efficiently and effectively. As such, I expect all assignments to be well-written; poorly written assignments will lose points.

All work will be graded on the quality of writing, clarity, organization, and inclusion of all the necessary components. Quality academic writing means:

### Basic writing skills

- Proper grammar & spelling
- Proper verbal agreement
- Proper punctuation use
- Proper paragraph construction (3-6 sentences, no 1+ page paragraphs!)
- Agreement between subjects in a sentence (e.g. the party, it)
- Correct possessive plural form (e.g. the United States’ not the United State’s; its, not it’s)
- No apostrophes in plural nouns (e.g. Russians, not Russian’s / the 1990s, not the 1990’s)
- Well-organized and clear structure

### Proper academic/professional writing

- No contractions (e.g. don’t, it’s)
- Avoid normative or opinion comments (focus on the facts!)
- No colloquialisms or slang
- Minimal use of adverbs
- Minimal passive voice
- Use active voice in the present tense (when appropriate)
- Use headings & subheadings to clearly organize your discussion
- Well-researched and detailed
- Proper citation

Also, in the social sciences it is ok to write “I think,” “I argue,” or “I recommend” in your writing, especially if it helps distinguish your thoughts from someone else’s!