

# **PSCI 240-001: Comparative Politics II – American Democracy in Comparative Perspective**

Winter 2019 – Face-to-face Edition  
Drexel University

Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:50 PM  
Academic Building, Room 215

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**Appointments:** <https://jacksantucci.acuityscheduling.com>

## **1 Overview & goals**

Should the U.S. political system work more like other democracies? Should we increase the number of parties? Limit the terms of Supreme Court judges? Reduce the power of low-population states? To assess these proposals and others, we need a good theory of democratic politics. This course will use two good theories to examine American democracy in comparative perspective. One comes from the field of comparative politics (i.e., the study of other countries' domestic politics). The other comes from American politics but may help us understand other countries as well. These theories are in tension and can lead to different answers about the same reform proposal. I will ask you to work through that tension in reading, writing, and in-class discussion. When this course is over, you will:

- Be able to talk with sophistication about democratic politics in general;
- Be able point out and evaluate tradeoffs when someone proposes some type of reform;
- Know how to use models of national-level politics to analyze politics at the sub-national level (e.g., in your own town);
- Have practiced improving your writing and (if you want) doing lightly quantitative analysis.

## **2 Things to buy**

Please purchase the following, available from the Drexel bookstore and elsewhere:

- Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. *A Different Democracy: American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

### 3 Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following components:

1. Attendance (10%) – Come to class daily. It will improve your papers.
2. Discussion questions (10%) – On Blackboard, post two good statements or questions that react to the reading for a given class session. Do this ten times in the quarter. It must be clear from your post that you read the material. Posts are due at noon on the date of the respective class. I use these posts to improve my lectures (i.e., learn what confuses or interests you) and create opportunities for participation beyond just talking in class.
3. Short data paper (35%) – Pick some U.S. state or local community. Compute the effective number of parties (or candidates, whichever is more long-run competitive) over at least three elections (primary or general, whichever is more long-run competitive). Explain what caused that number to change. Do this in 250-750 words. For guidelines on how I grade essay-length prompts, see “How to get an ‘A’” on this page: <https://bit.ly/2s7wTPS>. Due February 4 in hard copy, in class.
4. Longer paper (45%) – Details forthcoming, based on our progress as a group. For now, I am thinking of giving you two options. One will ask you to take a side on a current reform proposal (position paper). Another will ask you to explain what caused some reform in a U.S. state or local community of your choice (case study). The paper should range from 1,250-2,500 words, with case studies toward the longer end of that range. If you choose to do a case study, you may use the short data paper to start working on it. For guidelines on how I grade essay-length prompts, see “How to get an ‘A’” on this page: <https://bit.ly/2s7wTPS>. Due March 13 in hard copy, in class.

### 4 Other policies

You agree to:

1. Treat guest speakers and classmates with respect.
2. Check Drexel email daily through the date of the final exam.
3. Attend class and meet course deadlines *except in documented cases of bereavement, severe illness, or medical emergency*. You must provide a doctor’s note or funeral announcement if you cannot meet a deadline and/or attend a class meeting. Out-of-class written work loses five points for each 24-hour period past the time and date it is due.
4. Use Internet search or a dictionary to look up words you do not understand.
5. Abide by all other Drexel policies, found at the following websites. Note: I reserve the right to use plagiarism-detection software.
  - Academic integrity: [http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic\\_dishonesty.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp)

- Disability accommodation: <http://drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/students/>
- Add/Drop: <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>
- Course withdrawal: <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>

I agree to:

1. Abide by any grading guidelines in this syllabus and related instructions for assignments. Grading is on the 0-100 scale: 97 and up (A+), 93-96 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), 80-82 (B-), and so on, down to 50 (F).
2. Answer student e-mail within 48 business hours. Business hours are 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday, non-holiday.
3. Except for the required books, post links to readings on Blackboard, if not the readings themselves.
4. Grade written work within 10 business days of submission.
5. Notify you of changes to this syllabus at least one week in advance of affected due dates.
6. Give office hours on a by-appointment basis. (See link above.) Students who are not in Philadelphia can book these times for phone conversations.

## 5 Schedule of work

### 5.1 Introduction and basic definitions

**January 7** This syllabus and “How to get an ‘A’ on a paper” (<https://bit.ly/2s7wTPS>).

### 5.2 The principal-agent model of politics

**January 9** “Introduction” in Taylor et al.

**January 14** “Political Engineering and the US Constitution” (including appendix) in Taylor et al.

**January 16** “Political Parties, Election Campaigns, and Interest Groups” in Taylor et al.

**January 21** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – no class. Begin work for the “short data paper.” Identify a state/local community, and start compiling the data. You may focus on general elections or primaries. This week and next, I will teach you how to think about primaries.

### 5.3 The long-coalition model of politics

**January 23** Bawn, Kathleen and coauthors. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 3 (2012): 571-597.

**January 28** Hassell, Hans. “Party Control of Party Primaries: Party Influence in Nominations for the US Senate.” *Journal of Politics* 78, no. 1 (2015): 75-87.

**January 30** Work on your short data paper, due February 4. Take a second look at the foregoing two articles. In class, I will show how the long-coalition model may work for contexts with multiple parties.

### 5.4 Design of and diversity in legislatures

**February 4** Two items:

- “Legislative Power” in Taylor et al. **Short data paper is due in class.**
- Editorial Board. “America Needs a Bigger House.” *The New York Times* (November 9, 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/09/opinion/expanded-house-representatives-size.html>

**February 6** Two items:

- “Elections and Electoral Systems” in Taylor et al.
- Editorial Board. “A Congress for Every American.” *The New York Times* (November 10, 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/10/opinion/house-representatives-size-multi-member.html>.

**February 11** Three items:

- Holman, Mirya. “Women in Local Government: What We Know and Where We Go from Here.” *State & Local Government Review* 49, no. 4 (2017): 285-296.
- Hertzberg, Hendrik. “Idea Woman” (very short preface to the article below). <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1993/06/14/idea-woman>.
- Hertzberg, Hendrik. “Lani Guinier and Proportional Representation: The Justice Department Loses a Formidable Lawyer.” *The New Yorker*, June 14, 1993. <http://archive.fairvote.org/reports/1993/hertzberg.html>.

### 5.5 Changing the rules in theory and practice

**February 13** Colomer, Josep M. “It’s Parties That Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger’s Laws Upside Down).” *Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005): 1-21.

**February 18** Decide which paper you are going to write: a case study of reform or taking a position on some reform. I will use this class to explain how actual reforms have happened in the United States. Two items:

- Santucci, Jack. “Past experience shows that proportional representation is possible in the US. But there are tradeoffs.” *LSE’s USAPP* (December 21, 2016). <http://bit.ly/2h7zGUs>.
- Santucci, Jack. “Maine’s election shows that ranked-choice voting is hot right now. But we have been here before.” *LSE’s USAPP* (June 15, 2018). <http://bit.ly/2lbEsBp>.

## 5.6 Executive power and getting laws passed

**February 20** “Executive Power” in Taylor et al.

**February 25** Mainwaring, Scott. “Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination.” *Comparative Political Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 198-228.

## 5.7 Federalism and small-unit influence

**February 27** “Federalism and Division of Power” in Taylor et al.

**March 4** Stepan, Alfred. “Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model.” *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 4 (1999).

## 5.8 Judiciaries in theory and practice

**March 6** Two items:

- “Judicial Power” in Taylor et al.
- Reading on current reform effort, to be determined.

## 5.9 Does reform matter?

**March 11** Two items:

- “Comparative Conclusions” in Taylor et al.
- Clayton, Amanda and Pär Zetterberg. “Will 2018’s ‘pink wave’ of female candidates make it in Congress? Almost certainly. Here’s how.” *The Washington Post*, May 30, 2018. <https://wapo.st/2Jbku7L>.

**March 13** Topic of current interest, to be determined. **Longer paper is due in class.**