



Course Syllabus

CPO 2002: Comparative Government

CPO 2002 / CRN: 82383 / Fall 2026

A Session (8/17/26 – 12/10/26)

Credit Hours: 3

Pre-requisites: None

Contact Information

Instructor

David Fistein, PhD.
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Office: Social Sciences 218

Office Hours:
Monday 11-2
Wednesday 11-2
Tuesday 9-9:30 and 12:30 – 1:30
Thursday 9- 9:30 and 2:30 -4:30
Response Time: 24-48 hours

Division Chair

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Course Information

Important Note

For any syllabus posted prior to the beginning of the term, the instructor reserves the right to make minor changes prior to or during the term. The instructor will notify students via e-mail or Canvas announcement when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of the course.

Catalog Description:

This course examines major forms of government using a study of various political systems. Special focus will be given to how these governments compare to the American method of government.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcomes: SLOs

Students will:

- Differentiate comparative politics from other subfields of political science.
- Compare and contrast major forms of government by evaluating the benefits and limitations of autocratic and democratic governments, major political/economic ideologies, economic systems, and different methods of organizing the government.
- Analyze case studies of the United States and at least nine additional countries representing the various continents. Students will interpret historical, cultural, global, and contemporary influences on each country's institutions of government and political processes.
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills by evaluating the role of the United States in the global community, analyzing issues related to underdeveloped countries and disenfranchised/vulnerable populations around the world, and comparing/contrasting multiple viewpoints on current public policy topics.

Course Materials & Resources:

TEXTBOOK: Mahler, Gregory S. (2019). **Comparative Politics: Exploring Concepts and Institutions Across Nations** SIXTH Edition, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Delivery Method:

This is a **web-based** course. All online courses at GCSC utilize the Canvas Learning System. Students should read all information presented in the Canvas course site and should periodically check for updates—at least every 48 hours.

Remember: This course is not one in which students may work at their own pace. Each week there are learning modules, assignments, online lectures, online discussions, and/or online exams with due dates. Refer to the schedule within this syllabus and within Canvas for more information.

Attendance and Make-Up Policies for this Course

Attendance Policy:

Although physical class meetings are not part of this course, participation in all interactive learning activities is required. Students “attend” class by listening to each of the lectures as assigned, watching the videos, thinking about how they relate to the class materials, taking quizzes and small tests, and writing some 300–500-word essays.

Make-Up Work Policy:

The class is designed to help students by allowing them to miss assignments without penalty instead of immersing themselves in the complexities of making stuff up and falling behind.

10 quizzes = 2 lowest drop out

This means you can miss two without penalty

3 small tests – 1 lowest drops out

This means you can miss one small test

Discussion Boards remain open long enough for you to post early if you anticipate being busy later, but you can still make up one Discussion Board essay, if you miss it, by writing the extra credit essay, which for you will count as a replacement essay (a make-up essay) for whichever essay you missed earlier.

AI Policy for this Course

Generative AI Use with Permission and Disclosure

Students may use basic assistive technologies for spelling, grammar, and formatting (e.g., PaperRater or SpellCheckPlus). | Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly’s AI function, etc.) may also be used for individual assignments where Fistein, the instructor of record, has given **explicit permission**. Students must clearly disclose and properly cite any AI-generated content used in their work, following course guidelines. Students are permitted to use AI only in the manner and means described by the instructor. Unacknowledged or unauthorized AI use will be treated as a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college’s academic integrity policy.

Generative AI use exception: Students are permitted to use AI only in the manner and means described by the instructor. Specific assignments assigned by the instructor may contain very specific instructions on how to properly use Generative AI to complete the assignment. This is your opportunity to be creative, and you can “do stuff” with the Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Unacknowledged or unauthorized AI use will be treated as a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college’s academic integrity policy. >If I did not specifically ask for you to use AI to complete an assignment, then it is prohibited to use AI period.

Student Expectations

Communication and feedback within the course will occur through various channels, including GCSC email, Canvas Inbox, Canvas Announcements, Canvas Discussions, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, assignment feedback, and/or instructor office hours.

Additionally, as a student at Gulf Coast State College, you are expected to:

- **Adhere to Course Guidelines:** Follow the instructions within the course syllabus along with any additional instructions provided by the instructor. Be certain you understand the course objectives, grading criteria, and academic policies.
- **Maintain Regular Contact:** Keep in touch with your instructor via your GCSC email or other designated communication channels. Regular contact helps clarify doubts, share ideas, and foster a collaborative learning environment.
- **Active Participation:** Engage actively in the course and submit assignments on time. Your active participation is crucial for your academic success and contributes to a deeper learning experience.

As your instructor, my commitment to you is to:

- **Provide Timely Feedback:** I will review and provide feedback on your assignments and submissions promptly. My goal is to help you understand your strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Respond via Canvas Inbox:** I will respond to your emails or messages within 24-48 hours (excluding weekends) unless otherwise noted. I understand the importance of clear and timely communication in addressing your questions and concerns.
- **Post Regular Announcements:** Announcements will be posted to keep you updated and help you manage your time. These reminders will include important dates, upcoming assignments, and any changes to the course schedule.
- **Maintain Weekly Office Hours:** I will maintain regular weekly office hours, but I can also be available by appointment. This is to ensure I'm available for any questions or concerns that may come up during the week.

Course Requirements:

Students enrolled in this course will be required to:

Quizzes:

There will be a total of ten video quizzes. The two lowest video quiz grades drop out at the end. Quizzes will be multiple-choice type questions administered in an **Online**-asynchronous format. You will have a window of roughly ten days to take each quiz, and there will be a time limit. Two quizzes have been designated as "DOUBLE POINTS" assignments. You should do your best not to miss out on those points. Otherwise, you can miss 2 quizzes with no penalty. That makes up for any contingencies or situations you may experience during the semester, where you are unable to complete the video quiz. Two lowest quiz grades drop out at the end of the semester (which could be a zero or some number like "8," for example). Quizzes are easier than a small test. Take advantage of it!

Small Tests and final exam:

There will be three small test exams that will be administered in an **Online** format. The small tests will consist mainly of multiple-choice questions. They will be a mixture of questions from the book and Questions from the additional readings. **All assigned readings and materials presented in “class” are subject to examination.** If you miss a small test, which is always due on a Sunday, you have Monday-Tuesday to make it up, and in extreme circumstances, I can hold the release of answers for everyone until you take your test. However, I have to know that I am doing that, so you still have to contact me on Monday or Tuesday. We can discuss specific situations and make-up policies during office hours, in an email, or with Zoom if an additional topic is necessary. PowerPoint slides from any possible assigned video lecture will be posted on Canvas. The final exam will be cumulative. No make-ups are allowed for the final exam.

Article Review: Students will have to read an article about international news, related to their paper topic, and summarize the article for the other students during the following class discussion using the Zoom feature embedded in the LMS Canvas in our class underneath grades and assignments on the left side. Each student will have 3 ½ minutes of speaking time and will field 1 or 2 questions from the audience. The grade will be dependent upon the accuracy of information, concise delivery, and knowledgeable answering of questions. Not sure how big our class will be at this point, but everyone must have a chance to go. Unless you can switch with someone in advance, you must go on the date that you sign up for, or else turn in a written assignment for fewer points.

Additional announcements in regard to exams and article reviews will be made ...

Response to a discussion board question:

There will be four ranging from 30-60 points and usually asking for a response anywhere from 350 words to 500. The exact number can be found inside each assignment. The use of Artificial Intelligence to write your discussion board responses is not permitted in this class, unless otherwise stated. It may happen that an assignment actually calls for the use of AI. That means that you should use it to accomplish the task of the assignment. Otherwise, do not use AI. The correct answers for the discussion boards are strictly tied to course materials and/or videos you should watch prior to writing and submitting a response, and sometimes you will be highly encouraged to use your mind and form your own ideas and share them. AI can access these materials on the internet, but if I wanted to know what AI has to say, I could look it up myself. I am interested in what you have to say/write in response to my question, and so I will award any discussion board a grade of 0 that uses AI (intentionally or unintentionally). I will go through a progression of testing measures and procedures, checking and re-checking the available information. I get paid for passing people, by the way, and not failing them. When I make my determination, there will be no discussion or negotiation. It is your responsibility to turn in clean original work.

Assignments/Assessment Instruments

I. Exam, tests, and quizzes

There are three small tests, and the lowest grade drops out. The final exam is cumulative and includes one short essay and multiple-choice questions. There are ten quizzes and the two lowest grades. Overall, Everybody can get an A or B, just as everyone can get a bad grade. You want to get as many points as possible on the various assignments. There is a total of 500 Points:

Article Review – 14 % of the total grade -	(70 points)
Final Exam – 20 % of the total grade -	(100 points)
small tests 16% of the total grade -	(80 points)
Quizzes – 20% of the total grade -	(100 points)
Discussion Board responses – 30% of the grade-	(150 points)

Grading Scale: Points	Percent
(450-500)	90 -100 = A
(400-449)	80 - 89 = B
(350-399)	70 - 79 = C
(300-349)	60 - 69 = D
(300>)	= F

II. Activities

Please read under Course Requirements (quizzes, small tests, short essays, article review, final exam)

III. Discussion Boards -short essays up to 500 words

Responses to discussion board questions:

There will be four ranging from 30-60 points and usually asking for a response anywhere from 350 words to 500. The exact number can be found inside each assignment. The use of Artificial Intelligence to write your discussion board responses is not permitted in this class, unless otherwise stated. It may happen that an assignment actually calls for the use of AI. That means that you should use it to accomplish the task of the assignment. Otherwise, do not use AI. The correct answers for the discussion boards are strictly tied to course materials and/or videos you should watch prior to writing and submitting a response, and sometimes you will be highly encouraged to use your mind and form your own ideas and share them. AI can access these materials on the internet, but if I wanted to know what AI has to say I could look it up myself. I am interested in what you have to say/write in response to my question, and so I will award any discussion board a grade of 0 that uses AI (intentionally or unintentionally). I will go through a progression of testing measures and procedures, checking and re-checking the available information. I get paid for passing people, by the way, and not failing them. When I make my determination, there will be no discussion or negotiation. It is your responsibility to turn in clean original work.

Course Schedule

Dates	Week	Module Assignments
17-23 August	1	Module 1 Answer Discussion Board called "Nice to meet you" by August 23, midnight Chapter 1: Read pages 1-22 in Mahler [the assigned textbook] Research Methods: Re-read pages 5-13, 21-22 in Mahler textbook
Aug24 -Aug 30	2	Watch movie "Burma: In the Garden of the Crying Buddha" <u>(The movie is on Canvas under "movies" and under Module 1, and there is a guide sheet to know what to watch for.)</u> Read Myanmar2 article about today's Burma (Myanmar). Read USA chapter in Mahler [textbook] Complete Quiz answering questions about "Burma: In the Garden of the Crying Buddha"

Aug 31 – Sept 6	3	<p>Module 2</p> <p>The Modern State Read Chapter 2 in Mahler Constitutions: pp: 29-39 Read articles about “Gagauzia” and “Georgia borders” watch “Treaty of Westphalia” videos: The third video “Treaty of Westphalia the concept of sovereignty and religious tolerance” is optional (I like the maps, which make some points the others don’t). So is the other one, *optional, which is a funny parody of the process that took place and is being sold as proper and glorious in the other videos. Somaliland video and Quiz. Watch “Kurdistan History” video. A nation without a state USA- is a consciously designed state</p>
Sept 7-Sept 13	4	<p>Sept 7 holiday</p> <p>States and Nations.</p> <p>Roma [gypsies]a stateless people. Read both “Europe and the Roma 2” articles: The city where the bus incident took place is the same city, “Most,” one of the videos is about. Watch the Videos about the Roma; Watch the video about “The State.” Small Test 1 on Canvas due Sunday Sept. 13 midnight</p>
Sept 14 - 20	5	<p>Read Nationalism and Identity Supplemental Fun Information Pages read “Odin’s Soldiers” Please read the India article and the South Africa articles Watch Transnistria video about nationalism and identity; Transnistria Quiz ---New. Complete Discussion Board Sunday midnight Sept 20</p>
Sept 21 -Sept 27	6	<p>Module 3</p> <p>Regime Types and/Ideologies; Chapter 2 in Mahler: pp 39-45 Democratic Regimes; Read UK Chapter in Mahler Watch videos: “Democracy vs. Authoritarianism” and Finland videos Finland Quiz</p>
Sept 28 – Oct 4	7	<p>Authoritarian regimes</p> <p>-Read Turkey article; Authoritarianism Fascism Supplemental Fun Information Pages Great weakness of Authoritarian regimes [optional] Watch all <u>videos</u> provided in this week’s module Soviet Union Quiz</p>
Oct 5 – Oct 11	8	<p>Module 4: Multiple choice test [small test 2] due Sunday Oct 11 Read Germany Chapter in Mahle Presidency 1- Reach Chapter 12 (cabinet, vice president, constitutional powers, other powers) Fall break October 8,9, 2026</p>
Oct 12- Oct 18	9	<p>short article review Group 1 (8 -10 students) Wednesday 11 am short article review Group 2 (8 -10 students) Friday 7 pm short article review Group 3 (8-10 students) Sunday 6pm <i>article reviews require a 15–30 minute read/research and telling about it on zoom</i></p>

		Armenia-Azerbaijan treaty: Watch the three videos (roughly 30 minutes in all) Complete Discussion Board by Sunday midnight Oct. 18
Oct 19 – Oct 25	10	Module 5: The political economy Read “Political economy readings” supplemental fun information Read Panama Canal article Theories concerning “Globalization\Economic Development:” Read Comparative Advantage and Trade article; View documents called “Dependency Theory” “World Systems Theory” self-explanatory Watch Hong Kong video; Video Quiz Complete Discussion Board Oct 25 th Midnight.
Oct 26 Nov 1	11	Module 6: (two-week lesson) going all the way through Nov. 8 Governing Institutions Chapter 3 Legislative in Mahler + Read India Chapter in Mahler; Watch 2 videos; complete Video Quiz Double Points!!
Nov 2 - 8	12	(second of two weeks!) Governing Institutions Executive Chapter 4 in Mahler + (same as above): Read India Chapter in Mahler; Watch 2 videos; complete Video Quiz Double Points!! Small Test 3 due Sunday midnight Nov. 8.
Nov 9 -15	13	Module 7: Read Chapter 6 Political Behavior and Environment Read the “parties ideologies document” Watch “hybrid electoral system in Germany;” watch TBA current topic. Watch and complete quiz “India’s children coal miners (“Rathole miners”)
Nov 16 - 22	14	Read Chapter 7 The institutions of society Women and Politics: Watch Child widows in Nepal movie. Take Nepal Movie Quiz. Read about India’s farm law; watch Brandenburg Gate ballerina and complete Quiz. Women were allowed to take “manly jobs” in the Red Army. Germans thought that was uncivilized and physically punished/abused women captives to teach them a lesson in proper manners. Furthermore, this is a woman war hero being glorified, not a dude.
Nov 22- 29	15	Thanksgiving Break November 25- 29 Thanksgiving
Nov 30 – Dec 6	16	Read/watch UK dumping trash+ Video. Click on and watch the video. Final Exam online > there are <u>two parts</u> : one due on the 7 th and one on the 9 th . The Essay Question will be announced. 2 weeks prior and the multiple-choice part will open one week before each respective deadline.
Dec 4 - 10		Finals Week: Exam online> there are two parts: one due on the 7th and one on the 9th.

The essay question will be announced 2 weeks prior, and the multiple-choice part will open one week before each respective deadline.

Grading

Grading Scale

Everybody can get an A or B, just as everyone can get a bad grade. You want to get as many points as possible on the various assignments. There are a total of 500 Points:

Article Review – 14 % of the total grade -	(70 points)
Final Exam – 20 % of the total grade -	(100 points)
small tests 16% of the total grade -	(80 points)
Quizzes – 20% of the total grade -	(100 points)
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Calculation of Grades

Article Review – 14 % of the total grade -	(70 points)
Final Exam – 20 % of the total grade -	(100 points)
small tests 16% of the total grade -	(80 points)
Quizzes – 20% of the total grade -	(100 points)
Discussion Board responses – 30% of the grade-	(150 points)

Incomplete Grades

Grades of Incomplete in any course can only be assigned to students who have an emergency arise during the last two weeks of the course. To receive an Incomplete, students must:

- Submit a written request to the instructor prior to the last face-to-face class meeting. For online courses, a written Incomplete request must be received no later than the week before the Final Exam period begins.
- Have completed no less than sixty percent of the course requirements and be passing the course at the time the request for an Incomplete is submitted.

Important Note: The Incomplete option provides 30 days from the date grades are due to make up any missing work; if all remaining work is not submitted during this period, the grade will automatically change to an “F.”

General GCSC Course Policies

Accessibility Statement

Gulf Coast State College supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the student. Please visit [GCSC's Student Accessibility Resource \(SAR\) webpage](#) to learn more. For information regarding the registration process, email sar@gulfcoast.edu or call 850-747-3243.

GCSC Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance and participation are significant factors that help to promote success in college. Students are expected to attend this online class according to the college-wide online class policy. Although physical class meetings are not part of this course, participation in all interactive learning activities is required.

In the event of absence, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible to indicate the reason and to inquire whether make-up work is possible. (Make-up work is offered solely at the discretion of your professor.)

If your absences in a class become excessive, as stated in the course syllabus, your professor can withdraw you from the course for excessive absences without your permission.

Instructors will monitor attendance at the beginning of each semester. If you are not in attendance during this period, you may be withdrawn from the course. You will be financially responsible for the course, and a "W or NS" will appear on your transcript. Withdrawal from a course may also have implications for financial aid.

Withdrawal Policy

Two withdrawals are permitted per credit course. After that, a grade will be assigned. Please be concerned about withdrawals. When admitting students into certain programs, universities may calculate withdrawals as grades. It is your responsibility to verify the effects of enrollment and/or withdrawal upon your financial assistance (financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc.). There are two kinds of withdrawals: student and administrative.

- **Student Withdrawal (W1)** - Students wishing to withdraw must complete the online Student Withdrawal Form before the scheduled withdrawal deadline as published in the College catalog. Student withdrawals initiated prior to the scheduled withdrawal deadline will be recorded as a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.

- **Administrative Withdrawal (W2)** – A faculty member may withdraw a student up to the published withdrawal deadline for violation of the class attendance policy, in which case the student will receive a grade of “W.” The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.

Students cannot withdraw from developmental studies courses (college-preparatory classes) after the drop/add period without written permission from their instructor and/or their academic advisor.

Academic Integrity

Honest participation in academic endeavors fosters an environment in which optimal learning can take place and is consistent with the college’s mission. Academic misconduct, including cheating or plagiarism, is destructive to the spirit of an educational environment. GCSC professors report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college for inclusion on the student’s records.

Most course syllabi include an academic honesty policy and the consequences for violating this policy. Familiarize yourself with course policies regarding authorized or unauthorized use of AI to avoid the pitfalls of academic dishonesty.

The following definitions will apply:

"Cheating" includes but is not limited to the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the College's faculty.

"Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment, as well as the purchase of papers or projects. It can also include overuse of an editing program like Grammarly or submitting work written by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generator like ChatGPT. Make certain to consult your course syllabi for your instructor's guidelines on AI material.

"Self-plagiarism" occurs when a student submits the same or considerably similar document to fulfill requirements in different classes. For example, if a student submits a term paper in Religion that they originally wrote for an English class, this is self-plagiarism. Once a paper receives a grade in one class, it cannot be submitted again for another class.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)" is technology that uses machine learning to create new content, such as text, images, or code, based on user input. These systems are trained on vast amounts of data, including large language models and image or code generators. Common examples include ChatGPT, GitHub, Copilot, Google Gemini, Perplexity, and the Grammarly AI function.

Sanctions for incidents of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the incident and/or its repetition, may range from receiving an F grade (or 0) for the test, assignment, or activity to failure of the course, to suspension or dismissal from the college.

Classroom Recording

In accordance with federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their own personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the college, or as evidence in internal or external legal proceedings. Students may not publish or upload the recordings or any components thereof without the knowledge and written permission of the faculty member.

Failure to obtain permission to publish could lead to the students' having to pay damages, attorney fees, and court costs. For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of generative AI tools in academic work requires clear guidelines to maintain academic integrity. Please review the policy selected for this course regarding the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI features, and similar platforms for assignments, research, and other coursework.

See the student handbook for further information. Students with questions about acceptable use should consult their instructor.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Gulf Coast State College does not discriminate against any person in its programs, activities, policies or procedures on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, marital status, religion, age, gender, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

All questions or inquiries regarding compliance with laws relating to non-discrimination and all complaints regarding sexual misconduct or discrimination may be directed to Amanda Reed, Executive Director of Human Resources/Title II/504/Title IX Coordinator and Employment Equity Officer, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 W. US Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401; 850-769-1551, ext. 3516. Rules, policies, fees, and courses described in this catalog are subject to change without notice.

Student Support Resources

Gulf Coast State College is committed to providing you with the resources you need for success as a student and beyond. View all the academic and student support resources provided at GCSC on the [Student Services web page](#).

Course Technology & Support

To successfully participate in this online course, students must have basic computer and digital information literacy skills and meet the following technology requirements:

- Computer: Up-to-date web browser that supports the Canvas learning management system; please refer to the system requirements for compatibility and information on using the Canvas app on mobile devices.
- Internet Speed: Minimum bandwidth of 8 Mbps upload/download speed to effectively engage in online activities and access multimedia.
- Office 365 software: Available for free download through GCSC Information Technology Services (ITS).
- If you need technical support, contact the ITS Help Desk, available 24/7 at (850) 913-3303.