POLI 331
Comparative Party Systems
Section EC
Fall 2026

This syllabus is subject to change and any changes will be posted in the Announcements section of your eConcordia portal.

Disclaimer: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

About this Course

Instructor: Csaba Nikolenyi

Instructor Contact Information: csaba.nikolenyi@concordia.ca

This email address allows you to contact the Professor directly. If you have any questions or concerns about the course that are specific to you, or if there is a delay in hearing back from your TA, please do not hesitate to use this email.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10 AM to 11 AM
Zoom Link: Zoom link posted in the course

TAs:

TA Contact Information: available through the course website (Contact page)

Course Description

This course introduces students to the academic study of political parties and party systems. It examines the determinants of party behaviour from a number of theoretical perspectives, including historical, sociological and institutional. The topics covered include, but are not limited to, the number of parties, electoral systems, party finance, leadership selection, and government formation and stability. Specific case studies are selected both from established and new democracies.

Prerequisite/Corequisite:

The following course must be completed previously: POLI 203. If prerequisites are not satisfied, permission of the Department is required.

Notes:

Students who have received credit for this topic under a POLI 398 number may not take this course for credit.

Learning Objectives

1. By the mid-term exam, students will be able to describe and recognize the main types of political parties and party systems in contemporary democracies.
2. By the end of this course, students will be able to explain why party and electoral systems vary across democratic political systems.
3. By the end of the course, students will be able to develop an original argument about the consequences of electoral reform for Canada and other contemporary democracies.
4. By the end of the course, students will recognize the interconnected nature of electoral and legislative institutions in contemporary democracies.
5. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze and explain voter behavior under alternative electoral systems through roleplay and simulations

Textbook

Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction, Third Edition, Northrose.

The textbook will be available in ebook format and can be purchased directly from VitalSource:

https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/electoral-systems-elisabeth-carter-david-m-v9781350348998

Additional and recommended readings:

Readings in addition can be found in the Concordia Library Electronic Reserves.

Please visit
https://reserves.concordia.ca/

and login with your Concordia netname and password.

Once you are in the Reserves, please make sure to choose the current semester (Fall 2026)

and then look for our reserved readings either under the course name (POLI 331 EC) or under the instructor's name: Csaba Nikolenyi.

Michelle from the Library will prepare a library research presentation for the second week of November and the recording will be posted in the course once available.

Course Website
The course website can be accessed at www.econcordia.com , through the eConcordia Dashboard.

Students will have access to the course content for 6 months after the end of the term for which you are registered. After 6 months, students will still have access to their grades through their eConcordia account.

Assessments

Assessments

Weekly Graded Quizzes (Graded starting Lesson 4)	10%
Mid-term exam	30%
Simulation Reflection Essay	10%
Term Paper	20%
Final Exam	30%

Assessment descriptions

Weekly Graded Quizzes (10%)

During the first two weeks, there will be an ungraded quiz for practice only due to the DNE deadline (Lesson 2 and Lesson 3 Quizzes Ungraded). Starting Lesson 4, the lesson quizzes will be graded. Lesson quizzes will be available Tuesday-Sunday on the scheduled dates in the agenda and once activated, there will be a timer (timer TBD) for each quiz.

The weekly quizzes will be available every **Tuesday.** Students registered with the ACSD will receive their extra time.

Please note, there are no quizzes for Lesson 7 (Midterm Exam) and Lesson 8 (Simulation: Make Your Vote Count).

Mid-term exam (30%)

The mid-term examination format and instructions will be announced closer to the scheduled date.

Simulation (Engagement) Reflection Essay (10%)

The engagement exercise will ask you to simulate the behavior of political parties under two alternative electoral systems: first past-the-post and proportional representation. You will be required to complete the simulations and prepare reflective essays explaining their outcomes. Details will be announced closer to the scheduled date.

Term paper (20%)

You will have to write a research paper on a topic that will be assigned to you on November 2nd.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be available for 3h on eConcordia. The Examinations Office schedules the Final Exam on a specific date and time. Do plan your schedules accordingly. Students registered with the ACSD will receive their extra time.

If you have a legitimate final exam conflict, you have two options, but you MUST take the necessary steps directly with the Examinations Office within the deadline date for an option below to apply. For more information, please visit the following link to work with the Examinations Office regarding potential options (https://www.concordia.ca/students/exams/conflicts.html)

Grades

Please note the following grading scheme adopted by the Department of Political Science:

90-100 %	A+	4.30	Outstanding
85-89 %	A	4.00	Outstanding
80-84 %	A-	3.70	Outstanding
77-79 %	B+	3.30	Very good
73-76 %	B	3.00	Very good
70-72 %	B-	2.70	Very good
67-69 %	C+	2.30	Satisfactory
63-66 %	C	2.00	Satisfactory
60-62 %	C-	1.70	Satisfactory

57-59 %	D+	1.30	Marginal pass
53-56 %	D	1.00	Marginal pass
50-52 %	D-	0.70	Marginal pass

Behaviour

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

IP

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme.

In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Use of Concordia email

Your Concordia email is the official channel for all university communications, as required by the university's Policy on Concordia email accounts for students and employees. Please use your Concordia email for all communication related to this course and check it regularly so you don't miss important information. Learn more about how to access your Concordia email.

As a student, you are expected to follow the email policy and to use your Concordia email in a respectful and responsible manner. The policy helps ensure that communication across the university is secure, reliable, and consistent.

Plagiarism

Department of Political Science Statement on Plagiarism

The Department of Political Science has zero tolerance for plagiarism.

1. What is plagiarism?

The University defines plagiarism as “the presentation of the work of another person, in whatever form, as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement” (Concordia Academic Code of Conduct, Article 19a, https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/provost/docs/Academic-Code-Conduct-2015.pdf). Plagiarism is an academic offence governed by the Code of Conduct (Academic). To find out more about how to avoid plagiarism, see the Concordia University Student Success Centre at: https://www.concordia.ca/students/success.html

2. What are the consequences of being caught?

Students caught plagiarizing are subject to the following sanctions:

(a) a written reprimand; (b) a piece of work be re-submitted; (c) an examination be taken anew; (d) a grade reduction or grade of zero for the piece of work in question; (e) a grade reduction or failing grade for the course; (f) a failing grade and ineligibility for a supplemental examination or any other evaluative exercise for the course; (g) the obligation to take and pass courses of up to twenty-four (24) credits in addition to the total number of credits required for the student’s program; (h) suspension for a period not to exceed six (6) academic terms. Suspensions shall entail the withdrawal of all University privileges, including the right to enter and be on University premises; (i) expulsion from the University. Expulsion entails the permanent termination of all University privileges. In the case of a student who has already graduated, the only two available sanctions are (i) a notation on the student’s academic record that he or she has been found guilty of academic misconduct; or (ii) a recommendation to Senate for the revocation of the degree obtained. (Academic Code of Conduct, Articles 21-25)

Complete regulations can be found in the Academic Code of Conduct.

Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the

faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities.

Changes of the Syllabus

The instructor reserves the right to amend the schedule of meetings and assignments listed in this syllabus as might become necessary based on events throughout the semester. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced and students will receive an amended syllabus in writing. Copies of the most up to date syllabus can be found on the course website on eConcordia.

Third Party Software/Websites

Here is an excerpt on Concordia's policy on Educational software or services developed and owned by third parties, including those linked to textbooks, in-class surveys, lecture capture, virtual classrooms, course assignments and quizzes can be invaluable tools for the development and teaching of courses.

Third-Party software/websites that require personal information (name, email, student number, etc.):

Students are advised that external software and/or websites will be used in the course and students may be asked to submit or consent to the submission of personal information (for example, name and email) to register for an online service. Students are responsible for reading and deciding whether or not to agree to any applicable terms of use. Use of this software and service is voluntary. Students who do not consent to the use the software or service should identify themselves to the course instructor as soon as possible, and in all cases before the DNE deadline, to discuss alternate modes of participation.

Third-party software/websites for work submission:

Students are advised that external software and/or websites will be used in the course and students may be asked to submit or consent to the submission of their work to an online service. Students are responsible for reading and deciding whether or not to agree to any applicable terms of use. Use of this software and service is voluntary. Students who do not consent to the use the software or service should identify themselves to the course instructor as soon as possible to discuss alternate modes of participation that do not require them to give copyright or the right to use their work to a third party.

By using the external software or websites, students agree to provide and share their work and certain personal information (where applicable) with the website/software provider. Students are advised that the University cannot guarantee the protection of intellectual property rights or personal information provided to any website or software company. Intellectual property and personal information held in foreign jurisdictions are subject to the laws of such jurisdictions.

Third-party technology to record a course:

Note that, as a part of this course, some or all of the lectures and/or other activities in this course may be recorded. Recordings will be focused on the instructor and will normally exclude students. It is possible, however, that your participation may be recorded. If you wish to ensure that your image are not recorded, speak to your instructor as soon as possible.

Also, please note that you may not share recordings of your classes and that the instructor will only share class recordings for the purpose of course delivery and development. Any other sharing may be in violation of the law and applicable University policies, and may be subject to penalties.

Important Information

Topic	Link
Academic Integrity	Academic Integrity
Educational Technology Guidelines	Concordia Educational Technology Guidelines for Faculty and Students (the "Guidelines")
Access Centre for Students with Disabilities	ACSD
Concordia Library Citation & Style Guides	How to cite...
Course Communication Tools	Communication
eConcordia Policies	Policies
Final Exams Information	Final Exams
Helpdesk/Support	FAQ
Refunds	Refunds
Technical Requirements	Technical Requirements
Tips for Studying Online	Studying Tips
Tips on how to reach online learning goals (learning modules)	How to Succeed @ eConcordia
How to install and use Zoom	Zoom Information

POLI 331 - Comparative Party Systems
Agenda
Fall 2026

All deadlines indicated are on the due date listed by 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise indicated.

Week 1: September 7 - September 13	
	Lesson 1: Introduction and Overview
September 07	**Labour Day, university closed**
September 08	**Classes begin**
September 08	**Discussion Board opens at 2 PM.**
September 09	**Zoom Session at 10 AM: Orientation Session**
Week 2: September 14 - September 20	
	Lesson 2: Typologies of Parties
	Required readings: Ware, Alan. 1995. *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2. Madison,James. "The Federalist Papers No. 10", in Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, John Jay, and Michael A. Genovese. 2009. *The Federalist Papers*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 49-54. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, and G. D. H. Cole. 1913. T*he Social Contract and Discourses*. London, New York: Dent; Dutton, Book 2, chapter 3, pp. 26-8.
September 15	**Lesson 2 Quiz (Ungraded) opens**
September 20	**Lesson 2 Quiz (Ungraded) closes**
Week 3: September 21 - September 27	
	Lesson 3: Typologies of Party Systems
	Required readings:

	Blondel, J. 1968. “Party Systems and Patterns of Government in Western Democracies.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 1 (2): 180–203. Mainwaring, Scott, and Timothy Scully. 1995. *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. Chapter 1. Ware, Alan. 1995. *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 5 and 6.
September 21	**Deadline to add fall-term courses**
September 21	**Deadline for withdrawal with tuition refund (DNE) from fall-term courses**
September 22	**Lesson 3 Quiz (Ungraded) opens**
September 27	**Lesson 3 Quiz (Ungraded) closes**
Week 4: September 28 - October 4	
	Lesson 4: Electoral systems: Plurality and Majority rules
	Required readings: Carter, Elisabeth, David M. Farrell, and Gemma Loomes. 2024. *Electoral Systems : A Global Perspective.* Third edition. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. Chapters 1 and 2. Gottlieb,Anthony. "Win or lose." The New Yorker, vol. 86, no. 21, 26July 2010, p. 73-7. Hutchinson, Rachel, 2023. “Cumulative Voting: A Step Towards Proportional Representation” Jon Fraenkel & Bernard Grofman (2014) The Borda Count and its real-world alternatives: Comparing scoring rules in Nauru and Slovenia, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 49:2, 186-7 and 192-8.
September 29	**Lesson 4 Quiz (Graded) opens**
October 04	**Lesson 4 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Week 5: October 5 - October 11	
	Lesson 5: Electoral systems: Proportional and mixed systems
	Required readings:

	Carter, Elisabeth, David M. Farrell, and Gemma Loomes. 2024. *Electoral Systems : A Global Perspective.* Third edition. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. Chapter 5: Mixed-member electoral systems. Deignan, Patrick. "PR & the Sligo Borough Election of January 1919." *History Ireland 17*, no. 3 (2009): 38–39. Massicotte, Louis, and André Blais. 1999. "Mixed Electoral Systems: A Conceptual and Empirical Survey." *Electoral Studies* 18 (3): 341–66.
October 06	**Lesson 5 Quiz (Graded) opens**
October 10	**Reading week begins**
October 11	**Lesson 5 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Mid-term break: October 12 - October 16	
October 12	**Thanksgiving Day, university closed**
October 16	**Reading week ends**
Week 6: October 19 - October 25	
	Lesson 6: The Consequences of Electoral Systems
	Required readings: Carter, Elisabeth, David M. Farrell, and Gemma Loomes. 2024. Electoral Systems : A Global Perspective. Third edition. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. Chapters 7 and 8.
October 20	**Lesson 6 Quiz (Graded) opens**
October 23	Last day to submit required documentation to register with the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities and request exam accommodations for the fall 2026 final examination period
October 25	**Lesson 6 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Week 7: October 26 - November 1	
October 26	**Zoom Session at 10 AM: Mid-Term exam preview**
October 28	**Lesson 7: Mid-term Exam. The midterm exam is available from 9am to 11:59pm. Timer 1h40min.**
Week 8: November 2 - November 8	
November 02	**Zoom Session at 10 AM: Simulation preview**

	Lesson 8: Simulation: Make Your Vote Count
November 08	**Simulation Reflection Essay Due**
Week 9: November 9 - November 15	
November 09	**Zoom Session at 10 AM: Term paper preview**
	Lesson 9: The British and the Indian Party Systems
	Required readings: Lundberg, Thomas Carl, 'Electoral Systems in Context: United Kingdom', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) Ziegfeld, Adam, 'Electoral Systems in Context: India', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) **Recommended readings:** Mitchell, Paul, 'The United Kingdom: Plurality Rule Under Siege', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Feb. 2006). Heath, Anthony, Siana Glouharova, and Oliver Heath, '7 India: Two-Party Contests within a Multiparty System', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Feb. 2006).
November 10	**Lesson 9 Quiz (Graded) opens**
November 15	**Lesson 9 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Week 10: November 16 - November 22	
	Lesson 10: The Australian and the New Zealand Party Systems
	Required readings: McAllister, Ian, and Toni Makkai, 'Electoral Systems in Context: Australia', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017)

	Vowles, Jack, 'Electoral Systems in Context: New Zealand', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) **Recommended readings:** Farrell, David M., and Ian McAllister, 'Australia: The Alternative Vote in a Compliant Political Culture', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Feb. 2006). Vowles, Jack, '14 New Zealand: The Consolidation of Reform?', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Feb. 2006.
November 16	**Deadline for academic withdrawal (DISC) from fall-term courses**
November 17	**Lesson 10 Quiz (Graded) opens**
November 22	**Lesson 10 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Week 11: November 23 - November 29	
November 23	**Zoom Session at 12 PM: Final exam preview**
	Lesson 11: The French and the German Party Systems
	Required readings: Hoyo, Verónica, 'Electoral Systems in Context: France', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) Zittel, Thomas, 'Electoral Systems in Context: Germany', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) **Recommended readings:** Elgie, Robert, '6 France: Stacking the Deck', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edition)

	Saalfeld, Thomas, 'Germany: Stability and Strategy in a Mixed-Member Proportional System', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, 2005; online edition).
November 24	**Lesson 11 Quiz (Graded) opens**
November 29	**Lesson 11 Quiz (Graded) closes**
Week 12: November 30 - December 7	
	Lesson 12: The Italian and the Israeli Party Systems
	Required readings: Passarelli, Gianluca, 'Electoral Systems in Context: Italy', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) Hazan, Reuven Y., Reut Itzkovitch-Malka, and Gideon Rahat, 'Electoral Systems in Context: Israel', in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 5 Apr. 2017) **Recommended readings:** D'Alimonte, Roberto, 'Italy: A Case of Fragmented Bipolarism', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), The Politics of Electoral Systems (Oxford, 2005; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Feb. 2006). Rahat, Gideon, and Reuven Y. Hazan, '16 Israel: The Politics of an Extreme Electoral System', in Michael Gallagher, and Paul Mitchell (eds), The b. 2006).
November 30	**Term paper due**
November 30	**Last day for instructor-scheduled tests or examinations**
December 01	**Lesson 12 Quiz (Graded) opens**
December 06	**Lesson 12 Quiz (Graded) closes**
December 07	**Last day of classes, fall term**
Examinations Period: December 9 - December 22	
	Final Exam date and time is posted on your Student Hub