

PLS 140
Group paper instructions

The purpose of the group paper is to provide you with an opportunity to practice thinking like a political scientist. This exercise will allow you to not only demonstrate your understanding of the course material, but also, and most importantly, help you to think critically about some key aspects of comparative politics, engage with scholarly work, and analyze political phenomena.

To this end, you will use your command of the comparative method to analyze the politics and political systems of Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom. The paper will need to identify the similarities and differences between the two countries with respect to all the major aspects of comparative politics that we have covered in parts I-III of the course. These include state capacity, state-making processes and broader developmental trajectories, and political regimes. In addition to comparing the two countries, you should consider potential (causal) connections between those facets of their politics. Your analysis will need to draw upon evidence from outside scholarly and—where needed—non-scholarly sources as well as the textbook and other course readings.

You will write the paper with two other students. Your section's TA will assign you to a three-person group responsible for the paper. You will need to coordinate group activities with your groupmates, exchange with them your knowledge and ideas, and together search for relevant evidence, analyze the information that you have collected, and organize and write the paper. The final product of your joint work should be one cohesive and logically structured text, rather than three separate unrelated pieces.

The paper should be 4-5 pages long and follow the standard structure of a university essay: with an introduction, main body, and conclusion. It should be double-spaced with one-inch margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. You should make use of at least 5 academic sources; you may also consult nonacademic sources. All citations should follow the Chicago author-date style. (This is the style used in the syllabus.) The list of sources does not count towards the specified assignment length. If you choose to include a cover page, it also does not count towards the assignment length.

You will receive both a group grade and an individual grade for the paper. The group grade will reflect the overall quality of the paper. The individual grade will be based on your contributions to the paper, which will be determined by your TA based on their assessment of your work, self-reporting, and your groupmates' evaluation of your efforts. These two equally weighted grades make up your group paper grade, which is worth 20% of your overall grade in the course.

Group paper rubric

	Failure	Minimally acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Knowledge of country cases	The paper provides no evidence of the writers' knowledge of the country cases and understanding of their politics and political systems.	The paper is suggestive of limited knowledge of the country cases and understanding of their politics and political systems, based on superficial engagement with relevant course material and other sources. In some cases a large number of factual errors may be present.	The paper indicates some knowledge of the country cases and understanding of their politics and political systems, based on evident effort to engage with relevant course material and other sources. In some cases a small number of factual errors may be present.	The paper demonstrates solid knowledge of the country cases and understanding of their politics and political systems, based on evident engagement with relevant course material and other sources. In some cases a very small number of factual errors may be present.	The paper demonstrates thorough knowledge of the country cases and excellent understanding of their politics and political systems, based on evident engagement with relevant course material and other sources.
Cogency of analysis	Analysis is simplistic and/or poorly developed. It indicates little understanding of the topic and no originality of thought.	The paper is somewhat developed, but may not have a clear focus and be logically constructed and internally coherent. Analysis displays some understanding of the topic, but little originality of thought.	The paper is somewhat developed. Analysis displays some understanding of the topic and, in some cases, some originality of thought.	Analysis has a clear focus. It is logically constructed and internally coherent, but not fully developed or deficient in some other way. Analysis displays a solid grasp of the topic and some originality of thought.	Analysis has a clear focus. It is logically constructed and internally coherent. It displays a solid grasp of the topic and originality of thought.
Organization, writing style, spelling, and grammar	Weak or no organization. Random expression of ideas. Thoughts are expressed in a disjointed or incomprehensible way. Writing style, spelling, and grammar need major improvement. The paper is too short or too long.	The paper needs better transition and flow between ideas. Some awkward and confusing passages detract from a thorough understanding of the paper. The paper follows the length / page count instructions.	Mostly logical progression of ideas, but the writer must do more to make connections. Some awkward and confusing passages detract from a thorough understanding of the paper. The paper follows the length / page count instructions.	Mostly logical progression of ideas, but the writer must do more to make connections. A few distracting errors or awkward phrasing. The paper follows the length / page count instructions.	Good flow or progression of ideas and good presentation of how the points made fit into a broader argument. Eloquent expression of ideas with no distracting or obvious grammatical or mechanical errors. The paper follows the length / page count instructions.

Evidence and sources	The paper does not address the existing literature or identify the sources on which it is based.	The paper identifies the literature and other sources on which it is based, but shows limited understanding of them and does not explain their relevance and value.	The paper provides an outline of the literature and a list of sources. It demonstrates some understanding of the literature and other sources.	The paper provides an outline of the literature and a list of sources. It demonstrates good understanding of the literature and other sources.	The paper provides an outline of the literature and an extensive list of sources. It demonstrates an excellent understanding of the literature and provides a comprehensive explanation of the relevance and value of the data on which it is based.
Citations, quotations, and bibliography	Missing or inadequate citations, insufficient number of sources.	Referencing does not follow the required citation style. In some cases excessive use of quotations. Sufficient number of sources.	Referencing follows the required citation style, with some errors. Sufficient number of sources.	Mostly correct referencing, with a few minor errors. Number of sources which is at least sufficient and likely exceeds the requirements.	Correct referencing. Number of sources that exceeds the requirements.

Individual paper contribution rubric

	Failure	Minimally acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Responsiveness in group communications	The student did not participate in group communications.	The student occasionally participated in group communications.	The student regularly participated in group communications.	The student fully participated in group communications.	The student led group communications.
Paper preparation (literature search, material collation, analysis, etc.)	The student did not participate in the group's research for the paper.	The student occasionally participated in and made some contribution to group's research for the paper.	The student regularly participated in and made meaningful contribution to the group's research for the paper	The student fully participated in made substantial contribution to the group's research for the paper.	The student played a leadership role in the group's research for the paper.
Paper structure and writing	The student did not participate in the creation of the paper.	The student occasionally participated in the creation of the paper and made some contribution to the organization and writing of the paper.	The student regularly participated in the creation of the paper and made meaningful contribution to the organization and writing of the paper.	The student fully participated in the creation of the paper and made substantial contribution to the organization and writing of the paper.	The student played a leadership role in the creation of the paper.