Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2019

INTL 3300

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

Professor Megan Turnbull   Class: T/Th, 2:00-3:15, MLC 148
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                                                                                          Candler Hall, Rm. 312

COURSE DESCRPTION

Why do some countries hold elections while others do not? Why are some states able to provide security and welfare to their citizens while others struggle to do so? Why are some countries plagued by violence while others enjoy internal peace? These questions have long animated the field of comparative politics and are among the several of which we will explore this semester. This course will provide students with a firm foundation in the subfield of comparative politics, preparing them for more specialized courses on the topics in the course schedule below. The course has two main objectives:

> 1. To familiarize students with the importance of theory for describing, explaining, and understanding political processes. After taking this course, students should be able to distinguish between different theoretical explanations and evaluate the merit of evidence used to support them.

> 2. To provide students with an overview of the debates and issues in comparative politics. Students should be able to understand the basis of these debates as well as take and support positions on them.

READINGS

All readings will be accessible through eLearning Commons. As important current events unfold throughout the term, I will post short newspaper articles and other links on eLearning Commons and notify students about them by email. Reading these articles is also a requirement of this course. I will post all lecture slides on eLearning Commons immediately after class.

Some of the readings are dense and involve advanced statistics and formal modeling. You are not expected to fully grasp the mathematics and statistical models in the readings; indeed, we will spend little time on them in class. Rather, you should focus on absorbing the logic and internal coherence of the argument and the evidence used to support it. You are strongly encouraged to bring any questions about jargon, concepts, argumentation, or anything else either to class or my office hours.

REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Active participation	See note below on participation	10	-
Assignments	Four assignments and one quiz, each worth 2%	10	-
Critical reading memos	Two memos, each worth 5%	10	-
Research design presentation	Construct a research design in a group to answer a political science question	10	January 31
Midterm exam	Covers first half of the semester	20	March 21
Group presentation	Country case study on democratic erosion	15	April 23 & 25
Final exam	Cumulative	25	May 2 3:30-6:30pm

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

In order to earn a strong participation grade, you should do the following:

1. Attend class.

Both lecture, class discussions, and class activities will be an important part of this course. Class attendance is thus required in order to do well in the course. Attendance will be recorded for each class, and will constitute a portion of your participation grade. You can miss two classes, no questions asked, with no penalty. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, all subsequent missed classes will be reflected in your participation score. Regular tardiness and excessive bathroom breaks will reduce your participation grade.

2. Read the assigned materials.

The course schedule below details reading assignments day-by-day. Students are expected to have read the assigned material before class and bring the readings to class. For most readings, you should be able to succinctly answer the following:

- What is the research question(s)? What is the dependent variable?
- What is the argument?

- What evidence do the authors draw on to evaluate their argument?
- What are some potential criticisms? You might consider:
  - Alternative explanations: what else might explain these findings?
  - Logic and coherence of the argument
  - Biases in the data: selection bias, omitted variable bias, etc.

Preparing answers to these questions as well as the "guiding questions" in the course schedule, below, will ensure that you are prepared for class discussion and will also assist you in class activities.

3. Actively participate in class.

Students will maximize the course's benefits by actively engaging in class discussions and activities. It is the responsibility of the student to raise questions when something is unclear. Regular and active participation will be recorded during each class meeting, and will constitute a portion of your participation grade. Your participation should reflect that you have carefully done the readings for the day. To give you a sense of the breakdown of the participation grade:

A range: Attend and participate in every class; participation reflects that you have done the
           readings

B range: Attend and participate in most classes; participation reflects that you have done the
            readings

C range: Attend most classes and participate about 50 percent of the time or less

D range: Attend about 50 percent of the classes; rarely participate

F: Absent more often than present; rarely participate

Finally, it will be difficult to actively participate if you are distracted by your phone. If you have any questions or concerns about participation, you are encouraged to bring them to me early in the semester.

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CRITICAL READING MEMOS

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The purpose of the critical reading memos is threefold. They will help you study for the midterm and final exams by serving as study guides, strengthen your writing skills, and sharpen your capacity for analytical thinking. You will complete two critical reading memos during the semester. Briefly, your memo should (1) summarize the main argument and evidence for the day's reading(s) and (2) develop a critique. A handout with more information and grading rubric will be circulated at the start of the semester. Students will sign up at the beginning of the semester to write up memos for two different classes. They are due by 9am the day of class, uploaded to the course website. Please note that these will be circulated to the entire class and may inform our class discussion for the day. Late memos will not be accepted.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Students will participate in two group presentations this semester. The first one is based on an in-class activity on January 29 on research design. Presentations are scheduled for January 31. The second is a group presentation on a country case study of democratic erosion at the end of the semester. More information on these presentations and grading rubric will be circulated in advanced.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Throughout this semester, you will have the opportunity to strengthen your reading and writing skills (critical reading memos), oral communication skills (class discussion and group presentations), as well as your content knowledge of comparative politics (midterm and final exams). I will provide more detailed rubrics for each assignment, but generally, grades are assigned on the following basis:

A: 93-100   A-: 90-92   B+: 87-89   B: 83-86   B-: 80-82   C+: 77-79

C: 73-76   C-: 70-72   D+: 67-69   D: 60-66   F: <60

MISSED EXAMS OR ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments must be submitted and exams taken as scheduled with the exception of a bona fide medical or other emergency as validated by appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor's note).

USE OF LAPTOPS AND TABLETS IN CLASS

While some students find that personal laptops and tablets enhance their classroom experience, others find them to be a significant distraction. In an effort to accommodate all students, the classroom will be divided into "laptop" and "non-laptop" sections. You are welcome to sit in whichever section you feel best suits your learning needs for the day.

UNIVERISTY HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Thursday, January 10: Introduction
- Read the entire syllabus thoroughly

Tuesday, January 15: How to read political science research
- Readings
  - Read the "reading tips hand-out" and "How to Read Political Science in Four Steps"
  - Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32(2):303-330.
  - Bring a print-out of the reading with your mark-up and notes to class. This will be part of a class exercise.
- Assignment #1:
  - Reflect on your reading habits. Bring a ~1 page reflection to class that answers the following:
    - How far in advance do you read for class? 6 hours? 12? 24? Two days? Do you think you should be reading further in advance? If so, what changes will you make in your schedule to do so?
    - Do you like to skim first and then go back and read? Take breaks? Read straight through?
    - Do you schedule time in your day/week for reading and homework? Do you look up in advance how many pages you'll need to read before class?
    - Do you take notes as you read? Or do you take notes at the very end?
    - What reading habits do you feel work for you? What habits aren't working and how will you change them?
    - After reading and taking notes, are you able to explain to a friend what the main question was, what the main argument and key take-away are, and what evidence was used to support the argument? Importantly, are you able to articulate your questions and critiques?

Thursday, January 17: Why do we compare?
- No readings for today
- Assignment #2
  - Come to class with a ~1 page answer to the question: why do we compare?

Tuesday, January 22: Why is it "political science" and not "political studies"?
- Reading
  - Malici, Akan and Elizabeth S. Smith. 2019. "Chapter 2: How Do We Get a Science of Politics?" In *Political Science Research in Practice*, edited by Akan Malici and Elizabeth S. Smith. Second ed., 14-27. New York: Routledge.
- Assignment #3
  - Bring your answers to the exercises and discussion questions on p. 26 to class.

Thursday, January 24: Research methods in political science
- Reading
  - Pantoja, Adrian D. and Sarah Allen Gershon. 2019. "Chapter 7: Statistical Research: Lack of Citizenship, the Achilles' Heel of Latino Political Power." In

Political Science Research in Practice, edited by Akan Malici and Elizabeth S. Smith. Second ed., 100-116. New York: Routledge.
- Assignment #4
  - Bring your answers to the exercises and discussion questions on p. 115 to class.

Tuesday, January 29: Political science research in practice
- No readings; review your notes from the previous classes to (1) take an in-class quiz on research design (assignment #5) and (2) prepare for an in-class activity. The quiz will be at the beginning of class and you will have ~15 minutes to complete it.

Thursday, January 31: Student research design presentations

Tuesday, February 5: The State
- Readings
  - Bates, Robert H. 2001. "Chapter 4: State Formation in the Modern Era." In *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development*, 70-83. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
  - Mecham, Quinn. 2015. "How Much of a State Is the Islamic State?" *The Washington Post*, February 5.
- Guiding Questions
  - What is the state? What makes it different from other organizations?
  - According to Bates, what is different about state formation in the developing world compared to early modern Europe?
  - What international factors shape state formation today?

Thursday, February 7: Running away from the state
- Readings
  - Alexander, Scott. "Book Review: Seeing Like A State." Slate Star Codex. http://slatestarcodex.com/2017/03/16/book-review-seeing-like-a-state/.
- Guiding questions
  - What kind of activities have modern states engaged in? What were their consequences?
  - Are we better off without the modern state?

Tuesday, February 12: Who has the right to govern?
- Readings
  - Blair, Robert, and Pablo Kalmanovitz. 2016. "On the Rights of Warlords: Legitimate Authority and Basic Protection in War-Torn Societies." *American Political Science Review* 110 (3): 428–40.
- Guiding questions
  - Do warlords ever have a right to govern? If so, when?
  - Are "state rulers" any different from "warlords"? If so, how?

Thursday, February 14: What do we mean by "development?"
- Readings
  - Sen, Amartya. 1999. "Introduction: Development as Freedom," and "The Ends and Means of Development." In *Development as Freedom*. 3-11 and 35-53. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Guiding questions
  - What does Sen mean by "development as freedom?" Do you agree with his argument?
  - Do all good things- democracy, freedom, economic growth- go together?

Tuesday, February 19: Development
- Readings
  - Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2012. "Chapter 3: The Making of Prosperity and Poverty." In *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, 70-95. New York: Crown Business.
- Guiding questions
  - What role do institutions play in development?
  - What else might explain differences in wealth and political freedoms between countries and across time?

Thursday, February 21: Political regimes
- Reading
  - Diamond, Larry. 2002. "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21-35.
  - Dahl, Robert A. 1972. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 1-9.
- Guiding Questions
  - What makes a country a democracy? An authoritarian regime?
  - How would you define democracy? How would you know it when you see it?

Tuesday, February 26: Measuring democracy
- Read Freedom House country report hand-outs in preparation for class activity

Thursday, February 28: Democratic transitions
- Reading
  - Treisman, Daniel. 2017. Democracy by Mistake: National Bureau of Economic Research. http://www.nber.org/papers/w23944.
- Guiding Questions
  - Why are some countries democracies and others not?

Tuesday, March 5: Political parties, party systems, and interest groups
- Reading
  - Dickovick, J. Tyler and Jonathan Eastwood. 2019. "Chapter 11: Political Parties, Party Systems, and Interest Groups." In *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Third ed., 255-279. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thursday, March 7: Governments and electoral systems
- Reading
  - Lijphart, Arend. 1991. "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 2(1): 72-84.
- Guiding questions
  - What are the different electoral systems described in the article? Forms of government?
  - Which electoral system does Lijphart advocate for and why? Do you agree?

-Spring Break-

Tuesday, March 19: Midterm review
- Review your notes and come to class prepared with questions

Thursday, March 21: Midterm exam

Tuesday, March 26: Authoritarian institutions
- Readings
  - Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. 2007. "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats." *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (11): 1279-1301
- Guiding questions
  - What distinguishes authoritarian regimes from democracies?
  - How do autocrats manage to stay in power?
  - Under what conditions might authoritarian regimes transition to democracies?

Thursday, March 28: Polarization
- Readings
  - McCoy, Jennifer, Tahmina Rahman & Murat Somer. 2018. "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities." *The American Behavioral Scientist* 62 (1): 16-42.
- Guiding Questions
  - What is polarization?
  - According to the authors, why does it undermine democracy?
  - How do societies de-polarize?

Tuesday, April 2: Polarization activity
- Read the contentious issue casebook in preparation for class activity

Thursday, April 3: No class; Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 9: Civil war
- Readings
  - Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56: 563–95.
  - Luttwak, Edward N. 1999. "Give War a Chance." *Foreign Affairs* 78(4): 36–44.

- Guiding questions
  - What causes civil war?
  - How do Collier and Hoeffler measure their variables? What might be some problems with their measurements and indicators?
  - According to Luttwak, why should we give war a chance? Do you agree?

Thursday, April 11: Civil society
- Readings
  - Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49 (3): 401–29.
- Guiding Questions
  - What is civil society?
  - How can civil society promote or reinforce democracy? How can it undermine it?

Tuesday, April 16: Ethnicity and nationalism
- Readings
  - Varshney, Ashutosh. 2007. "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 274–94. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Guiding questions
  - What is ethnicity? Nationalism?
  - What are the different theoretical frameworks for studying ethnic politics?

Thursday, April 18: Contemporary debate: Democratic backsliding
- Readings
  - Introduction and Chapter 5 from Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future*. New York: Random House.
  - Robin, Corey. "Democracy is Norm Erosion." *Jacobin Magazine*. January 29, 2018.
- Guiding questions
  - What is Levitsky and Ziblatt's argument? Robin's critique?
  - Are you persuaded by either of these readings? Did either change your mind about the quality of democracy in the US?

Tuesday, April 23: Student presentations on democratic backsliding

Thursday, April 25: Student presentations on democratic backsliding

Tuesday, April 30: Final exam review and wrap up

- No readings; review your notes and come to class prepared with questions