

# **Introduction to Comparative Politics**

Fall 2019

INTL 3300

Department of International Affairs  
University of Georgia

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Class: T/Th, 12:30-1:45pm, MLC 277  
Office Hours: T/Th, 3:30-4:30pm, Candler 309

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 you 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 steps 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

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Active participation	See note below	10	-
Reading memos	2 memos, each worth 5%	10	-
Reading quizzes	~10 minutes; 7 out of 8 count, each worth 5%	35	-
Research design presentation	Construct a research design in a group to answer a political science question	10	September 10
Democratic backsliding presentation	Group presentation on country case study of democratic backsliding	10	November 7 & 12
Final exam	Cumulative	25	12-3pm, December 10

## ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

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

### **1. Attend class.**

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 it that the author(s) wants to explain (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 internal 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 your responsibility 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, laptop, or other electronic devices. If you have any questions or concerns about participation, you are encouraged to bring them to me early in the semester.

### **CRITICAL READING MEMOS**

The purpose of the critical reading memos is threefold. They will help you study for the final exam 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.

## **QUIZZES**

There will be eight quizzes throughout the semester (see the course schedule, below), seven of which will count (the lowest grade will be dropped). Quizzes will be at the start of the class and draw directly on the day's readings. They will be short (~10 minutes) and you can expect questions such as "what is the research question in the day's reading" or "what is the main hypothesis?" The quizzes are meant not only as extra motivation to do the reading for the day, but also to provide you with some feedback on your ability to absorb the reading and prepare you for the final exam throughout the semester rather than cramming at the very end.

## **GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

Students will participate in two group presentations this semester. The first one is based on an in-class activity at the start of the semester on research design. 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 (quizzes and final exam). 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.

## **UNIVERSITY 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, August 15: Introduction

- Read the entire syllabus thoroughly

Tuesday, August 20: 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 hard or electronic copy of the reading with your mark-up and notes to class. This will be part of a class exercise.
- Reading reflection
  - 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, August 22: Why do we compare?

- No readings for today
- Come to class with a ~1 page answer to the question: why do we compare?

Tuesday, August 27: 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.
- Guiding questions
  - What makes political science a “science”? More broadly, what makes an academic discipline “scientific”?
  - Do you agree that the study of politics can be a scientific endeavor? Why or why not?

Thursday, August 29: No class, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association

- Use class time to study and prepare for Quiz 1

Tuesday, September 3: Political science research in practice- **Quiz 1**

- No readings for today; review your notes from the previous classes for (1) an in-class quiz and (2) a class activity. The quiz will be at the beginning of class and take ~10 minutes.

Thursday, September 5: Building a research design

- No readings for today; class activity

Tuesday, September 10: Student research design presentations

- No readings for today; student presentations

Thursday, September 12: 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?
  - In what ways was the Islamic State similar to “normal states”? Different?

Tuesday, September 17: 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/>.
  - Fukuyama, Francis. 2004. “The Imperative of State-Building.” *Journal of Democracy* 15(2): 17-31.
- Guiding questions

- What kind of activities have modern states engaged in? What were their consequences?
- Are we better off without the modern state? What is Fukuyama's view on this question? Scott's?

Thursday, September 19: Civil war- **Quiz 2**

- 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. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/55210/edward-n-luttwak/give-war-a-chance>
- Guiding questions
  - What causes civil war? Why does it happen?
  - How do Collier and Hoeffler measure their variables? What might be some problems with their measurements and indicators? Can you think of better ways to measure the key concepts in their hypotheses?
  - According to Luttwak, why should we give war a chance? Do you agree?

Tuesday, September 24: 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.
  - Read Stakeholder Democracy Networks' short briefing on The Tompolo Foundation
- Guiding questions
  - Do warlords ever have a right to govern? If so, when?
  - Are "state rulers" any different from "warlords"? If so, how?
  - Does Tompolo qualify as a warlord who has a right to govern? If you were a policy advisor to the Nigerian government, what would you advise? Work with Tompolo? Try to weaken and undermine him? As you answer this question, keep in mind our recent discussions on states, political order, and civil war.

Thursday, September 26: What do we mean by "development?"- **Quiz 3**

- 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.
  - Martin, Courtney. "The Reductive Seduction of Other People's Problems." *BRIGHT Magazine*., last modified January 11, accessed Jan 27, 2019, <https://brightthemag.com/the-reductive-seduction-of-other-people-s-problems-3c07b307732d>.
- 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?
- Have you studied, interned, or worked abroad? Are you thinking about it? How, if at all, does the piece from Bright Magazine resonate with your travel experiences?

#### Tuesday, October 1: 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 are the different types of institutions that Acemoglu and Robinson describe?
  - What else might explain differences in wealth and political freedoms between countries and across time?

#### Thursday, October 3: Political regimes- **Quiz 4**

- 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 October 8: Measuring democracy

- Read Freedom House country report hand-outs in preparation for class activity
- Recommended reading
  - Gold, Hannah. 2019. "'Nostalgia Doesn't Speak to Me, History Does': Astra Taylor on Her New Film and 'Reaching Toward' Democracy." *Jezebel*, January 16,. <https://theslot.jezebel.com/nostalgia-doesnt-speak-to-me-history-does-astrataylor-1831765012>.

#### Thursday, October 10: Democratization: Structural and Rational Actor Explanations

- Readings
  - Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.
- Guiding questions
  - Who are the key actors in Acemoglu and Robinson's argument? What are their economic interests? How does their economic position shape their preferences for (non)democracy?
  - In a nutshell, what is the argument? Can you explain it to a friend in your own words? Focus on the steps of the argument.



Tuesday, October 15: Democratization as a Mistake

- Reading
  - Treisman, Daniel. 2017. Democracy by Mistake: National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23944>.
- Guiding Questions
  - How might democratic transitions be a mistake? Why do authoritarian rulers make these mistakes?
  - How does Treisman code mistakes? Put differently, how does he, and the reader, know a “mistake” when they see it?
  - What flaws do you see in the research design? Coding? How would you make it better?

Thursday, October 17: Governments and electoral systems- **Quiz 5**

- 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?

Tuesday, October 22: 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, October 24: Polarization- **Quiz 6**

- 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?
  - Is polarization always bad for democracy?
  - How do societies de-polarize?

Tuesday, October 29: Polarization activity

- Read the contentious issue casebook in preparation for class activity

Thursday, October 31: 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, November 5: Contemporary debate: Democratic backsliding- **Quiz 7**

- Required 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.
  - Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 5-19.
  - Robin, Corey. "Democracy is Norm Erosion." *Jacobin Magazine*. January 29, 2018.
  - Riddell, Kelly. "Anti-Trump Left a Threat to American Democracy." *The Washington Times*. December 19, 2016.
  - Kuhn, David Paul. "Sorry, Liberals. Bigotry Didn't Elect Donald Trump." *The New York Times*. December 26, 2016.
  - Cobb, Jelani. "Stacey Abrams's Fight for a Fair Vote." *The New Yorker*, August 12, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/19/stacey-abrams-fight-for-a-fair-vote>
- Recommended reading
  - Berman, Ari. "A Republican Won the Georgia Governor's Race, but it was Tainted by Voter Suppression." *Mother Jones*, November 16, 2018. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/11/brian-kemps-win-in-georgia-tainted-by-voter-suppression-stacey-abrams/>.
- Guiding questions
  - According to Bermeo, what does democratic backsliding look like today?
  - What is Levitsky and Ziblatt's argument? Robin's critique?
  - Are you persuaded by the Levitsky and Ziblatt or Robin readings? Did any of the readings change your mind about the quality of democracy in the US? Georgia?

Thursday, November 7: How to strengthen democracy?

- No readings; class activity

Tuesday, November 12: Ethnicity and nationalism- **Quiz 8**

- 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, November 14: Democratic Backsliding presentations

Tuesday, November 19: Democratic Backsliding presentations

Thursday, November 21: No class, Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association

- Use class time to begin to take action on the plan you built during the class activity on November 7; write up a 1 page summary and reflection and submit on etc.

Tuesday, November 26: No class

- Use class time to prepare for final exam and bring any questions to the last class on December 3

Tuesday, December 3: Last class: semester wrap-up and final exam review