

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2020

INTL 3300

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

Professor Megan Turnbull

Class Meeting: T/Th, 11am-12:15pm, Main Library B2

Email: megan.turnbull@uga.edu

Office Hours: Th, 3:30-5:30pm,
International Affairs Building (202 Herty Drive)

Teaching Assistants:

Colin Dailey (colindailey@uga.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30pm, in the main library coffee shop

Jason Lian (jasonlian@uga.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:40-10:40am, in the main library coffee shop

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 and research design 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 key topics and debates 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, how different variables are operationalized and measured, and the evidence used to support the conclusions. You are strongly encouraged to bring any questions about jargon, concepts, argumentation, or anything else to class, my office hours, or the teaching assistants' office hours.

REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Reading Memos	2 memos, each worth 5%	10	-
Research Design Group Project	Construct a research design in a group to answer a political science question	15	April 21
First Exam	Covers material from weeks 1-4	20	February 4
Second Exam	Covers material from weeks 5-8	20	March 5
Final Exam	Cumulative	35	May 5, 12-3pm

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Given that this is a large lecture format, you will not be graded on participation or attendance. I do hope however that you will regularly attend class, ask questions when something in the reading or lecture is unclear, and offer critical commentary on the readings and theoretical perspectives covered in the lecture. In an effort to incorporate some discussion into the lecture, we will occasionally break out into small groups.

OFFICE HOURS & TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Office hours are the time that professors and teaching assistants specifically designate to meet with students for help with assignments, questions about the lecture or reading, answer questions, or just to chat. In other words, office hours are **your** time. You are encouraged to come to office hours with questions about the class, comparative politics, political science, or just to introduce yourself. Professor Clare Brock provides a more thorough description of office hours if you would like more information: <http://www.clarebrock.com/blog/office-hours>

The teaching assistants are here to help you navigate and comprehend the course material. You are strongly encouraged to make use of their office hours when you have questions about the

lecture, assignments, exams, or readings. In short, you might think of them as your first point of contact when seeking clarification on the material.

CRITICAL READING MEMOS

The purpose of the critical reading memos is threefold. They will (1) help you study for the exams by serving as study guides, (2) strengthen your writing skills, and (3) 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) critically engage with the readings. Memos should cover all of the readings assigned that day. A handout with more information 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 specified assignment folder on eLc** (for example, "September 1 Reading Memo). 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.**

RESEARCH DESIGN PROJECT

Working in groups, you will have the opportunity to build a research design to answer a political science question. We will cover research design and the "tools" political scientists commonly use to answer research questions in the first few weeks of the course. Issues pertaining to research design will regularly come up throughout the semester and at the end of the year, you will apply your research design skills and knowledge to answering a political science question. More information will be provided separately.

EXAMS

There will be three exams this semester in order to assess your understanding of research design, key concepts, different theoretical perspectives, and key debates in the field of comparative politics. The first exam will cover the first four weeks of the semester; the second will cover weeks 5-8; and the final exam is cumulative, covering all of the material throughout the semester. More information about the exams will be provided separately.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Throughout this semester, you will have the opportunity to strengthen your reading and writing skills (critical reading memos), oral communication skills (occasional small and large class discussions), as well as your content knowledge of comparative politics (three 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). I will strictly enforce this rule out of fairness to your classmates.

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.

Tuesday, January 7: Introduction

- Read the entire syllabus thoroughly. If you have a question at some point in semester, please look at the syllabus for the answer before emailing me.

Thursday, January 9: Why do we compare?

- 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?

Tuesday, January 14: The Comparative Method

- Reading

- Eyadat, Zaid. 2019. “The Comparative Case Study Method: “Uncivil Society” in the Arab Uprisings.” In *Political Science Research in Practice*, edited by Akan Malici and Elizabeth S. Smith. Second ed., 28-42. New York: Routledge.
- Guiding questions
 - What is the method of agreement? Method of difference?
 - What are the strengths of the comparative case study method? Weaknesses?

Thursday, January 16: Theory, Hypotheses, and Evidence

- Readings
 - Dickovick, J. Tyler & Jonathan Eastwood. 2019. “Chapter 2: Theories, Hypotheses, and Evidence,” in *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 25-46.
- Guiding questions
 - What are the key terms in the chapter? Why are they useful for studying and thinking about politics?

Tuesday, January 21: 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.
- 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, January 23: The breakdown of the state: 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. <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, January 28: Rebuilding political authority: post-conflict politics

- 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, January 30: Exam 1 Review

- No readings; review all of your reading and class notes, student reading memos, and come prepared to class with questions to prep for the first exam

Tuesday, February 4: Exam 1

Thursday, February 6: Defining 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.
 - 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, February 11: 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, February 13: 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 18: 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-astra-taylo-1831765012>.

Thursday February: 20 Democratization: Structural Explanations

- Readings
 - Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy.” *American Political Science Review* 53 (1): 69–105.
- Guiding questions
 - According to Lipset, what does democracy require?
 - What evidence does he use to make his case? Do you see any problems or shortcomings in his research design? If so, how would you improve upon it?

Tuesday, February 25: Democratization: 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.

Thursday, February 27: 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?

March 3: Exam 2 Review

- No readings; review all of your reading and class notes, student reading memos, and come prepared to class with questions to prep for the second exam

March 5: Exam 2

SPRING BREAK- ENJOY!

Tuesday, March 17: 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?
 - Is polarization always bad for democracy?
 - How do societies de-polarize?

Thursday, March 19: Polarization activity

- Read the contentious issue casebook in preparation for class activity

Tuesday, March 24 and Thursday March 26: No class, Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association

Tuesday, March 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?

Thursday, April 2: 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?

Tuesday, April 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?

Thursday, April 9: Democratic erosion

- Readings
 - 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.
- Guiding question
 - According to Bermeo, what does democratic backsliding look like today? How has it changed over time?
 - What is Levitsky and Ziblatt's argument? How would you know if they were wrong? How would you know if they were right?

Tuesday, April 14: Research design break-out session

- We will use class time to work on the research design group project

Thursday, April 16: No class; Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association

Tuesday, April 21: Research designs due

- We will divide up into groups and share our research design projects

Thursday, April 23: Final Exam Review

- No readings; review your reading and lecture notes, reading memos, and come to class with questions for the final exam review