

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2021

INTL 3300

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

T/Th, 12:45pm-2pm, Chapel 101

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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 & COURSE MATERIAL

All readings, lectures, and course materials will be accessible through eLearning Commons (eLC). There are no books or other materials that need to be purchased for this course. 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 or office hours.

REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Reading Memos	5 memos, each worth 5%	25	-
Midterm paper	6-7 pages, double spaced	20	March 5
Course Reflection	3-4 pages, double spaced personal reflection	10	April 29
Research Design Project	Construct a research design (individually or in groups) to answer a political science question	20	April 30
Final Project	Written or some other format	25	May 11

ATTENDANCE

This is a face-to-face course, meaning that everyone can attend every class if they wish. Given the current COVID-19 pandemic however, **in person attendance is not required** and I will not take attendance. You are more than welcome to attend and participate in every class via zoom, and there is no penalty for doing so. Because not everyone has a stable internet connection every day, **virtual attendance is not required either**. All classes will be recorded on zoom and uploaded to eLC after class so that those who were unable to attend can view the lecture.

If you choose to attend class in person, note that UGA requires all students, faculty, and staff to wear face coverings over the nose and mouth while indoors and maintain at least six feet of distance. If you come to class without a face covering, you will be asked to find one or to leave and participate virtually.

OFFICE HOURS

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>

CRITICAL READING MEMOS & OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

The purpose of the critical reading memos is threefold. They will (1) help you digest the main points of the readings, (2) strengthen your writing skills, and (3) sharpen your capacity for analytical thinking. **You will complete five 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 reading(s). Memos should cover at least one of the assigned readings (though you are welcome to cover all of them if you wish), and they should be 1-2 pages in length. A handout with more information will be circulated at the start of the semester. There will not be a sign-up sheet and you are free to write your memos for any five classes where a reading is assigned. **Please submit your memo by noon on the day of class by uploading it to the appropriate assignment folder in eLC** (e.g., "reading memo 1"). Whenever possible, I like to incorporate reactions and questions from students' memos into our class discussion, which is why I ask that you submit them prior to class.

Information about the remaining assignments in the table above will be shared separately as the due dates approach.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Recent studies show that self-assessment and self-grading enhance student learning and creativity. For each assignment, students will assess and grade themselves, and either the teaching assistant or the instructor will provide written feedback and a grade as well. For assignments worth 10% of the final grade or less, the student's grade will stand as the final grade (conditional on students submitting the assignment; if the assignment is not submitted, then the grade is an automatic zero). For assignments worth more than 10% of the final grade, the student's grade will stand as the final grade except where there is more than a 5 point difference (out of 100) between their grade and teaching assistant's or instructor's. In such an event, the student and teaching assistant or instructor will meet with the goal of agreeing on a final grade. If an agreement cannot be reached, then the final assignment grade will be the average of the student's and the grade from the teaching assistant or the instructor.

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.

CLASS RECORDINGS

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course or share any other material, including but not limited to readings, assignments, handouts, class activities, emails, and the FAQ. The syllabus is considered a public document, is available on SPIA's website, and may be shared publicly.

There may be instances where the lecture portion of this course is recorded under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA ACT. Students who have a recording accommodation with the UGA Disability Resource Center agree in writing that they:

- a) Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course;
- b) Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way;
- c) Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study;
- d) Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials;
- e) Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester; and
- f) Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

If you have questions or concerns about recordings under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA ACT, please contact the Director of the Disability Resource Center at eeuw@uga.edu.

Students will lose a full letter grade on their final grade for each instance that they share course material outside of class or violate any of the above terms.

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.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

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 14: Introduction

Tuesday, January 19: Why do we compare?

- Read
 - 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, January 21: 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?

Tuesday, January 26: 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?

Thursday, January 28: Research design wrap up

- Group activity; no reading for today

Tuesday, February 2: 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, February 4: 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.
- 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?

Tuesday, February 9: Research and policy on civil war

- Readings
 - 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
 - Do you agree with Luttwak? Why or why not? Be sure to use evidence to support your position.

Thursday, February 11: 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.

Tuesday, February 16: Political order and violence wrap

- Class activity; no reading for today

Thursday, February 18: 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 23: 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 25: 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, March 2: Measuring democracy

- Read Freedom House country report hand-outs in preparation for class activity

Thursday, March 4: Modernization Theory

- Readings

- Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Papaterra Limongi Neto. 1997. “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” *World Politics*, 49(2): 155-183.
- Guiding questions
 - What do you think the key take-aways or conclusions are of the reading?
 - Do you find the reading persuasive? Why or why not?

Tuesday, March 9: An African Election

- No reading; we will watch, An African Election, a documentary about Ghana’s 2008 election

Thursday, March 11: An African Election

- No reading; we will finish watching, An African Election and have a class discussion that puts the documentary in dialogue with political science scholarship on democracy.

Tuesday, March 16: 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, March 18: Democracy by Mistake

- Reading
 - Treisman, Daniel. 2020. “Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer government.” *American Political Science Review*, 114 (3): 792-810.
- 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?

Tuesday, March 23: 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, March 25: Regime Transition wrap up

- Class activity

Tuesday, March 30: 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?

Thursday, April 1: 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
 - 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 6: Class activity on polarization and democratic erosion

Thursday, April 8: Instructional break, no class

Tuesday, April 13: Civil Society

- Readings:
 - Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49 (3): 401-29.
- Guiding questions
 - Under what conditions might civil society promote democracy?
 - When might civil society help undermine democracy?

Thursday, April 15: Identity politics

- 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 20: Election violence

- Readings
 - Birch, Sarah, Ursula Daxecker, and Kristine Höglund. 2020. "Election Violence: An Introduction." *Journal of Peace Research*, 57 (1): 3-14.
- Guiding questions
 - What is election violence? What are some existing theories that explain why election violence occurs?

Thursday, April 22: Corruption

- Readings
 - Pavão, Nara. 2018. "Corruption as the Only Option: The Limits to Electoral Accountability." *Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 996-1010.
- Guiding questions
 - What is corruption?
 - How and why does it undermine accountable government?
 - Why do voters re-elect corrupt politicians? Under what conditions might citizens vote out corrupt politicians?

Tuesday, April 27: Group research design projects

- No readings; we'll use class time to finalize the research design projects

Thursday, April 29: Final class – **course reflections due**