

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2023

INTL 3300/CRN 25994

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

T/Th, 11:10am-12:25pm, Sanford Hall 313

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do some countries hold elections while others do not? Why do some governments provide security and welfare to their citizens while others struggle to do so? Why does civil war happen in some places but not others? Are some democracies backsliding and if so, why? These questions and others have long animated the field of comparative politics and are among the several of which we will explore this semester. This course aims to provide students with a firm foundation in the subfield of comparative politics, preparing them for more specialized classes 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 and phenomenon. After taking this course, students should be able to distinguish among 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. The course readings have been organized on the “Content” page in eLC by date. **Please note that additional readings appear in some folders.** These are not required and you are not responsible for them, but you are free to review them if you are interested in learning more about the topic.

REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Dates
Section Reflections	Four 2-page reflections on the first four parts of the course	20	January 31; February 21; March 28; April 18
Research Design Activity	In-class group activity	15	January 26
Political Regimes Activity	In-class group activity	15	March 2
Research Design Project	Construct a research design (individually or in groups) to answer a political science question	50	April 28

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is not required. It is strongly encouraged however as class meetings and lectures will not be recorded, and there are two in-class activities that will be graded. If you are not in class on those days, you can complete the activities outside of class.

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 readings, 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>

SECTION REFLECTIONS

The course is divided into five sections. In the last section we will work on the research design project where you will be asked to apply the social science skills you have learned over the semester. The first four sections focus on different topics in political science. At the end of each section, you will be asked to write a 2-page reflection on the readings, lectures, and class discussions. More information on these assignments will be provided separately. Each reflection is worth 5% of your overall course grade. They can be uploaded to the corresponding assignment folder on eLC. **The due dates are:**

Part I Reflection: Tuesday, January 31

Part II Reflection: Tuesday, February 21

Part III Reflection: Tuesday, March 28

Part IV Reflection: Tuesday, April 18

RESEARCH DESIGN PROJECT

The research design project is an opportunity to take the social science skills you've learned over the semester and use them to answer a political science research question. We will use the last two weeks of the semester to work on these projects. You are free to work in groups or individually. More information will be provided separately. Research design projects can also be uploaded to the corresponding assignment folder on eLC.

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 using the provided rubric, and either the teaching assistant or the instructor will provide written feedback and a grade as well. For assignments worth 5% of the final grade or less (i.e., the section reflections), 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 5% 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, using the rubric as a guide. 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 cew@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.

Tuesday, January 10: Introduction and Syllabus Review

Thursday, January 12: Reading like a Political Scientist

- Readings
 - How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps, by Professor Amelia Hoover Green
 - Skim “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions,” by Brendan Nyhan and Jason Feifler, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 32, pp. 303-330, 2010. We will use this paper for an in-class exercise so please bring a copy (electronic or hard copy) to class.
- A brief note
 - This a “no-cost” course, which means there are no expensive textbooks to purchase. The trade-off, however, is that we will be reading political science journal articles and book chapters (for free). These readings can be challenging for those just learning about political science. The Hoover Green article should help you better navigate the course readings, and we’ll spend time in class discussing and practicing how to effectively work your way through a journal article.

Part I: Research Design

Tuesday, January 17: Why do we compare?

- Readings
 - 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 19: 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 24: 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 26: Research design wrap up and **graded in-class activity**

- We'll be doing an in-class activity today. Please review the readings and your notes from the previous two weeks to prepare.

Part II: Political Order and Violence

Tuesday, January 31: The State ***Part I Reflection Due***

- Reading break
- This class will be heavier on the lecture-side and will cover different conceptualizations and theories of the state and state formation

Thursday, February 2: 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?
 - 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 7: What explains civil war onset?

- Readings
 - Lawrence, Adria. 2010. "Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings against Colonial Rule." *International Security* 35 (2): 88-122.
- Guiding questions
 - What are Lawrence's critiques of existing theories of civil war onset?
 - What research design does Lawrence rely on? What are the strengths of this approach and its shortcomings?

Thursday, February 9: International Interventions

- 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.

Tuesday, February 14: 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.
- 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 16: Review of political order and violence

- No readings for today
- Review your notes from the readings and class and come prepared to class with questions and thoughts for your Part II reflection

Part III: Democracy and Development

Tuesday, February 21: How should we conceptualize "development"? ***Part II Reflection Due***

- 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?
 - 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?

Thursday, February 23: Theories of 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 are institutions?
 - 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?

Tuesday, February 28: Conceptualizing different political regimes

- Reading
 - Diamond, Larry. 2002. “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes.” *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21-35.
- 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?

Thursday, March 2: Measuring democracy

- Read Freedom House country report hand-outs in preparation for **graded in-class activity**
- Musgrave, Paul. 2021. “Political Scientists Turned a Blind Eye to America’s Democratic Failures.” *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2021, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/18/political-scientists-turned-a-blind-eye-to-americas-democratic-failures/>

Spring Break, March 6-10

*No class meetings on Tuesday, March 14 and Thursday, March 16. Professor Turnbull will be at a conference. Review the readings and your lecture notes from the beginning of the semester.

Tuesday, March 21: Theories of democracy

- 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?

Thursday, 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?

Part IV: Hot Topics in Comparative Politics

Tuesday, March 28: Democratic erosion ***Part III Reflection Due***

- 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?

Thursday, 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?

Tuesday, April 4: Election violence

- Readings
 - Klaus, Kathleen. 2017. "Contentious Land Narratives and the Nonescalation of Election Violence: Evidence from Kenya's Coast Region." *African Studies Review*, 60 (2): 51-72.
- Guiding questions
 - What is election violence? What are some existing theories that explain why election violence occurs?

Thursday, April 6: 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 11: Political misinformation and fake news

- Readings
 - Osmundsen, Mathias, Alexander Bor, Peter Bjerregaard Vahlstrup, Anja Bechmann, and Michael Bang Petersen. 2021. "Partisan Polarization is the

Primary Psychological Motivation behind Political Fake News Sharing on Twitter.” *American Political Science Review* 115 (3): 999-1015.

- Guiding questions
 - What evidence do the authors marshal to test their argument? What is their methodological approach?
 - What are the different hypotheses the authors examine?

Thursday, April 13: Criminal politics

- Readings
 - Barnes, Nicholas. 2021. “The Logic of Criminal Territorial Control: Military Intervention in Rio de Janeiro.” *Comparative Political Studies* 55 (5): 789-831.
Be sure to read the appendix as well.
- Guiding questions
 - What kind of evidence does the author rely on to support his argument? How did he gather this evidence?
 - What do ethical research practices look like?

Part V: Working like a Political Scientist

The final two weeks of the semester will be devoted to working on your research design projects.

Tuesday, April 18: Research design project ***Part IV Reflection Due***

Thursday, April 20: Research design project

Tuesday, April 25: Research design project

Thursday, April 27: Research design project and class wrap-up