

# Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2023

INTL 3300/CRN 25326

Department of International Affairs  
University of Georgia

Class Meetings: T/Th, 2:20-3:35pm, IA Building 115

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 12-2pm, IA Building 312

## 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 assignments are all structured with this goal in mind.

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. **Please complete all readings assigned for the day before coming to class.** The course schedule below includes guiding questions for each class to help you navigate the reading and pull out key ideas and

arguments. You are not required to answer them, they are merely meant to help you think about the reading.

### REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Dates
Quizzes	Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade	40	September 7 October 5 October 31 November 16
Measurement Activity	In-class group activity	5	October 17
*Documentary reflection	4 pages double spaced reflection on An African Election	10	November 28
*Active participation and attendance	3 pages double spaced reflection on your participation	15	December 1
*Article critique	6-8 pages double spaced constructive critique of one of the course readings	20	December 11
*Discussion leader	Working with a partner(s), you will lead the discussion for the day's reading for one class; 2 page outline should be submitted to the instructor no later than noon the day before class	10	-

Note: Assignments with an asterisk include a self-grade from students.

### QUIZZES

There will be four quizzes, each worth 10% of your final grade. We will spend time reviewing the material to prepare for each one. The goal of the quizzes is not to “catch you” for not knowing small details in the readings or lectures but rather, to help you absorb and commit to your long-term memory key concepts and arguments. This is especially important if you are interested in taking upper-level political science classes.

### ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to the quizzes and your active participation, you will complete four other assignments this semester. More information will be provided separately, but broadly, these assignments are all meant to prepare you for upper-level political science classes, especially in comparative politics.

The measurement activity is an in-class, group activity on October 17. Working in groups, you'll review three country reports from Freedom House and then "score" the level of freedom of each. We'll compare group scores with Freedom House at the end of class. This exercise will help us think concretely about how to measure big, messy concepts such as "democracy." This is an important and necessary skill for political scientists.

Toward the end of the semester, we'll watch An African Election, a documentary of Ghana's 2008 election. After a class discussion on November 28, you'll write up a 3 page, double spaced, documentary reflection that also draws on our course readings and lectures on democracy and democratization. This assignment will help you connect theory to the world around us.

Working with a partner(s), you will serve as a discussion leader once during the semester. Discussion leaders will open discussion by summarizing the argument and evidence for the reading and asking clarification and critical questions for discussion. Discussion leaders will send a 2 page outline of their comments to the instructor no later than noon the day before class. This assignment will help you to critically engage with political science research.

As a final paper, you will write a constructive critique of one of the course readings (it cannot be the same one you served as a discussion leader for). By the end of the semester, the readings, lectures, and class discussions should prepare you to constructively engage with political science research. This exercise should make you feel more confident and comfortable digesting and evaluating argument and evidence; this will be especially important for those interested in taking upper-level political science classes.

### **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is mandatory and you are expected to be on time. Points will be docked from your participation grade if you are late (even once). However, nobody should come to class if they are sick. Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Beyond that, students will have to submit documentation (for example, a doctor's note), to avoid losing participation points.

Participation is more than showing up to class on time. It also entails asking questions during lectures, participating in class activities, sharing discussion questions with the class, responding to discussion leaders' questions, and sharing your own thoughts, perspectives, and insights. We are a small group, and actively participating in class is important for keeping the class interesting, fun, and most importantly, helping each other learn. Put otherwise, the quality of this class will rise and fall with your participation, and we all have an obligation to come to each class prepared and ready to engage with one another.

If you have any questions or concerns about participation, please speak with Dr. Turnbull.

At the end of the semester, you will submit a reflection (3 pages, double spaced) of your participation over the course of the semester, and include a self-grade for your participation. To help you complete this assignment, you are strongly encouraged to keep a log of your participation after each class (a template will be provided on eLC along with guidelines and rubrics for other

assignments). Broadly, you should consider whether and how your participation improved the class discussion. For example, you might ask a clarification question about the reading or lecture, offer a discussion question for the class, connect the course material to current events, respond to a classmate's question, respond to the guiding questions in the course schedule, or share your critique or reaction to the reading or lecture material.

### **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>

### **ASSESSMENT AND GRADING**

Recent studies show that self-assessment and self-grading enhance student learning and creativity. For some assignments (those marked with an asterisk in the table above), students will assess and grade themselves using the provided rubric, and 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 and meeting minimum guidelines as laid out in the grading rubric; if the assignment is not submitted, then the grade is an automatic zero). Where there is a more than a 5 point difference (out of 100) between the student's and the instructor's grade, the student and the 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 instructor's.

We will use the following scale to assign grades at the end of the semester:

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

### **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. Moreover, we are small class and our engagement impacts the overall learning environment. Laptops and tablets are allowed as long as they do not take away from our class discussion. If and when that happens, they will no longer be allowed.

### **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 [eeew@uga.edu](mailto:eeew@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, August 17: Introduction and Syllabus Review

Tuesday, August 22: Reading like a Political Scientist and **Sign-up for discussion leaders**

- 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. The course schedule also includes guiding questions to help you navigate the reading.

### **Part I: Research Design**

Thursday, August 24: Why do political scientists compare? Where did the subfield of “comparative politics” get its name from?

- 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?

Tuesday, August 29: 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, August 31: 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?
  - What other threats to causal inference are discussed in the reading?

Tuesday, September 5: Research design review and quiz prep

- Review your lecture and reading notes

## **Part II: Political Order and Violence**

Thursday, September 7: The State and **Quiz 1: Research Design**

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

September 12 and 15: No class. Professor Turnbull will be in London for a conference. Use this time to read “Greed and Grievance in Civil War” for September 19, a long and dense reading.

Tuesday, September 19: 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?

Thursday, September 21: 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?
  - Thinking back to the Collier and Hoeffler reading, what are some of the differences between that paper and the one from Lawrence?

Tuesday, September 26: 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.

Thursday, September 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.
- Guiding questions
  - Do warlords ever have a right to govern? If so, when?
  - Are “state rulers” any different from “warlords”? If so, how?

Tuesday, October 3: Political order and violence review and quiz prep

- Review your reading and lecture notes and come to class with questions

### **Part III: Democracy and Development**

Thursday, October 5: How should we conceptualize “development”? **Quiz 2: Political Order and Violence**

- 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://brighthemag.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?

Tuesday, October 10: 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?

Thursday, October 12: 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?

Tuesday, October 17: Measuring democracy

- Read Freedom House country report hand-outs in preparation for **graded in-class activity**
- Read 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/>
  - Did Musgrave's article make you think differently about American democracy? If so, how so?

Thursday, October 19: Theories of democratization

- Reading back; this lecture will cover different theories of democratization

Tuesday, October 24: 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?

Thursday, October 26: Review conceptualizing and theorizing democracy and quiz prep

- No readings; review your reading and lecture notes on democracy

#### **Part IV: Hot Topics in Comparative Politics**

Tuesday, October 31: Democratic erosion and **Quiz 3: Making Democracy**

- No readings
- After today’s quiz, we’ll spend time discussing whether and how theories of democracy might explain democratic decline

Thursday, November 2: Norms and democratic backsliding

- 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, November 7: Resisting democratic erosion

- Readings
  - Gamboa, Laura. 2017. “Opposition at the Margins: Strategies Against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela.” *Comparative Politics* 49(4): pp. 457–477.
- Guiding Questions
  - What strategies can opposition actors rely on to protect democracy?
  - How does Gamboa know what she knows? What methods does she rely on? Thinking back to Part I of the course, what are the strengths and weaknesses of these methods?

Thursday, November 9: Polarization

- No reading for today; this lecture will cover definitions and theories of polarization; we’ll also brainstorm ideas about how societies might depolarize.

Tuesday, November 14: Criminal politics and quiz prep

- 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. We will discuss field research and ethics on November 16.**
- 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?
  - To prepare for quiz 4, review your notes from the Levitsky and Ziblatt (November 2) and Gamboa (November 7) readings and take practice quiz questions

Thursday, November 16: Field research and **Quiz 4: Democratic Erosion**

- No readings; prepare for quiz 4
- After the quiz, we'll discuss field research and research ethics, using Barnes' appendix as a guide

Tuesday, November 21: An African Election

- We will watch a documentary of Ghana's 2008 election, *An African Election*, available on through UGA's library on Kanopy

Tuesday, November 28: What is democracy? What makes a democracy strong? What can citizens do to protect democracy?

- For our final meeting, we'll discuss different definitions of democracy and how to protect it, drawing on our class readings, lecture and discussion, and the documentary from November 21.