INTL 8374: Comparative Political Behavior
Spring 2024

Dr. Shane P. Singh
Office: 305 International Affairs Building (202 Herty Drive)
Office Hours: Mondays, 12:30-2:30PM
Email: singh@uga.edu
Course Webpage: eLC

Class Meeting Time: Fridays, 3:00-6:00PM

Class Location: 117 International Affairs Building (202 Herty Drive)

Goal of the Course: This course will cover a variety of topics in the realm of comparative political behavior, including the formation and consequences of partisan identification and political attitudes, the causes and consequences of voter turnout, spatial models of voting, the influence of foreign policy and conflict on vote choice, economic voting, and parties’ vote seeking strategies. The readings will help to (re)familiarize you with a variety of methodological techniques that are commonly used to assess theories of comparative political behavior. Our universe of cases will generally be individuals and parties in democratic countries, though we may sometimes discuss non-democracies.

Throughout the course we will pay special attention to the interplay between political institutions, contextual factors, and behavioral outcomes. We will think of countries as examples of certain political systems with certain institutional features; and being embedded in a particular country should influence an individual’s or party’s behavior.

By the end of the course, students should be able to address questions including, but not limited to, the following:

• Why do individuals turn out to vote or abstain from voting?
• Why do people vote for certain parties?
  ○ Relatedly, do institutional features and political context moderate the vote decision process?
• How important is the economy to political behavior?
• How important is foreign policy and conflict to political behavior?
• Do theories of political behavior, many of which were originally developed in the United States, travel well across borders, or do we need to formulate specific theories for particular countries or regions?

Required Readings:


Several journal articles, all of which are available online.

There are numerous readings on the syllabus marked with an asterisk. These are optional. I include them for three main reasons. First, if you read some or all of these each week, you will come to class extra prepared to contribute to discussion. Second, some of these readings provide background information that will help you understand the assigned readings. Third, if you are particularly interested in a given topic, the optional readings will help you broaden your knowledge in that area.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

General Participation (10%): I will rarely lecture in this class. Each class will consist of discussion. As this is a graduate seminar, just showing up is not enough. I expect that class participation will be informed participation; this implies that you will have done all of the required readings ahead of time. You should come to class prepared to discuss these readings and related research possibilities.

Lead Participation (10%): In at least one class period this semester you will be a “lead participant.” If you are not a PhD student, you may be partnered with one or two other students. Lead participants will briefly present a summary of the materials assigned for the week and will lead the class in discussing and critiquing them. When you lead class discussion you should bring with you to class or email to everyone ahead of time a handout. This should contain at least four general questions aimed at facilitating class discussion.

Weekly Analyses (35%): For each class period, with some exceptions noted below, students should write an analysis of at least three of that week’s required readings. These must be uploaded to eLC by 9AM on the day of class. You may miss two weekly analyses without penalty. The goal is for you to critically assess the assigned readings. These analyses provide you an opportunity to go beyond summarizing the readings and to reflect on their implications for comparative politics, their strengths, and their weaknesses. You can use your weekly analyses to aid you during class discussion. For each reading you engage, your weekly analysis should provide or reflect upon much of the following:

- **Upshot**
  - Provide a three-sentence summary of the upshot of the reading.

- **Theory**
  - Does the work make an original theoretical contribution?
  - Does it apply a theory developed elsewhere to a different outcome?
  - What are the assumptions of the theory? Are they plausible?
  - Do the hypotheses follow logically from the theory?

- **Research Design**
  - What is/are the main data source(s)? Are the data appropriate for answering the research question?
  - Give a short description of the dependent variable and the key independent variable(s). How are these measured? Do these measures
adequately correspond to the theoretical concepts they are intended to capture?
  o What empirical method(s) did the author(s) use to test their expectations? Should they have used a different method?
  o How do the authors causally identify the effect(s) of their key independent variable(s)? If it is a (quasi-)experimental design, is it internally and externally valid? If it is an observational design, do they account for all confounders?

- Empirical Analysis and Findings
  o Are the results interpreted correctly?
  o Do the findings correspond with expectations?
  o Are the findings presented in an easily interpretable way? If not, how could the findings be better presented?
  o Are there other observable implications of the theory that could be further examined?
  o What are some potential directions for future research?

- Discussion Questions
  o Construct at least two discussion questions that we can deliberate in class.

**Research Paper and Presentation (45%):** The primary assignment of the course is an original research paper. You should develop and empirically test a theory directly related to one of the topics we cover in class. The empirical test may be quantitative (it can be observational or (quasi-)experimental) or qualitative. It is important that you put forth an original theoretical argument and explicitly state the hypothesis or hypotheses derived from this argument. To this end, **your paper must have a section called “Theory and Hypotheses.”** Your paper must also have an introduction, a literature review, a discussion of variable operationalization and measurement, results, and a conclusion. The style of the paper should be that of an article published in a recent issue of the *American Journal of Political Science*. A one-page summary of your research paper will be due midway through the semester. These summaries may be discussed in class.

You will present your paper toward the end of the semester. Presentations should, at a minimum, include the following:

- An overview of the research question
- A discussion of how the research fits with the extant literature
- A description of the theory and hypotheses
- A description of the research design
- A presentation of the (preliminary) empirical analyses and findings
- A discussion of the (preliminary) findings and their implications

Presenters may wish to incorporate the feedback and suggestions of the class into their final paper.
Grade Scale:

- >93%: A
- 90-92.99%: A-
- 87-89.99%: B+
- 83-86.99%: B
- 80-82.99%: B-
- 77-79.99%: C+
- 73-76.99%: C
- 70-72.99%: C-
- 60-69.99%: D
- <60%: F

Late/Missed Assignments: Missed assignments will result in a zero without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Students will be penalized for late assignments; 20% of the grade for each day late without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency.

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.

Academic Integrity: The academic honesty policy of the university is supplemented (not replaced) by an Honor Code which was adopted by the Student Government Association and approved by the University Council May 1, 1997, and provides: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” All students agree to abide by this code by signing the UGA Admissions Application.

I encourage you to use AI tools to explore the field and help you study. However, you must take full responsibility for any AI-generated materials you incorporate in your course assignments. Information must be verified, ideas must still be attributed, and facts must be true.
Readings and Course Schedule: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Readings with a “*” in front are optional.

WEEK 1
January 12: No Class (SPSA)

WEEK 2
January 19: Welcome and Introduction
Go over syllabus; no Weekly Analysis this week


WEEK 3
January 26: Sources of Public Opinion and Attitude Formation

Lead Participant(s): Kathleen Abernethy


**WEEK 4**  
**February 2: Voter Turnout**

*Lead Participant(s):* Gabriela Greilinger


**WEEK 5**
**February 9: Partisan Identification and Its Sources**

*Lead Participant(s): Eduardo Monteiro Burkle*


**WEEK 6**

**February 16: Spatial Models of Vote Choice**

*Lead Participant(s): Yuge Wang*


WEEK 7
February 23: Conditional Spatial Models of Vote Choice

Lead Participant(s): Bonkyu Lim


**WEEK 8**  
**March 1: Economic Voting**

Lead Participant(s): Kathleen Abernethy


**WEEK 9**  
**March 8: No Class (Spring Break)**

**WEEK 10**  
**March 15: No Class**
WEEK 11
March 22: Conditional Models of Economic Voting
Upload a one-page research paper summary to eLC at least one day before this class, and be prepared to give a short presentation on your idea. We may discuss each summary as a group.

Lead Participant(s): Gabriela Greilinger


**WEEK 12**

**March 29: How Foreign Policy and Conflict Affect Attitudes and Behavior**

*Pick presentation days.*

*Lead Participant(s): Bonkyu Lim*


WEEK 13
April 5: No Class (MPSA)
WEEK 14
April 12: Attitudes Toward Democracy

Lead Participant(s): Eduardo Monteiro Burkle


**WEEK 15**

**April 19: How Parties Respond to the Electorate and Seek Votes**

*Lead Participant(s): Yuge Wang*


**WEEK 16**  
April 26: Presentation of Research Papers (Last Day of Class)

**FINALS WEEK**  
May 3: Research papers due on eLC by 11:59PM.