

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2024

INTL 3300/CRN 64537

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

T/Th, 11:10am-12:25pm, Caldwell Hall 302

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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
Quizzes	Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade	40	February 1 February 27 March 26 April 16
Documentary Responses	2 memos, ~2 pages each, double spaced	20	February 15 April 9
Political Regimes Activity	In-class group activity	10	March 14
Research Design Project	Construct a research design (individually or in groups) to answer a political science question	30	April 26

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is not required. It is strongly encouraged however as class meetings and lectures will not be recorded, and there is one in-class activity 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>

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.

DOCUMENTARY RESPONSES

We will watch two documentaries that help illustrate how political science theories play out (or not) in the real world. These documentaries are available for free on Kanopy through UGA libraries or Youtube. In response to each one, you will write a 2 page memo that answers

questions laid out in the course schedule below. You will bring these memos to the next class to help inform our discussion about the topic at hand.

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 meeting minimum guidelines and 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.

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. 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 9: Introduction and Syllabus Review

Thursday, January 11: 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 16: 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 18: Independent review

- **No class today** (Professor Turnbull will be out of town); review the lecture slides and your class notes on how political scientists think about causal inference and different threats to causal inference. For many of you, this will be new material, so please take this opportunity to absorb it and come to the next class with clarification questions.

Tuesday, January 23: 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 25: 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 30: Research design review and prep for quiz 1

- No readings; review your notes for Part I of the course to prepare for a review session ahead of quiz 1

Part II: Political Order and Violence

Thursday, February 1: The State and **QUIZ 1**

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

Tuesday, February 6: 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, February 8: 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?

Tuesday, February 13: Documentary viewing: The Way of the Warlord

- You are free to come to class or watch the documentary on your own, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-OqRTG0n9I>
- After the documentary, write up your thoughts to the following questions and bring to our next meeting:
 - Does the documentary support some or all of Luttwak’s arguments in “Give War a Chance?” Challenge them? How so?
 - Do you see support for some theories of civil war we’ve discussed in class so far? Relationships or dynamics that these theories have missed?
 - How should international actors respond to civil war and violence?

Thursday, February 15: International Interventions and **DOCUMENTARY RESPONSE 1 DUE**

- 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 20: 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 22: 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

Part III: Democracy and Development

Tuesday, February 27: How should we conceptualize “development”? and **QUIZ 2**

- 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 29: 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?

Spring Break

Tuesday, March 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?

Thursday, March 14: 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?

Tuesday, March 19: 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 21: Governments and electoral systems and Quiz 3 prep

- 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 26: Democratic erosion and **QUIZ 3**

- 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 28: 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?

Tuesday, April 2: 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 4: Independent review

- No meeting (Professor Turnbull will be out of town for a conference). Review your notes, catch up on reading, and/or get a head start on watching An African Election.

Tuesday, April 9: Documentary viewing, An African Election

- You are free to watch the documentary (available on Kanopy through UGA libraries) or come to class to view
- After the documentary, write down your thoughts to the following questions and bring to the next class
 - What factors do you think increase the risk of election-related violence?
 - What factors do you think restrain or reduce the risk of election-related violence?

Thursday, April 11: Election violence, quiz 4 prep, and **DOCUMENTARY RESPONSE 2 DUE**

- 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?

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 16: Research design project and **QUIZ 4**

- By the end of this class, you (and your team, if working in a group) should have drafted the following components of the final project:

- 1) Write out your hypotheses; one sentence each. Then, in a paragraph or two, summarize the mechanisms proposed by Levitsky and Ziblatt (how do mutual toleration and forbearance protect against democratic erosion?) (~15 minutes)
- 2) Conceptualize your dependent and explanatory variables. Specifically, how will you define mutual toleration and forbearance? How will you define democratic backsliding? (To answer this last question, you will probably need to define democracy first). (~20 minutes)
- 3) Figure out how to measure your dependent and explanatory variables. What are good indicators of these two norms? Of democratic backsliding. (Make sure to avoid a tautology; for instance, do not define a healthy democracy by the strength of these two norms). (~25 minutes)
- Start thinking about your answer to question (4) in the final project guidelines. Aim to have a draft answer by the end of class (~15 minutes)

Thursday, April 18: Research design project

- By the end of this class, you (and your team, if working in a group) should have drafted the following components of the final project:
 - Finish drafting your answer to question (4) about your methodological approach (~20 minutes)
 - Draft your answer to question (5), which will depend on your answer to question (4) (~30 minutes)
 - Start drafting your answer to question (6) – which again, depends on your answer to questions (4) and (5) (~25 minutes)

Tuesday, April 23: Research design project and **LAST CLASS**

- By the end of this class, you (and your team, if working in a group) should have drafted the following components of the final project:
 - Finish drafting your answer to question (6) (~20 minutes)
 - Draft your answer to question (7) (~40 minutes)
 - Review your project relative to the grading rubric (at the end of the final project guidelines). What areas would you like to revise and improve? Make a revision plan to execute during the next class (~15 minutes).

Thursday, April 25: No meeting; Professor Turnbull out of town for a conference