

INTL 3300: Introduction to Comparative Politics

University of Georgia, Department of International Affairs

Course Instructor: Dr. William Acosta

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Meeting Time 12:40-1:30 in Journalism 513

Office Hours by appointment in-person Candler Hall 216 or Zoom

Course Overview

In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding the diverse political systems and governance structures that exist across nations is more important than ever. Laws and governance in one state can affect political outcomes in another. The study of comparative politics gives us the skills and tools needed to understand and compare these systems. This course will provide students with a strong foundational understanding of the subfield of comparative politics.

The course is divided into two sections. In the first section, we will discuss the structure of politics across the world, examining various political institutions, cultures, and practices. In the second section, we will explore how these concepts apply to real-world cases, analyzing the political systems and dynamics of different countries. Through this approach, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of comparative politics and its application in understanding global political phenomena.

Required Text

- Mahler, Gregory S. 2019. *Comparative Politics: Exploring Concepts and Institutions Across Nations*. 6th ed. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Available for Free via UGA Library

- There will also be assigned readings through the semester. They will either be freely accessed online, or I will provide them via eLC.
- Please keep up with current events. We will discuss current events often and discuss them in class.

Grading

- Your final course grade will be determined by the following assessments:
- Exams (50%)
 - There will be two exams in this course. Lectures and class discussions are intended to supplement the readings. Exams will draw primarily from the readings. The exams are not cumulative. Please note the dates of midterm and final exams. Both exams will be administered via eLC.
- Quizzes (10%)
 - There will be five quizzes throughout the semester. All quizzes will be administered via eLC.
- Participation (10%)
 - Simply showing up to class is not enough to earn a high participation grade. I expect you to play an active role in class discussions. I will also take regular attendance, and I hope to learn all your names. I will also post discussion questions on eLC at the end of each week in preparation for next week. These discussion questions are intended to serve as a guide for our discussion. I encourage you to develop your own questions and post them on eLC or bring them up in class. This is a recommendation not a requirement.

- If you do not feel well, do not come to class! Unfortunately, COVID is making a comeback with cases in GA higher than the national average. If you feel sick, please let me know and I will provide accommodation.
- Final Project (30%)
 - After the Midterm, I will provide you with a prompt for your final project. The simplest form of this project could be a 5–7-page paper, but if you would like to do something else, such as a podcase, video essay, photography project, or other creative endeavor, I will allow you to do so. If you choose an option other than a paper, your project can be collaborative, as long as the nature and necessity of the proposal is fully expressed in your proposal. For example, podcasts work better with more than one person. I will provide a document with full instructions after the Midterm.

Grade Distribution

- A+ = 97-100
- A = 90-96
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 80-86
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 70-76
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 60-66
- F = 0-59

Policies and Resources

Rules for Writing

When writing papers for this class, you should follow these rules. Failure to do so could result in a reduction of your grade.

- All papers should be double-spaced and in 12-point font, printed on pages with 1” margins all around.

- Title pages, graphs, tables, figures, references, appendices, etc. do not count toward your paper's length.
- You are required to use the American Political Science Association (APSA) style format for your papers. The full style guide can be found on our class's eLC page.

Cell Phones and Other Noise-Making Devices

- All cell phones and other devices that make noise must be turned off or put on silent/vibrate upon entering the classroom. Repeated unnecessary disruptions of class caused by such devices may negatively affect a student's grade

Academic Honesty

As a University of Georgia student, you are expected to adhere to the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must comply with the standards outlined in "A Culture of Honesty," which can be found at:

www.uga.edu/honesty. Ignorance of the academic honesty policy is not an acceptable excuse for violations. If you have questions related to course assignments or the academic honesty policy, please direct them to the instructor. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be referred to Judicial Affairs, as mandated by university policy.

The most common issue of academic dishonesty encountered is plagiarism. Plagiarism involves copying from any source material, whether direct quotations or paraphrased ideas, published or unpublished without giving proper credit. To avoid plagiarism, always ensure that you properly cite all sources used in your work.

The use of artificial intelligence in this course is prohibited. While AI can be a useful tool, I believe you will be better off developing your own writing skills than supplementing it with

artificial intelligence. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence is a violation of UGA's Culture of Honesty.

Class Discussion and Debates

Political debates and discussions can become heated. Passion is fine, but respect is necessary. All students are expected to be courteous and respectful to their classmates.

Communicating with Me

My primary method of communicating with you outside of class time and office hours will be through email. Each of you has been assigned a university email address and you are responsible for regularly checking this account. Important information such as assignment changes, important dates, modifications to the class schedule, and other valuable updates will be sent to this email account throughout the semester.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Georgia is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities, as well as reasonable modifications for students with disabilities. Students requiring academic accommodation should request these services from the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located at 114 Clark Howell Hall. For more information, visit www.drc.uga.edu.

Well-being Resources

- UGA Well-being Resources promotes student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community. Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit Student Care & Outreach. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the

most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program, which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

- UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help. Below are some key resources available to you:
 - Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
 - Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
 - University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
 - Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
 - Health Promotion/Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
 - Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu
 - Additional Information: Including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting well-being.uga.edu.

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time. If I do, I will inform you via eLC and via email.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Course (August 14-16)

- Introduction to course

Week 2: Comparative Political Analysis: An Introduction (August 19-23)

- Read: Chapter 1 – Why do we study politics?
- PBS NewsHour. 2023. "Netanyahu Once Again Prime Minister with Most Far-Right Government in Israel's History." PBS, January 1.
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/netanyahu-once-again-prime-minister-with-most-far-right-government-in-israels-history>.
- Quiz 1 (August 23)

Week 3: Constitutions (August 26-30)

- Read: Chapter 2 – Constitutions

Week 4: Legislatures (September 2-6)

- Read: Chapter 3 - Legislatures
- Quiz 2 (September 6)

Week 5: Executives (September 9-13)

- Read: Chapter 4 – Executives

Week 6: Judiciaries (September 16-20)

- Read: Chapter 5 - Judiciaries

Week 7: Political Behavior and the Political Environment (September 23-27)

- Read: Chapter 6 - Political Behavior and the Political Environment

Week 8: The Institutions of Civil Society (September 30 - October 4)

- Read: Chapter 7 - The Institutions of Civil Society
- Quiz 3 (October 4)

Week 9: China (October 7-11)

- Read: Chapter 8 - China
- Midterm Exam (October 7)

Week 10: France (October 14-18)

- Read: Chapter 9 - France

Week 11: Germany (October 21-25)

- Read: Chapter 10 - Germany
- Quiz 4 (October 25)

Week 12: India (October 28 - November 1)

- Read: Chapter 11 - India

Week 13: Kenya (November 4-8)

- Read: Chapter 12 - Kenya

Week 14: Mexico (November 11-15)

- Read: Chapter 13 - Mexico
- Quiz 5 (November 15)

Week 15: Russia (November 18-22)

- Read: Chapter 14 - Russia

Week 16: Thanksgiving Break (November 25-29)

- No Classes

Week 17: (December 2)

- Review and Prepare for Finals

Finals Week

- Final Exam December 9 12:00-3:00