

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2025

INTL 3300/CRN 25994

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

T/Th, 2:20-3:35pm, Peabody Hall 115

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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, lecture slides, 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 by date on the “Content” page in eLC. **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 read all assigned readings for the day before coming to class. You can find the assigned readings by checking the course schedule below.**

REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Dates
Quizzes	Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade	40	January 30 February 25 April 8 April 24
International Interventions Essay	6 pages, 1.5 spacing, excluding references	15	March 13
Political Regimes Activity	In-class group activity	10	March 24
Research Design Brainstorming	In-class group activity	10	April 14
Research Design Project	Construct a research design (individually or in groups) to answer a political science question	25	May 5

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is not required and will not be recorded. **There is no need to email the instructor or the teaching assistant if you cannot make it to class.** Attendance and participation are 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 individually.

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.

QUIZZES

There will be four **in-class** quizzes, each worth 10% of your final grade. We will spend time in class 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.

ESSAY ON INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

During Part II of the course on political order and violence, we will watch a brief documentary and read a short piece in Foreign Affairs, both on international interventions. These policy-oriented pieces are meant to help illustrate how political science theories play out (or not) in the real world,

and raise important questions about the goals and ethics of international interventions. You will write a 6 page essay, 1.5 spacing, excluding references, that responds to a set of questions. These questions, and the rubric, will be provided separately.

GRADED IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

About half-way through the course, we will complete two in-class activities. The first (Political Regimes Activity) asks you to assess the political regime in three different countries. The second (a brainstorming activity for the final research design project), asks you to brainstorm measurements for different concepts in a selected reading from Levitsky and Ziblatt's, *How Democracies Die*. Guidelines and rubrics for each activity will be provided separately.

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. You are free to work in groups or individually. More information will be provided separately.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Recent studies show that self-assessment and self-grading enhance student learning and creativity. For each assignment (except for the quizzes), 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. In the event of a significant difference between the student's self-grade and the instructor's (3 points or more out of 100), the student and the instructor or teaching assistant 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

LATE POLICY

All assignments should be submitted by their deadline. For each day an assignment is late, 10% will be deducted from the grade; assignments will **not be accepted** after three days past the due date.

This policy will be strictly enforced. We are a large class with one teaching assistant, and it is important for students to submit their work on time so that the instructor and the teaching assistant can return assignments in a timely fashion.

Exceptions will be made in the event of a serious illness or emergency **and with appropriate documentation** (i.e., a doctor's note or a dean's note). Having a heavy course load, an internship, or multiple deadlines in one week, etc., are not acceptable reasons for submitting an assignment late. Students are strongly encouraged to note important deadlines on their calendar, and to manage their own time so that they can meet those deadlines.

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 ew@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. For most classes, guiding questions are included to help you navigate the reading and extract the main points. These are not homework questions, and you're welcome to ignore them if you find them distracting or unhelpful.

Tuesday, January 14: Introduction and Syllabus Review

Thursday, January 16: 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 reading 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 21: 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 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?

Tuesday, January 28: Theory, Hypotheses, and Evidence

- No readings for today

Thursday, January 30: Quiz 1 prep

- 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

Tuesday, February 4: The State and **QUIZ 1**

- Reading break
- After the quiz, this class will be heavier on the lecture-side and will cover different conceptualizations and theories of the state and state formation

Thursday, 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?

Tuesday, February 11: 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 13: 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, February 18: International Interventions

- Note: Today’s class will focus more on policy and less on political science scholarship. For those interested in a career in foreign affairs and/or international security, hopefully today’s materials and discussions are helpful.
- Before coming to class, read:
 - First, read: 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>
- In class, we’ll watch the brief documentary (~30 minutes), “The Way of the Warlord,” available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20180713-reporters-plus-central-african-republic-way-warlords>
- After the documentary, we’ll discuss the following in class to help you prepare for your essay on international interventions.
 - 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 20: Quiz 2 Prep

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

Tuesday, February 25: **Quiz 2**

Thursday, February 27: Essay writing workshop

- No readings for today; we'll use class time as a writing workshop for the international interventions essay

Spring Break

Part III: Democracy and Development

Tuesday, March 11: Essay writing workshop

- No readings for today; we'll use class time to finalize and submit the international interventions essay

Thursday, March 13: No class meeting today; Professor Turnbull will be away at a conference

Tuesday, March 18: How should we conceptualize democracy and other 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 20: Measuring democracy

- Read the Freedom House country report in preparation for **graded in-class activity on political regimes**

Tuesday, March 25: Democracy and Development

- No readings for today; today's class will be lecture heavy

Thursday, March 27: Governments and electoral systems

- Note: We will spend part of class today discussing the final project. Please review the guidelines and rubric prior to coming to class.
- Reading
 - Lijphart, Arend. 1991. "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 2(1): 72-84.

Tuesday, April 1: Quiz 3 Prep

- No readings for today; review your notes for Part III and come to class prepared with questions

Thursday, April 3: No class meeting today; Professor Turnbull will be away at a conference

Tuesday, April 8: **Quiz 3**

Part IV: Hot Topics in Comparative Politics

Thursday, April 10: Democratic erosion + **graded in-class activity**

- Readings
 - Chapter 5 from Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future*. New York: Random House.
 - We will use part of class time today for an in-class graded activity on how to measure the concepts in today's reading.
- Guiding questions
 - What is Levitsky and Ziblatt's argument? How would you know if they were wrong? How would you know if they were right?

Tuesday, April 15: 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, April 17: Polarization

- Readings
 - Baron et al., "Couples Therapy for a Divided America: Assessing the Effects of Reciprocal Group Reflection on Partisan Polarization." Available at: <https://osf.io/preprints/osf/3x7z8>
- Guiding Questions
 - What is polarization?
 - According to the authors, why does it undermine democracy?
 - Is polarization always bad for democracy?

Tuesday, April 22: Quiz 4 Prep

- No readings for today; review your notes for Part IV and come to class prepared with questions

Thursday, April 24: **QUIZ 4**