

Introduction to Comparative Politics INTL 3300
Fall 2025
The University of Georgia
Department of International Affairs
T and Th 11:10 a.m. to 12:25 p.m. Candler 214
Student drop-in hours: W 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and by appointment
Dr. Markus M. L. Crepaz (mcrepaz@uga.edu)

Comparative politics is the systematic comparison of differences and similarities across a set of selected countries. Explicit comparisons generate incisive questions and, hopefully, enlightening answers. For instance, why is it that in Sweden a speeding ticket could cost \$ 125,000 while this would be unthinkable in the US. Or why is that the United States favors liberty over equality while the opposite is true of many other modern, industrialized countries? Such structured comparison can thus be thought of as a method of gaining insights into different cultures, systems, institutions, structures, and other constraints that guide the politics of different countries.

Course outcomes:

- Appreciate HOW and WHY other countries, even though facing similar challenges as the United States, are finding quite different solutions
- You will understand that differences in institutions, cultures, political action, and structures yield very different outcomes.
- Be able to apply what you have learned in class to new topics from outside of class.
- Become a more discerning consumer of information of the political events around the world
- Appreciate the difficulties of why it is so hard to “learn” from other countries
- Finally, because of contrasting the US with other countries, you will develop, not only a better understanding of politics in other countries, but also, and perhaps paradoxically, a deeper knowledge of politics and society in the United States.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Well-Being Resources:

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community. Page 5 of 5 Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. 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 Wellbeing Resources are here to help.

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 <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

You do not need to buy any textbook for this class! All the readings are conveniently hyperlinked below. Occasionally, you may have to log in via your institution to get full access to an article as it may be behind a paywall. You may want to use [this link](#) to get access to scholarly material.

Some ground rules:

1. Each day's assignments and readings must be completed before class, and each student must be ready to conduct a quality discussion on the day's material. Do not mistake quantity for quality. "Quality" discussion is recognized when the student makes comments that reflect absorption of the reading material, or that pushes a discussion forward, builds on other students' comments, and/or offers a unique, but relevant perspective. Statements that start with "I feel...", or "What about..." don't count as quality participation.
2. This is a **NO-TECH** class. So, no laptops, phones, or I-pads are allowed. What you should bring is a notebook and a good pen and take good notes as to what is being covered in class.
3. Grade changes: if you feel that a test or assignment was graded incorrectly you must submit a type-written explanation of the problem along with the test or assignment in question **within one week** of my returning the paper/exam/quiz, etc. to you. I will re-evaluate your work and you will receive a "new" grade, whether that be the **same**, a **higher**, or **lower** grade. The only exception to this rule is for simple errors in calculation.
4. Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated. *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". 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.*
5. To ensure that the student's work is original and not plagiarized, if there's any suspicion that a paper may have been copied from other sources or has been generated by AI programs such as **Chatbot GPT** and others, various software programs will be employed to detect such fraud.

6. *Thus, to ensure you develop and master the foundational knowledge and skills in this course, the use of generative AI (GAI) tools is strictly prohibited. This includes all stages of your work process, even the preliminary ones. This prohibition extends to AI writing tools like Grammarly and Wordtune, as well as GAI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Writesonic, Rytr, and Rttutor (and any others). If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.*
7. Late papers are not acceptable. They are a burden for me and are unfair to your colleagues who do their work on time. **Therefore, I will deduct a half a letter grade (5 points) for each day a paper is late, including weekends. Extensions may be given but only if they are requested well in advance of the deadline, and if there is a compelling reason.**
8. If you need to use outside reference works, please consult Joel Krieger, et. al., *Oxford Companion to Comparative Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2013. Do NOT use Webster's Dictionary for definitions of things such as "democracy"!
9. Disability arrangements: if you qualify for course adaptations or special accommodation under the Americans With Disabilities Act, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and provide the appropriate documentation well before exam accommodations are made. Once I have DRC's documentation all efforts will be made to accommodate any learning disabilities.
10. **Prohibition on Recording Lectures.** 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. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:
 - Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
 - Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
 - 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.

11. **Extra Credit:** Extra credit is not offered at any point in this course, including the end of the course after grades have been averaged. Requests for extra credit opportunities will be denied. Do your best on each assigned task.
12. **Note on Final Grades:** It is both highly unprofessional and unacceptable to negotiate grades with your professors. In the past, after submitting final grades at the end of the semester, I have experienced emails from students wanting their final grades changed to reflect what the student “thinks” it should be, or what is “needed” for one objective or another, and not what was actually earned. This practice of “grade-grubbing” is unfortunately increasing across university campuses nationwide. Know that I do not negotiate grades. I spend a great deal of time grading student work and find it extremely disrespectful when students approach me with such an unethical proposition.

Again, your final grade is NOT subject to negotiation, and I will not respond kindly to grade grubbing appeals. If you have an issue with a specific grade earned, please see “Grade Appeals” above for how to address this. But, simply “needing” a better final grade in no way entitles you to one. If you plan to graduate soon, or if you need an exceptionally good grade from this course for whatever reason, the only possible way of receiving this is to work hard. The grade you earn is the grade you will receive. The sole factor that matters in determining your grade is your performance in the course. Awarding a student a better grade than the student deserves based on his or her official course performance is a violation of my professional ethics. Moreover, it is a crime deceiving your government and tax-paying fellow citizens.

13. **Respectful participation:** Politics is by definition a controversial topic. In this class we will cover some difficult topics with many diverging takes on particular issues. I value open discourse across the political spectrum. However, I am less interested in “opinions” but rather in statements for which the students, and I, need to bring empirical evidence to bear or is informed by the required readings. We will all work to ensure that our contributions to the class discussion work to improve (rather than detract from) the quality of the course. Active engagement is prized, but we will not tolerate discourse that means to quiet, rather than encourage, others to contribute as well.
14. **Commitment to viewpoint diversity:** This course welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality, and those who hold unpopular political views. In the spirit of this vital commitment, in this course each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students, and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, culture, groups, or viewpoints. *However, ensure that your viewpoints are backed up by solid empirical or historical evidence (see point 1 above).*

15. Policy on absences:

Absences can be excused only under the following circumstances, and with official documentation:

1. A university-sanctioned event (proper UGA letterhead will be needed as documentation);
2. Personal illness, when attendance in class would endanger your health or the health of others (you must provide medical documentation [a doctor's note] specifically indicating you could not attend classes on said date);
3. There is a serious illness in your immediate family (defined as parents, siblings, spouse, or children) which would reasonably necessitate absence from class (you must provide medical documentation [a doctor's note] specifically indicating you could not attend classes on said date);
4. A mandated court order by a governmental agency (with legal documentation clearly indicating your summon on the date conflicting with class);
5. Special and recognized holidays of your religion (in which case, approval in advance is required);
6. The wedding or funeral of a close relative (defined as above mentioned immediate family, plus grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings-in-law, half-siblings, and first cousins) (requires documentation clearly indicating you cannot attend on said date).
7. Excusal requests for absences will not be accepted any later than one week (seven days) from when the absence took place. When possible, I greatly appreciate receiving excusal requests prior to the date in question.
8. Do not ask about having an absence excused without any of the aforementioned documentation which must include your full name and the absence date(s). If you need support with the certification of the legitimacy of an absence, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs can produce a letter on your behalf if the reason is determined legitimate. Note that the documentation, itself, does not excuse an absence; only the instructor has the authority to excuse you from class. In the case of an excused absence, you are not marked present for the missed class session; rather, the attendance grade for the missed class session is cancelled out of the total attendance average.
9. Student Care and Outreach (SCO) verifies when students are experiencing extenuating circumstances that may impact their abilities to engage with classes, and notifies instructors about these circumstances, but SCO is clear that their notification to faculty does not excuse absences. Official documentation, as outlined above, is still necessary for excusal.

The following are some circumstances (not exhaustive) which happen in life, some misfortunate, but are not grounds for an excused absence:

- Having a flat tire or any other transport complications on the way to class;
- Missing your bus, or your bus not arriving on time, on the way to class;
- Needing to work during class time;
- Volunteering for a charity organization;

- Personal illness, but without visiting a physician and obtaining medical documentation;
- Taking care of a sick relative not in your immediate family (defined above), or a sick pet;
- Going to vote or registering to vote (if not registered in Athens, vote absentee!);
- Adverse weather conditions, such as snow or ice (absent of a university-wide cancellation of classes);
- Early travels for holidays (including the Tuesday before Thanksgiving Break), and the final class meetings before Winter Break).

Course requirements:

1. **In-class participation:** Students are expected to have read and digested the reading material BEFORE each class and are participate actively in class discussions. Such discussions are assessed not just on the quantity, but also on the quality of the students' contributions. *So, talking a lot in class does NOT necessarily mean a high participation grade!* This portion counts for 15% of the course grade. What I am particularly looking for are questions, statements, and arguments made by students that are directly informed by the readings and empirical evidence (see point 1 above).
2. **Attendance:** You can miss 2 classes with no questions asked. For each additional class missed, **no matter what the reason** (unless **serious** emergencies *supported with relevant documentation*) I will deduct **3 points from your final grade tally**. Attendance will be monitored via **Arkaive**, which is an attendance checker app. You will need to download the free app from the app store and is available both for i-phones and android phones. If you don't have a smart phone, or if you have privacy concerns, let me know and I'll check you in manually at the beginning of class. Arkaive works on the basis of geolocation. At the beginning of class I will "open" the class on my phone and I'll give you a 4 letter/digit code which you will have to enter into your app to be recorded as "present" in the class. **Attendance counts for 10% of the overall grade.** I will remind you a few times at the beginning of the semester to check into Arkaive, but I expect that later you will remember doing this yourself at the beginning of each class and I will not remind you every time at the beginning of class. If you were present, but forgot to record your attendance via Arkaive you will be recorded absent. Subsequently asking me to change your absence to presence in such a scenario will be denied. Note that poor attendance will also be detrimental to your grades in group assessments. **Arkaive** uses a 15 minute grace period to be counted as present. If, you arrive in class more than 15 minutes late the program will consider you absent. **If you are recorded present for less than 60 percent of class meetings throughout the semester, the course grade is an automatic zero.**
3. **"Applying what you have learned"** (see more detail in the reading assignments): 6 two-page reflections on a short reading or readings (among the required readings) which should combine the knowledge gained by absorbing the readings as well as the lectures each counting for 5% for a total of 30% of the overall grade. The grading scale for this portion of the grade is Fail (0), Low Pass (60), a "mid-pass" (80), and a

High Pass (100). In the “assignment” portal of the eLC I will post specific questions that you should directly answer.

When answering the questions in this section, answer them exactly as they are posed – i.e. repeat the question followed by your answer, then move on to the next question, and so on. Be as specific as you can in answering these questions.

The following rubrics will be applied:

1. Does your answer correctly identify the central argument made by the author/piece?
 2. Is your answer free of typos, and/or grammatical errors?
 3. Does your response correctly identify the approach used by the author/piece?
 4. Is your critique of the approach or substance of the argument consistent with other theories/approaches you have learned in this or other classes?
 5. Do you provide your own, defensible, critique of the argument? This will require more than just saying that you “agree”, or that you find the claims “reasonable”; I expect a robust explanation as to why you find the claims plausible or not.
4. Three **quizzes** covering the reading materials. These will be “open book” quizzes that will ask specific questions from the various readings. Each quiz will roughly cover **the reading materials** from 3-4 weeks before the quiz starts. Since it is open book, some quiz questions will be rather specific so be sure you closely read the articles each week, not just to be ready for the quiz, but also to enable you to meaningfully participate in class discussions. Each quiz counts for 5% for a total of 15%. I make the quizzes available for a few days ahead of the due date but once started, the quizzes will be “open”, i.e. accessible, for only 30 minutes.
5. **Final exam:** it is open book and will consist of a number of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blanks, and short answer questions and will count for 30% of the overall grade. **This exam will cover the materials conveyed in the slides and all the readings.** So, again, it is important that you take very good notes in your notebook. Date will be determined by the final exam schedule.

Grading structure:	≥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

Reading assignments: This is a NO COST course in terms of expenses for buying books or other instructional materials. All readings are directly linked for your convenience. I made sure that all

links are functional. Should a link be broken you will be able to find the reading by using this [link](#) in Galileo for accessing the journal article via your institution.

Reading assignments:

August 14: Introduction and outline of course

August 19: **What is comparative politics?**

Timothy Lim (2010) [Doing Comparative Politics: Introduction – What is Comparative Politics](#). (chapter one)
Lynne Rienner.

August 21: The “science” in Political Science and how to think straight.

A word about Social Science: how to make an argument?
Skim this entertaining read: [An Introduction to Speculation](#) by Lave and March (1975) (start reading from p. 10) An Oldie, but a Goodie!

8/26 **Nations, States and the crises of nation building.**

8/28 Crises of Identity

[Catalonia independence: electoral shift marks the beginning of a new era in a region fraught with political tension](#). The Conversation. June, 19, 2024.

9/2 Crisis of Legitimacy

[The Legitimacy Crisis](#), Niskanen Center, October 2017

9/4 Crisis of Penetration:

[Weak States: Causes and consequences of the Sicilian Mafia](#). Economic History, 2018.

9/9 Crisis of Participation

[LDF’s Lawsuit Challenging Georgia’s Voter Suppression Law](#). Legal Defense Fund. (2024).

9/11

Crisis of Distribution and equality of opportunity! Playing a game entitled “Learning empathy and the power of circumstance”.

[Why Finland is the happiest country in the world – an expert explains](#). The Conversation (2023).

[Opinion: Finland is the World’s Happiest Country: Here’s how we do it](#). Marja Heinonen (2023).

Applying what you have learned (Module 1). Spend some time with the [Opportunity Atlas](#) link. According to your findings, what drives inequality? What policies would you suggest to reduce income inequality? Be specific, i.e. what would be gained and at what cost would a reduction in income inequality be achieved? You **must** include some of the information contained in the preceding readings on Finland. How do the readings on Finland connect to the information provided in the Opportunity Atlas? Applying what you have learned 1 is due on 9/17, 5:00 p.m. I’ll provide a tab in elc under “Assignments”.

Democracy, Authoritarianism and everything in between.

9/16

Phillippe Schmitter and Terry L. Karl. [What Democracy is and is not](#). *Journal of Democracy* (1991).

9/18

[Paths to Democratic Resilience in an Era of Backsliding: A Roadmap for the Democracy Support Community](#). International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2023.

9/23

[Liberal Democracy has now exceeded many people’s capacity to tolerate it](#). Essay by Karen Stenner, Hope not Hate, January 2020.

Applying what you have learned Module 2: Do you have an authoritarian personality? See where you stand on the F-scale: <https://www.anesi.com/fscale.htm> and provide a brief (two page) analysis of your own results. Applying what you have learned 2 is due on 9/26, 5:00 p.m. via the “assignment” tab in elc.

Thinking broadly I: History without subject – explorations into structuralism

9/25

Jared Diamond. [Guns, Germs, and Steel](#). (Excerpts and chapter summaries) (1997).

9/30

Ricardo Hausman (2009) [Prisoners of Geography](#), *Foreign Policy*.

10/2 Frederick Jackson Turner (1893): ["The significance of the frontier in American history"](#)

Applying what you have learned Module 3: read this very short piece, [The Plow and the Now](#) (Economist, 2011) and place in the context of the central elements of a structuralist explanation (two pages). Applying what you have learned 3 is due October 8, 5:00 p.m. via tab in "Assignments" in elc.

Thinking broadly II: The ties that bind: political culture

10/7 [The Dutch Reformed Church and its Contribution to Apartheid.](#) European Academy on Religion and Society (EARS), 2021.

10/9 [A New Study Shows How Much Social Capital Matters.](#) The Economist, August 2022.

10/14 Greif, Avner. 1994. "[Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies.](#)" *The Journal of Political Economy* 102(5):912-950.

Applying what you have learned 4 Module 4: read this short piece [Revenge of the Tiger Mother](#) (Economist 2014) and place in the context of the central elements of a culturalist explanation (two pages). Applying what you have learned Module 4 is due October 17, 5:00 p.m.

Thinking broadly III: The rules of the game: institutions and their effects

Oct. 16 Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James Robinson (2010) [The Role of Institutions in Growth and Development.](#) *Review of Economics and Institutions.*

Oct. 21: Lijphart, Arend (1994) [Democracies: Forms, Performance and Constitutional Engineering.](#) *European Journal of Political Research*, 25:1-17.

Oct. 23: [Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt on the Tyranny of the Minority.](#) Persuasion, Sep. 9, 2023. (Interview with Levitsky and Ziblatt).

Applying what you have learned Module 5: read this short piece “[Dairy Board to Launch Quality Mark for Milk Products](#)” (Times of India, 2017) and place it in the context of the central elements of an institutional explanation. (two pages). **Module 5 is due Oct. 29, at 5:00 p.m.**

Thinking broadly IV: constructing the world around us – the power of ideas.

10/28 Anthony Marx (1996) Race Making and the Nation State. *WorldPolitics*, 48:180-208)
https://www.jstor.org/stable/25053960?seq=1#page_scan_t ab_contents

10/30 Ernest Renan “[What is a Nation](#)”? In: *Nationalism*, Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), p. 17-18, Oxford. Oxford University Press.

What is political development?

11/4 Frances Hagopian (2000) [Political Development Revisited](#). *Comparative Political Studies*.

11/6 Jeffrey Herbst (2002). [States and Power in Africa](#). Review by James Robinson. *Journal of Economic Literature*. 60.

11/11 Stephen Marglin (2003) [Development as Poison](#). *Harvard International Review*

Special topic: the environment

11/13 Garrett Hardin (1968) “[The Tragedy of the Commons](#)”. *Science*. 162, (3859) 1243-1248.

11/18 Bill McKibben “[A Deeper Shade of Green](#)”, National Geographic, August 2006.

11/20: [The Climate Issue](#), (Economist) Sep. 19, 2019

11/25: [Are Heatwaves Evidence that Climate Changes is Speeding Up?](#) Economist, July 2023.

Applying what you have learned Module 6: do [The Environmental Footprint Quiz](#), explain what it is, report on your findings, and explain what your findings mean (populate the queries with the living conditions of your parents, not your current personal conditions [e.g. living in a dorm]). **Module 6 is due Dec. 3, at 5:00 p.m.**

FINAL EXAM:

Thursday, Dec. 4, 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.

