

# **Comparative Politics Field Seminar** (Comparative Analysis Method)

Spring 2026

INTL 6300 – CRN 70551

Department of International Affairs  
University of Georgia

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Office hours: Thursdays, 12:30pm-2:30pm, IA Building Room 311

Class Meetings: Thursdays, 2:55pm-5:45pm, IA Building 115

## **Course Description<sup>1</sup>**

This primary aim of this graduate seminar is to introduce graduate students to prominent theories, methods, and debates, in the subfield of comparative politics. For doctoral students, this course should prepare you for the preliminary exam in comparative politics.

Comparative politics is primarily concerned with domestic politics within countries, and we'll therefore cover a range of topics, including state formation, regime transitions, political culture, civil war, and contentious politics, among others. For each topic, however, we'll generally be asking a set of questions that we can think of as shared framework to help guide our research and evaluate that which we'll read in the course: what is the implied counterfactual in the argument? What are the steps or causal mechanisms in the argument? How are key concepts operationalized? What methodological approach is used, and what are its strength and limitations? How do the authors account for alternative explanations? If the study included human subjects research, what might be the potential risks and costs for participants and how were they mitigated?

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should have a firm grounding in key areas of study in comparative politics, important debates, and fruitful areas for future research.

## **Readings**

Students are expected to have completed all the required reading before coming to class. All readings will be posted to eLC.

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<sup>1</sup> CAPA Course Description: Comparative approaches to political science. The transition from feudalism to capitalism, state building, and the interaction between political institutions and cultures in various polities. Methods and approaches investigated include structuralism, functionalism, culturalist perspectives, rational choice, institutionalist frameworks, and the perennial issue of what constitutes the "state."

## Requirements

| <b>Assignment</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>% of Final Grade</b> | <b>Due Date</b> |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Participation     | Active and regular contributions to the class discussion   | 20%                     | -               |
| Discussion Leader | ~6 pages, 1.5 spacing, summary + critical review of a selected course reading. You will sign up for two this semester. | 30% (15% each)          | -               |
| Final paper       | Research paper, critical literature review, prospectus/pre-analysis plan, or mock CP preliminary exam                  | 50%                     | May 1           |

Note: All assignments are to be uploaded to the appropriate assignment folder on eLC.

## Participation

Attendance is mandatory and you are expected to be on time. Points will be docked from your participation grade if you are late (even once). However, nobody should come to class if they are sick. If you are sick and unable to make it to class, it is your responsibility to email the instructor within 24 hours of class. If you miss more than one class, you will be asked to submit documentation (i.e., a doctor's note) to avoid losing points on your participation grade.

Participation is more than showing up to class on time. This is a graduate seminar, and actively participating in class is important for keeping the class interesting, fun, and most importantly, helping each other learn. Put otherwise, the quality of this class will rise and fall with the quality of your participation, and we all have an obligation to come to each class prepared and ready to engage with one another. When you come to class unprepared (i.e., not having done the readings) or do not participate, you are doing a disservice not only to yourself but to your classmates as well. I appreciate that not everyone feels comfortable or confident speaking in class; however, public speaking is a necessary skill in academia (and other fields): presenting work at a conference, asking questions at a conference panel or roundtable, giving a job talk, and teaching, etc. My hope is that by the end of the semester, we all feel more comfortable speaking and engaging with one another.

Active and high quality participation does not mean that you are expected to know everything. Coming to class with clarification questions, voicing uncertainties about an argument and its evidence, and asking for help to better understand an argument all count as participation; indeed, these kinds of questions often result from careful reading. Additionally, you might also come to

class with more critical questions that challenge the readings' arguments, assumptions, and evidence.

### **Discussion Leader**

In the first weeks of the semester, you will sign up for two readings listed in the course schedule below to serve as discussion leader. Briefly, your task as discussion leader is to summarize and offer critical and constructive questions to guide our discussion in seminar on that reading. More information will be provided separately.

### **Final Paper**

For the final paper, you have the option of writing (1) an original research paper on a topic in comparative politics with the aim of submitting it to a peer-reviewed journal; (2) a critical overview and assessment of one of the topics on of the course schedule, along the lines of a review that would appear in the *Annual Review of Political Science*; (3) a mock comparative politics exam, or (4) a prospectus or pre-analysis plan. More information will be provided separately.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours are the time that professors specifically designate to meet with students for help with assignments, questions about the lecture or reading, 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.

### **Assessment and Grading**

Grades are assigned on the following basis:

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.**

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, and emails. 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 [eeew@uga.edu](mailto:eeew@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.

## AI Policy

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 Rtutor, among others. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it.

## Course Schedule

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

January 15: No class, Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association

January 22: Introductions, syllabus review, and overview of comparative politics

- Read the syllabus thoroughly, mark important deadlines on your calendar, and come to class with any questions or concerns
- Read Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1 and 2

January 29: State formation

- Required readings
  - Tilly, Charles. 1990. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Read Chs. 1, 3, and 4.
  - Herbst, Jeffrey. 1990. "War and the State in Africa." *International Security* 14 (4): 117-139.

- Tapscott, Rebecca. 2021. *Arbitrary States: Social Control and Modern Authoritarianism in Museveni's Uganda*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Read Chs. 1, 2, and 6.
- Driscoll, Jesse. 2015. *Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1, 2, and 6.
- Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Read Ch. 1.

#### February 5: Political regimes

- Required readings
  - Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2002. "Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2): 51-65.
  - Lührmann, Anna, Marcus Tannenberg, and Staffan Lindberg. 2018. "Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes." *Politics and Governance* 6(1):1-18.
  - Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." *World Politics* 49: 430-451.
  - Dahl, Robert A. 1972. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Read Ch. 1

#### February 12: Regime transitions (Part I)

- Required readings
  - Moore, Barrington. 1993. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press. Read Chs. 7-9.
  - Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53 (1): 69-105.
  - Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49 (2): 155-183.
  - Boix, Carles and Susan C. Stokes. 2003. "Endogenous Democratization." *World Politics* 55 (4): 517-549.

#### February 19: Regime transitions (Part II)

- Required readings
  - Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2009. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1-2.
  - Ansell, Ben W. and David J. Samuels. *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1-5.
  - Treisman, Daniel. 2020. "Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer Government." *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 792-810.

#### February 26: Authoritarian politics

- Required readings

- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction, Chs. 4, 7.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read Chs. 1-2
- Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1-3.

#### March 5: Systems of Representation

- Required readings
  - Lijphart, Arend. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Read Chs. 1-2.
  - Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.
  - Cusack, Thomas, R., Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. 2007. "Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems." *American Political Science Review* 101 (3): 373-391.
  - LeBas, Adrienne. 2011. *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Read Parts I, III, and IV.
- Recommended readings
  - Stepan, Alfred and Cindy Skach. 1993. "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus Presidentialism." *World Politics* 46(1): 1-22.
  - Mainwaring, Scott. 1993. "Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination." *Comparative Political Studies* 26(2): 198-228.
  - Taagepera, Rein. 2008. "Electoral Systems." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 653-676.

#### March 12: No class, Spring Break

#### March 19: Protest, revolution, and contentious politics

- Required readings
  - Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics*. 44(1): 7-48.
  - Young, Lauren E. 2018. "The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe." *American Political Science Review* 113 (1): 140-155.
  - Scott, James C. 2008. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Read Chs. 2 & 8
  - Skocpol, Theda. 2015. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Selections. Read Ch. 1 and conclusion
- Recommended readings
  - McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1): 64-90.

## March 26: Civil War

- Required readings
  - Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievances in Civil War." *Oxford Economics Papers* 56 (4): 563-595.
  - Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction, Chs. 1, 7, and 9.
  - Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1, 3, and 4.
  - Lessing, Benjamin. 2015. "Logics of Violence in Criminal War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1486-1516.
- Recommending readings
  - Straus, Scott. 2015. *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

## April 2: Political culture and civil society

- Required readings
  - Putnam, Robert D., Leonardi, Robert, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1994. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Read Chs. 1, 4, and 6.
  - Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49 (3): 401-429.
  - Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics* 53 (3): 362-398.
  - Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. 2016. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Read Chs. 1 and 13.

## April 9: Identity politics

- Required readings
  - Varshney, Ashutosh. 2003. "Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality." *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (1): 85-99.
  - Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books. Read Chs. 1-3, 5-6.
  - Lieberman, Evan S. and Perna Singh. 2012. "The Institutional Origins of Ethnic Violence." *Comparative Politics* 45 (1): 1-24.
- Recommended readings
  - Varshney, Ashutosh. 2009. "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 274-294.

## April 16: Democratic erosion

- Required readings
  - Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2019. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown. Read Introduction, Chs. 1, 4, and 5.
  - Riedl, Rachel Beatty, et al. 2024. "Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance." *World Politics*. Available at:

[https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/917802/summary?casa\\_token=\\_DIWOs3z3rQAAAA:49pXm8Q9bejERr9sJTImk1NMTxs\\_RvyYEnjrp2TQxyjXqg5SWJFhQZi4sn-BXVeTS-TsHVd1qmtG](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/917802/summary?casa_token=_DIWOs3z3rQAAAA:49pXm8Q9bejERr9sJTImk1NMTxs_RvyYEnjrp2TQxyjXqg5SWJFhQZi4sn-BXVeTS-TsHVd1qmtG)

- Gamboa, Laura. 2017. "Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela." *Comparative Politics* 49 (4): 457-477.
- Grumbach, Jacob M. 2023. "Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding." *American Political Science Review* 117 (3): 967-984.
- Selected articles from Comment and Controversy: Special Issue on Democratic Backsliding, PS: Political Science & Politics, Volume 57, Issue 2, April 2024.
  - Read Little and Meng, "Measuring Democratic Backsliding," available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/measuring-democratic-backsliding/9EE2044CDA598BD815349912E61189D8>
  - Read Miller, "How Little and Meng's Objective Approach Fails in Democracies," available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/how-little-and-mengs-objective-approach-fails-in-democracies/3DB3824785F06E7D971772B28CC8CBCE>
  - Read Baron et al., "An Events-Based Approach to Understanding Democratic Erosion," available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/an-eventsbased-approach-to-understanding-democratic-erosion/C480012CCF036A733DAD3A1766B2E2C0>

April 23: No class, Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association