Introduction to Comparative Politics

INTL 3300 | Fall 2026 | CRN 25337

Instructor Info

Dr. Christina Walker

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-11am and 3pm-4pm or schedule an appointment

Candler Hall Room 323

christinapwalker@uga.edu

Course Info

Pre-req (one of the following): POLS 1101, POLS 1101E, POLS 1101H, POLS 1101S, INTL 1100, INTL 1100E, INTL 1100H

Tuesday and Thursday 1:15-2:35 PM

3 Credit Hours

Sanford Hall Room 109, Synchronous

About

Comparative political themes in political science. The transition from feudalism to capitalism, state building, democracy, and interaction between political institutions and cultures in various politics. Examples will be drawn from developed, communist/post-communist, and developing political systems.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and differentiate alternative democratic and nondemocratic political regimes.
2. Analyze differing party and electoral systems in democratic regimes.
3. Compare the role of political executives in different political systems.

Course Materials

Required Texts: All course texts and materials will be made available through eLearning Commons (eLC).

Computer Capabilities: You must have a fast, reliable internet connection, as this course relies on eLC. You will need a word processor (i.e., Microsoft Word, Google Docs, LaTeX), remember MS Office is free for all students.

Grading Philosophy, Deadlines, & Late Work

Grading Philosophy: I understand grades can cause anxiety. To help with this, every assignment has a rubric that you will be graded on for transparency. As shown in the tables below, I automatically round your grade up (>=.5) and you have the opportunity to receive up to 10% in extra credit on your final exam. With these two things in mind, do not email me at the end of the semester asking to increase your grade or for additional extra credit.

Late Work: Deadlines are an unavoidable part of being a professional and this course is no exception. There will be no final exam make-ups/rescheduling unless there is an extenuating circumstance with documentation. Course requirements must be completed on or before the specified deadline. To help you improve your skills and understanding of the course, I am committed to returning feedback to you within 7 days of the due date. To accomplish this, I need you to turn in your assignments by the due date. However, I understand that life happens. Therefore, you all have two "Oops Tickets."

Oops Tickets: These tickets can be used to submit a late assignment or re-do an assignment to improve your grade, no questions asked. You do not need to explain why you are using your ticket. My goal is to not force you to explain any personal details to me that may be further exhausting or triggering to you. This will not be available for the final exam. You will not be allowed to use one of your tickets to re-do an assignment if there is suspicion of academic dishonesty.

Grading

Percentage	Assignment	Description
30%	Class Participation	Engagement with course materials.
30%	Assignments	7 assignments throughout the course.
10%	Reading Participation	Engagement with the readings each week.
30%	Final Exam	Cumulative, earn up to 10% with weekly reviews.

Class Participation: We will be using Top Hat for class participation. To receive full credit, you need to participate in at least 80% of in-class activities. You can join our class by clicking the Top Hat Course Launch Module in eLC (under August 18 Module).

Assignments: There are seven assignments throughout the course and each will have equal weight.

Reading Participation: This will come from your assignments that take place on Perusall (reading, annotating, videos, etc.).

Final Exam: The exam is cumulative, includes multiple-choice and short-answer questions, and will be during final exam week.

Extra Credit for Final Exam: Each week (starting week 2), I will upload a quiz/review with sample questions covering the material. If you complete each weekly quiz before the final exam and receive 100%, you will get 10% added to your exam grade. You can retake these quizzes as many times as you'd like. These reviews will close on December 3 at noon (the start of the final exam).

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentages	Description of Work
A	94.5-100%	Work is exceptional in many respects
A-	89.5-94.4%	Work is exceptional in some respects
B+	86.5-89.4%	Work is good in most respects
B	82.5-86.4%	Work is good in many respects
B-	79.5-82.4%	Work is good in some respects
C+	76.5-79.4%	Work is satisfactory in most respects
C	72.5-76.4%	Work is satisfactory in many respects
C-	69.5-72.4%	Work is satisfactory in some respects
D+	66.5-69.4%	Work is marginal in most respects
D	62.5-66.4%	Work is marginal in many respects
D-	59.5-62.4%	Work is marginal in some respects
F	0-59.4%	Work is failing in most respects

**Notice that grades at or over .5 will be rounded up*

Attendance Policy

Attendance is not kept each day, as there is no formal attendance policy. However, you must participate in at least 80% of the in-class activities to receive full credit for class participation. There is not necessarily an in-class activity each day.

Academic Honesty

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.

AI Policy

When it comes to using AI in this course, some assignments may specifically ask you to use it, or give you the option to. In those cases, go ahead. For other assignments, use the "friend test:" if you would feel comfortable asking a friend for this kind of help, it's probably fine. For example, brainstorming ideas through conversation is fine. But just as you would not ask a friend for last year's paper and copy it, do not ask AI to write your work for you and paste it as your own.

Course Schedule

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Class Date	Topic	To Do (Due Before Class Unless Otherwise Noted)
August 18	What is Comparative Politics?	• No Readings
August 20	How Do We Compare?	• Annotate the Syllabus • Read & Annotate Excerpt from Political Science Research in Practice
August 25	Rich & Poor States	• Listen to James Robinson On Why Nations Fail (Podcast)
August 27	Why Do People Obey?	• Listen to Philosophize This! Rousseau Government (Podcast)
September 1	Where Do States Come From?	• Listen to The Origins of Political Order Books Brothers (Podcast/Video)
September 3	No Class to Work on Assignment	• Assignment 1 due 9/3, 11:59 PM ET: Country Profile
September 8	What Makes a State Work?	• Read & Annotate Kaplan, Robert D. 2014. "The Coming Anarchy." The Atlantic.
September 10	Regime Types	• Read & Annotate Gorokhovskaia, Yana, Cathryn Grothe, and Amy Slipowitz. 2026. The Growing Shadow of Autocracy. Freedom House.
September 15	What is Democracy?	• Watch Why Your Vote Doesn't Count (Video) • Watch Proportional Representation (Video) • Watch Single Transferable Vote (Video) • Watch The Alternative Vote (Video)
September 17	How Are Democracies Built?	• Watch Nelson Mandela's Inauguration Speech • Read & Annotate Diamond, Larry. 2004. "What Went Wrong in Iraq." Foreign Affairs 83(5): 34–56.
September 22	Why Democracy?	• Read & Annotate Schmitter, Philippe C, and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is...and Is Not." Journal of Democracy 2(3): 75–88.
September 24	Making Democracy Stick	• Read & Annotate Diamond, Larry. 1994. "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation." Journal of Democracy 5(3): 4–17.
September 29	Authoritarianism	• Watch A Tale of Two Political Systems (Video) • Assignment 2 due 9/29, 11:59 PM ET: Strong State/Weak State
October 1	Why Dictators Survive	• Watch Rules for Rulers (Video)
October 6	When Democracies Die	• Listen to How Democratic Backsliding Happens with Steve Levitsky (Podcast)
October 8	How Regimes Change	• Read & Annotate Chenoweth, Erica. 2020. "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance." Journal of Democracy 31(3): 69–84. • Assignment 3 due 10/8, 11:59 PM ET: Regime Dossier
October 13	Culture, Race, & Gender	• Listen to The Three Faces of Ataturk (Podcast)
October 15	Nation, Religion, & Class	• Listen to Iran and the Jewish People (Podcast)
October 20	Politics & The Economy	• Read & Annotate Thelen, Kathleen. 2019. "The American Precariat: US Capitalism in Comparative Perspective." Perspectives on Politics 17(1): 5–27. • Assignment 4 due 10/20, 11:59 PM ET: Identity Mapping
October 22	Social Movements	• Read & Annotate Tarrow, Sidney G. 2011. Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

October 27	The Free Rider Problem	• Read & Annotate Ostrom, Elinor. 2009. "Collective Action Theory." In The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford University Press.
October 29	What Do People Actually Think?	• Read & Annotate Norris, Pippa. 2009. "The Globalization of Comparative Public Opinion Research." Handbook of Comparative Politics: 522–40. • Assignment 5 due 10/29, 11:59 PM ET: Dictator's Dilemma/Reformer's Gambit
November 3	Political Violence	• Read & Annotate Thomas, Jakana L., and Kanisha D. Bond. 2015. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." American Political Science Review 109(3): 488–506.
November 5	Globalization	• Read & Annotate Rodrik, Dani. 2012. The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy. WW Norton & Company. Is Global Governance Feasible? Is It Desirable?
November 10	Fragmentation & Polarization	• Read & Annotate Carothers, Thomas, and Andrew O'Donohue. 2019. Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarization. Bloomsbury Publishing. Introduction. • Assignment 6 due 11/10, 11:59 PM ET: Movement or Moment
November 12	Elections & Voting	• Read & Annotate Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio. 2008. "How Can Governments Be Accountable If Voters Vote Ideologically." In Controlling Governments: Voters, Institutions, and Accountability, Cambridge University Press.
November 17	The State of Comparative Politics	• No Readings • Assignment 7 due 11/17, 11:59 PM ET: Country Report Card
November 19	Exam Review	• Annotate Exam Guide
November 24	Thanksgiving Break	
November 26	Thanksgiving Break	
December 3	12:00 pm-3:00 pm	Final Exam

This schedule is subject to change based on enrollment and student interest.