

Comparative Politics Field Seminar (Comparative Analysis Method)

FALL 2026

INTL 6300 – CRN 70551

Department of International Affairs
University of Georgia

Instructor: Dr. Idean Salehyan
Email: TBD
Office hours: TBD
Class Meetings: TBD

Course Description¹

This seminar introduces students to the core theories, concepts, and methods of comparative politics. The subfield of comparative politics examines how political systems develop and function across diverse national contexts; thus, it is largely concerned with domestic politics around the world, although we will touch on how the international system shapes states. Students will engage with foundational and contemporary scholarship along with different methodological approaches to the study of political science.

The course will cover a range of approaches to comparative politics including rational choice theory, structural theories, political culture, etc. We will also cover a range of topics, including state formation, political institutions, voting behavior, ethnicity and politics, political economy, and civil war. Given the range of topics and approaches in comparative politics, we cannot possibly cover any one theme in great depth. Rather, this course will allow students to explore a variety of issues and concerns in the subfield as they develop their own research interests.

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 promising areas for future research.

Readings

Students are expected to have completed all the required reading before coming to class. All readings will either be posted to eLC or are accessible as electronic copies through the UGA library. There are also several recommended readings for each week; if you are preparing for your

¹ 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."

preliminary exam in comparative politics, you are strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with these readings.

Requirements

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Participation	Active and regular contributions to the class discussion	20%	-
Discussion Leader	~5 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%	TBD

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

Participation

It is essential that you come prepared to every class session and actively participate in discussions of the readings. Speaking up frequently is not as important as offering constructive, insightful comments and reflections on the readings for the week. That said, you should be participating in every class discussion and I will be keeping track of who is regularly contributing to the seminar. Students may want to come prepared with a few, pre-written questions and/or observations about the course material if that helps to organize your thoughts. At all times, I expect students to be respectful and considerate of one another, even as we discuss potentially controversial topics.

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. More information will be provided separately.

Final Paper

For the final assignment, you may choose from these options:

- A. Research design paper. You will write the front end of a research paper, which may eventually become a publishable journal article or dissertation chapter. This paper will

clearly state a research question, provide a detailed literature review, present an original theory, and derive a testable hypothesis(es). You should also outline the research methodology, data, cases, etc, you would use to test these hypotheses. You are not required to do any empirical analysis for this assignment, but should present a “blueprint” for future research.

- B. Mock comprehensive exam. You may opt to take a practice comprehensive exam on the field of comparative politics. This practice exam will consist of 3 questions, designed to resemble what you may find on the actual exam. If you do choose this option, you must read more than the required readings on the syllabus but also be familiar with several of the recommended readings.

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 and Make-up Procedures

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. It is important for students to submit their work on time so that the instructor can return assignments in a timely fashion.

Exceptions for absences and late assignments will be made in the event of a serious illness, medical or family emergencies, military service, or approved institute activities (such as field trips or athletic events) **and with appropriate, written documentation** (i.e. a doctor’s note or a dean’s note).² If you find yourself in such a situation, please email me to discuss and figure out a reasonable timeframe for you to submit late work. If you need to miss class or submit an assignment late because of an illness and urgent visit to the doctor, that will of course count as an excused absence (with a doctor’s note). However, please try to avoid scheduling non-urgent doctor’s appointments (or other meetings) during class time as these will generally not be excused. Generally, attending class and participating is a priority, and when possible, other meetings should be scheduled around class time.

If you do need to miss class and have appropriate documentation, please note that an excused absence means that you will have the opportunity to make up for your absence and still receive full points toward your participation grade. I will generally ask students to write a summary and reflection on the assigned reading for the day, but I am happy to discuss other options.

² For doctor’s appointments, please be sure to send a doctor’s note; please do not send a screenshot of an appointment reminder for an upcoming visit as they will not be accepted.

Having a heavy course load, an internship, or multiple deadlines in one week, etc., are not acceptable reasons for submitting an assignment late or missing class. Students are strongly encouraged to note important deadlines on their calendar, and to manage their own time so that they can meet those deadlines.

Finally, it is your responsibility to double check that you have uploaded the correct file/document when submitting your assignments on eLC. Any files uploaded after the deadline will be counted as late and the late policy will be applied accordingly.

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 cew@uga.edu.

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 from the course schedule may be necessary and will be announced to students in advance.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: State formation

- Required readings
 - Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Peter B. Evans, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge University Press.
 - 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.
- Recommended readings

- Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge University Press.
- Spruyt, Hendrik. 1996. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*. Princeton University Press.
- Levi, Margaret. 2008. *Of Rule and Revenue*. University of California Press.
- Migdal, Joel. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton University Press.
- Slater, Dan. 2000. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boone, Catherine. 2003. *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press.

Week 3: Political regimes

- Required readings
 - Schumpeter, Joseph. 1947. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York: Harper & Brothers. Read Chapters 21 and 22.
 - 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
- Recommended readings
 - Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2002. "Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2): 51-65.
 - Comment and Controversy: Special Issue on Democratic Backsliding, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Volume 57, Issue 2, April 2024.

Week 4: Regime transitions (Part I)

- Required readings
 - 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.
- Recommended readings
 - Moore, Barrington. 1993. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1973. *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 5: 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.
 - Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2012. "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 495-516.
 - Treisman, Daniel. 2020. "Democracy by Mistake: How the Errors of Autocrats Trigger Transitions to Freer Government." *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 792-810.
- Recommended readings
 - Ansell, Ben W. and David J. Samuels. *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 6: Authoritarian politics

- Required readings
 - Magaloni, Beatriz. 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction, skim Chs. 4, 7.
 - Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chs. 1 and 3, skip Ch. 2
 - Brownlee, Jason. 2012. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge University Press. Read Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 5.

Week 7: Systems of Representation

- Required readings
 - Lijphart, Arend. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Read Chs. 1-2.
 - Stepan, Alfred and Cindy Skach. 1993. "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism." *World Politics* 46(1): 1-22.
 - 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.

- Graham, Benjamin A., Michael K. Miller, and Kaare W. Strøm. 2017. "Safeguarding Democracy: Powersharing and Democratic Survival." *American Political Science Review* 111 (4): 686-704.
- Recommended readings
 - 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.
 - Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.

Week 8: 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. 2019. "The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe." *American Political Science Review* 113 (1): 140-155.
 - LeBas, Adrienne. 2011. *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Read Parts I, III, and skim Part IV (available as an e-book via UGA library).
- Recommended readings
 - McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1): 64-90.
 - Scott, James C. 2008. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
 - Skocpol, Theda. 2015. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 9: Civil War

- Required readings
 - 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 skim ch. 7.
 - Lewis, Janet I. 2017. "How Does Ethnic Rebellion Start?" *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (10): 1420–50.
- Recommending readings
 - Straus, Scott. 2015. *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
 - Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievances in Civil War." *Oxford Economics Papers* 56 (4): 563-595.
 - Lessing, Benjamin. 2015. "Logics of Violence in Criminal War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (8): 1486-1516.

- Lawrence, Adria. 2010. "Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings against Colonial Rule." *International Security*. Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 88-122.

Week 10: 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.
 - Bernhard, Michael, Allen Hicken, Cristopher Reenock, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2020. "Parties, Civil Society, and the Deterrence of Democratic Defection." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 55: 1-26.
- Recommended readings
 - Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. 2016. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 11: Identity politics

- Required readings
 - Varshney, Ashutosh. 2003. "Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality." *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (1): 85-99.
 - Robinson, Amanda Lea. 2014. "National versus Ethnic Identification in Africa: Modernization, Colonial Legacy, and the Origins of Territorial Nationalism." *World Politics* 66 (4): 709-46.
 - Wimmer, Andreas. 2013. *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks*. Oxford University Press. Read Chapters 1, 3, and 4.
- 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.
 - Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
 - Lieberman, Evan S. and Perna Singh. 2012. "The Institutional Origins of Ethnic Violence." *Comparative Politics* 45 (1): 1-24.

Week 12: Democratic erosion

- Required readings
 - Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown. Read Introduction, Chs. 1, 4, and 5. Available as an ebook at UGA library.
 - Riedl, Rachel Beatty, et al. 2024. "Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance." *World Politics*, 77: 151-177.

- Gamboa, Laura. 2017. "Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela." *Comparative Politics* 49 (4): 457-477.
- Recommended readings
 - Waldner, David, and Ellen Lust. 2018. "Unwelcoming Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2): 93-113.
 - Grumbach, Jacob M. 2023. "Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding." *American Political Science Review* 117 (3): 967-984.

Week 13: International Influences on Domestic Politics

- Gourevitch, Peter. "The second image reversed: the international sources of domestic politics." *International organization* 32, no. 4 (1978): 881-912.
- Thies, Cameron G. "War, rivalry, and state building in Latin America." *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (2005): 451-465.
- Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede, and Michael D. Ward. "Diffusion and the international context of democratization." *International organization* 60, no. 4 (2006): 911-933.
- Hiscox, Michael J. "Class versus industry cleavages: inter-industry factor mobility and the politics of trade." *International Organization* 55, no. 1 (2001): 1-46.

Week 14: Conclusions