

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Course Number

Institution Name, Course Term

Instructor: Julian Gerez

Email:

Office location:

Office/Student hours times:

Office/Student hours sign-up:

Class meeting times:

Class meeting location:

Course Overview

This course introduces students to the political science subfield of comparative politics, which aims to provide a systematic understanding of political institutions and political behavior *within* and *across* countries. In this class we will explore questions such as: How did the concept of the state originate and become a central form of human organization? Why are some countries more democratic while others are more autocratic? What different institutional forms do governments take? How do countries vary in their political institutions? How do politics affect the way countries produce important social outcomes such as representation, accountability, socioeconomic development, and stability?

Students in this class will learn how to provide possible answers to these questions by receiving guidance on how to analyze and compare complex political processes. Students will learn more about specific country case studies and also learn about the methods political scientists use in their research.

This course serves as a foundation for advanced courses in political science and related social sciences and students from all disciplines or all years, but especially declared political science majors in their first year would be well-suited to take the course. There are no prerequisites.

Learning Objectives

The main purpose of this course is to teach students how to make and evaluate arguments about politics. Using class lectures, examinations, assignments, and discussions, students will be able to:

- Analyze the formation and development of states and political institutions across different countries.
- Evaluate the factors that contribute to varying levels of democracy and authoritarianism in different nations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how countries across the world differ in terms of political institutions (systems of government, electoral systems, party systems) and political regimes (democratic versus authoritarian).
- Explain how institutions and regimes influence public policies in areas such as the economy and society.
- Apply the knowledge and skills learned in the course to analyze current events.

Assignments and Evaluation

Grades will be assigned according to the following components of the course. No extra credit will be granted.

- **Participation (15%):** Class time will be divided between lectures and in-class activities including discussions and in-class surveys. Active involvement in these activities will help you succeed in this class beyond just your participation grade, but to receive full credit for participation you must attend class, actively participate in discussions, group work, and other class activities. Come to class prepared, having completed all assigned readings prior to each class. This way you will be ready to contribute to discussions. If you know you will be absent for an excused reason, email me before class and provide any necessary documentation. You can also receive participation credit for coming to office hours or by attending and outside seminar or lecture related to course material and writing a short-reflection on it.

- **Exams** (3 × 25%): There will be three non-cumulative in-class exams covering the lectures and assigned readings for each of the three parts of the course. The exams will consist of essay questions. You must sit these exams at the scheduled time. If you cannot take the exam because you are sick, you must provide a note from your doctor stating that you could not take the exam. The exams will be held in class on: [dates].
- **Final written assignment** (10%): You will write a paper between 1,500 and 2,500 words using the material we have covered this semester applied to either of the following scenarios, based on a country of your choosing:
 1. *Democracy analyst*: After you graduate, you are presented with an opportunity to become a foreign service officer. Your first task is to compose a comprehensive report concerning democracy and democratization in the country you've chosen. Provide a detailed analysis of your country's progression towards or transition away from democratization. This should include an evaluation of how economic, cultural, and social factors influence regime type in your country, and must also include a comparison of your country to other countries. When comparing your country to others, justify your choice of comparison country or countries.
 2. *Policy/economics analyst*: After you graduate, you are presented with an opportunity to work as a policy analyst for your country. Your first task is to compose a comprehensive report on the economic policies and their impact on the country you've chosen. This should include an evaluation of how political, cultural, and social factors influence economic growth in your country. Include a comparison with other countries that have implemented similar or contrasting policies. Justify your choice of comparison country or countries and provide insights on what lessons your chosen country can learn from them. If you would like, you can choose a different set of policies to analyze such as environmental, gender equality, etc., but you must first receive written permission from the instructor.

Course Policies

Academic integrity: [Institution name] does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. Students violating the code of academic and professional conduct will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Guidelines on academic integrity are available at this link: [link]. All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by these guidelines.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who require accommodations for this class should come to my office hours as soon as possible to confirm their accommodation needs. If you believe you might have a disability requiring accommodation, contact [disability services office] at [phone number] and [email address].

Contacting me and office/student hours: Questions about logistics or small conceptual issues would be appropriate for an email. Deeper conceptual questions or other concerns would be better to bring to my office hours. Office hours are dedicated times when I will be available to meet with you to discuss course material, answer questions, provide feedback, or assist with any other academic concerns you might have, including internships or academic opportunities, career aspirations, etc. Office hour times, location, and sign-up sheets can be found in the header of the first page of this syllabus.

Technology in the Classroom: You may use laptops or tablets in class for note taking purposes only. Refrain from using these devices for checking on social media, instant messenger, e-mail checking, or anything else that may distract you, your fellow students, or me. It is obvious when someone is using their laptop for non-class related activities, and I reserve the right to discontinue the use of laptops (unless you contact me about an exception) if they become a distraction. Texting is not permitted during class.

Contested Grades: If you wish to contest a grade you must submit a written explanation of maximum one page length on why you believe the grade is inaccurate within two weeks of getting the assignment back. However, you must wait 48 hours from the time the assignment is returned before you submit the written explanation. I will not discuss grades until 48 hours after the assignment is passed back. If you ask for a reevaluation of your grade then I reserve the right to either raise or lower your grade based on my reevaluation. This policy is meant to address disagreements with our assessment of your work. It does not pertain to calculation errors. If you believe I have made a mistake adding up points, converting your points to a percentage, etc. you can let me know immediately, and I will be happy to correct any mistakes.

Course Outline and Readings

There is one textbook for the course: Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, 2017. Additional readings, which include academic papers and prepared case studies about individual countries will be available online for students.

Part I: The state and political order

1. Introduction: what is political science? What is comparative politics?
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 1
2. The state: why do states emerge and expand?
 - Charles Tilly. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University Press, 1985: pp. 169–187.
 - Herbst, Jeffrey. "War and the State in Africa." *International Security* 14.4 (1990): 117-139.
3. Constraining the state: introducing regime types
 - Chapter 1 of Dahl, Robert A. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press, 1971: pp. 1-16.
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 5
4. Diving deeper into democracies: parties and electoral systems
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapters 13-14
 - Case Study: Japan
5. Diving deeper into non-democracies
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 10
 - Case Study: Mexico

Part II: The origins of political institutions

6. The economic determinants of regime types
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 6
7. The sociocultural determinants of regime types
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 7
8. The types and origins of electoral systems
 - Leemann, Lucas, and Isabela Mares. "The Adoption of Proportional Representation." *The Journal of Politics* 76.2 (2014): 461-478.
 - Case Study: Germany
9. The types and origins of party systems
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 14
 - Case study: Nigeria
10. Federalism and centralization
 - *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 15
 - Case study: Russia

Part III: The consequences of institutions

11. Economics

- *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 9
- Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review* 87.3 (1993): 567-576.

12. Redistribution

- *Principles of Comparative Politics*, Chapter 16
- Chapters 1-2 of Blaydes, Lisa. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

13. Representation

- Posner, Daniel N. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98.4 (2004): 529-545.
- Htun, Mala. "Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups." *Perspectives on Politics* 2.3 (2004): 439-458.

14. Political violence

- Chapters 1-2 of Wilkinson, Steven. *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Case Study: Colombia

15. Democratic backsliding

- Bermeo, Nancy. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27.1 (2016): 5-19.