

GOVT130-002: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Spring 2022
M/Th: 12:55-2:10
Kerwin Hall 105

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Office: Kerwin 213
Office hours: Th 2:30-4:00pm

OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to comparative politics (CP), which is one of the main subfields of political science. It aims to expose you to the questions, concepts, theories, and methods at the heart of contemporary CP. The course is divided into two main parts, with the first part focused on political regimes. We will investigate the differences between democracy and dictatorship, the cultural and economic determinants of regime type, and the processes by which transitions to (and from) democracy occur. The second part of the course will focus on the different ways of designing democracy and the consequences of these institutional choices for outcome like representation, accountability, and stability. We will aim to understand the differences (and why they matter) between presidential and parliamentary systems, majoritarian and proportional representation electoral systems, centralized and federal systems, and the role that parties and social cleavages play in how democracy functions. The final sessions of the class will focus on civil war and corruption as examples of ways in which (democratic) governance can break down.

A central goal of contemporary comparative politics is to study general political phenomena. We will not be memorizing the facts and details of the political systems of specific countries but rather investigating broad questions like: Does economic development cause democratization? Do proportional representation electoral systems yield higher voter turnout? Do ethnic divisions cause civil war? One thing that such questions have in common is they are concerned with assessing the *causes* of different political outcomes. As we will learn in this course, answering such questions requires building theory, forming testable hypotheses, and gathering and evaluating empirical evidence. Throughout the course we will thus be putting a heavy emphasis on understanding the scientific method and how it applies to comparative politics. This will strengthen your ability to think critically about how the political world works, a skill that will help you succeed in this class and beyond.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester, you will have opportunities to learn some of the fundamental principles and theories of political science, including learning to analyze concepts, patterns, and trends in global politics from a comparative perspective and to identify how categories of cultural differences affect political systems. You will also gain factual knowledge of at least four political systems and develop skills in expressing themselves orally and in writing. The course will also help you develop research skills and information literacy, including identifying and using scholarly sources in their writing.

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with some major questions, themes and issues in comparative politics and define key political concepts.
2. Analyze how dynamics of identity (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender) structure political systems and govern their functioning.
3. Apply theory to specific case-studies, analyzing the relationship between economic, political and social features of political systems.
4. Locate and employ appropriate empirical evidence to evaluate claims and draw conclusions about the structures and functions of political systems.
5. Convey coherent analytical arguments about comparative politics, in writing and in speech.

Intended as an introduction to comparative politics in the Government Department, this course also fulfills a GenEd requirement in *Foundational Area 3: The Global and Cross-Cultural Experience* for students who enrolled at AU prior to Fall 2018.

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

Zoom classes

We will now be starting the semester online, which means our classes will meet via Zoom. I have set the Zoom settings such that your audio and video will be off when you enter the classroom. I encourage everyone to turn their video *on* once they've joined the class, if possible. This will make the class feel more interactive and engaging for all. I especially encourage the moral support of pets, if they are not too distracting. Please do, however, keep your mics muted unless you've raised your hand and I've called on you or we're in an open discussion. Zoom has a lot of nice features that we will take advantage of, including breakout rooms and polls.

There is also a chance that we will need to hold one or two additional classes this semester via Zoom. If we do, we will use the same link.

Link to Zoom classes is [HERE](#)

Meeting ID: 988 8055 6203

Passcode: 994710

Zoom office hours

I am also giving you the option of doing in-person or Zoom office. There will be a weekly signup for office hours to help me manage both in-person and online office hours (see Canvas), but hopefully this allows for maximal flexibility.

Optional Zoom for office hours: Click the link [here](#)

Meeting ID: 910 6831 4521

Passcode: 498683

Canvas

Canvas is our main Learning Management System (LMS) for this course. Every week by the end of the day on Friday I will post to Canvas the module for the coming week. Each module will include an overview of the coming week, including a list of the tasks that you should plan on accomplishing and by what dates. You should start each week by reading the Overview carefully, noting any deadlines, and planning on when to do the various tasks. The module will also contain everything else you'll need for the week, including supplementary readings, slides, links to recorded lectures, discussion boards, and activities you might need to prep for the Thursday discussion. The only thing that will not be in the weekly modules are the main readings from the *Foundations* textbook (see below) since you are expected to acquire that for yourself.

To logon to Canvas, go to canvas.american.edu and logon with your AU credentials.

COURSE MATERIALS

We will be using a textbook for this course, which can be purchased through the AU bookstore or Amazon. The main textbook for this course is:

- Clark, William, Matt Golder and Sona Golder. *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Sage, 2019 (abbreviated *Foundations* in the syllabus).

If ordering the book on your own, be careful not to confuse it with another by the same authors and entitled *Principles of Comparative Politics*. That one is more advanced and detailed but otherwise follows a similar format, so it's not the end of the world if you purchase it accidentally. It might also be of interest to students seeking a more in-depth exposure to the state of academic research in the subfield, including more mathematical and quantitative approaches to comparative politics. If you are unable to obtain a copy of the textbook, please let me know immediately.

In some weeks there are other or additional readings assigned. All readings not in *Foundations* will be posted on Canvas in the appropriate module. Any additional materials, including recorded lectures, quizzes, videos, etc. will also be posted in Canvas in the module for the week. When in doubt about what you need to read or do for the week, refer to the Task List in the module for the week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation (10%)

Participation is an important part of this course. Your participation grade will mainly be based on your active engagement in classes. You will see that, I have built in opportunities for debates, discussions, and group activities into the syllabus on an almost weekly basis. In other words, there will be a lecture component and an activity component almost every week. These activities are meant to be fun and informative opportunities to engage with and apply material from the week to understanding timely and important topics. Please come prepared and ready to engage. Your grade will be based on whether you come to class and make meaningful contributions often, sometimes, rarely, or never (corresponding to an A, B, C, or D respectively).

There will also be an *online discussion board* where you can post thoughts and questions for each other to deepen your peer-to-peer interaction. This is meant to be a space for you to ask each other questions, share links to articles or other online content that you found relevant and interesting, share your thoughts and opinions, etc. I will *not* be grading participation on these boards, this is meant to be a resource for *you* to help each other succeed in the course.

Midterm Paper and Exam (40%)

- **Country expert writing assignment (50% of midterm grade; 20% of overall grade):** Early in the semester, you will be asked to select a country from a list that I will provide. You will complete two short writing assignments about that country, one will be part of your midterm exam and the other will be part of your final exam. Please note that you should aim to follow this country in the news and become an ‘expert’ on it during this semester. You can use your knowledge of this country to apply theories and concepts from class and also use your country knowledge to contribute to discussions. The first writing assignment will ask you to evaluate whether your country is a democracy or dictatorship. I will provide a rubric early in the semester. The paper will be 4-5 pages (double-spaced, 12-inch font, 1-inch margins) and you should post it to Canvas by **Sunday, February 27 at 11:59pm.**
- **Midterm exam (50% of midterm grade; 20% of overall grade):** The second part of your midterm exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer essay questions. The midterm exam will take place in class on **Thursday, March 3.**

Final Paper and Exam (50%)

- **Country expert writing assignment 2 (50% of final exam grade, 25% of overall grade):** For your second country expert writing assignment, you will be asked to describe the democratic institutions of your country and assess their strengths and weaknesses. A rubric will be provided in the second half of the course. This should be a 6-7 page essay (double-spaced, 12-inch font, 1-inch margins) and is due on Canvas by **Sunday, April 24 at 11:59 p.m.**
- **Final exam (50% of final exam grade, 25% of overall grade):** The final exam is cumulative although it emphasizes material from the second half of the course. As with the midterm, it will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer essay questions and will be online. The final exam date and time will be set by the Registrar.

GRADING POLICIES

Grading scale:

93-100	A	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D
		83-86	B	73-76	C	<60	F
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-		

Late papers and exams: *Late papers* will be penalized 4 percentage points per day (or 2 percentage points every 12 hours) beyond the deadline including weekends and holidays, except in the case of a verified emergency or documented medical excuse. So, say a paper is due at 11:59pm on Wednesday and would have received a 95 percent if submitted on time—that same paper would receive a 93 percent if submitted at 11:59

am on Thursday and a 91 percent if submitted at 11:59 pm on Thursday. *Late exams* will not be accepted without my permission.

Re-grading policy: You have one week after your graded work is returned to request a re-grade. You should submit a written statement to me via email explaining why you think your work deserves to be re-graded. Remember that after re-evaluating your work, your grade may remain unchanged or could be adjusted higher or lower.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be Thursdays from 2:30-4:00. In order to be maximally flexible, you have the option of doing in-person or virtual office hours. To help me coordinate, I ask all students to sign up for a slot in advance by following [this link](#) to Google Sheets. You do not need a google account to access the form or sign up for a slot. Time slots are in ten-minute increments and you can reserve up to two slots/day. If you would like to meet for longer than 20 minutes, please send me an email and we can make arrangements. If you are unable to make regular office hours due to a time conflict, email me to arrange another meeting time.

The Zoom link to office hours if you prefer virtual can be found in Canvas.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity Code

All students are required to follow the University's Academic Integrity Code. If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements of the University's Academic Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported appropriately. You can find more information about the University's Academic Integrity Code here:

<http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>

In addition to following the Academic Integrity Code, I want to make it crystal clear that graded assignments must be done individually. You cannot collaborate with fellow students on any paper or exam. Since the two exams will be done remotely, you are free to use your notes and any other sources you can find but you cannot collaborate with a fellow student in any way and you cannot plagiarize.

Other Policies

All University-wide policies apply to this course. For more detailed information on the university's policies on discrimination, emergency preparedness, and academic support and access for those with disabilities, see Appendix A below.

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW (BY SESSION)

<u>Week</u>	<u>Session</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	1	Jan	10	Monday	Intro
1	2	Jan	13	Thursday	What is CP?
2		Jan	17	Monday	MLK
2	3	Jan	20	Thursday	The origins of strong states
3	4	Jan	24	Monday	Weak and failed states
3	5	Jan	27	Thursday	Democracy
4	6	Jan	31	Monday	Dictatorship
4	7	Feb	3	Thursday	Dictatorship
5	8	Feb	7	Monday	Econ origins
5	9	Feb	10	Thursday	Econ vs culture
6	10	Feb	14	Monday	Culture and transitions
6	11	Feb	17	Thursday	Transitions/China debate prep
7	12	Feb	21	Monday	China debate
7	13	Feb	24	Thursday	Democratic backsliding
8	14	Feb	28	Monday	Midterm review
8	15	March	3	Thursday	Midterm
9		March	7	Monday	Spring Break
9		March	10	Thursday	Spring Break
10	16	March	14	Monday	Presidential v parl
10	17	March	17	Thursday	Presidential v parl
11	18	March	21	Monday	Majoritarian vs PR
11	19	March	24	Thursday	Majoritarian vs PR
12	20	March	28	Monday	Parties/cleavages
12	21	March	31	Thursday	Parties/cleavages
13	22	April	4	Monday	Federalism/Iraq debate prep
13	23	April	7	Thursday	Iraq debate
14	24	April	11	Monday	“Please vote for me”
14	25	April	14	Thursday	Corruption
15	26	April	18	Monday	Civil War
15	27	April	21	Thursday	Civil War
16	28	April	25	Monday	Final review

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

The schedule below is an overview of the readings, tasks, and topics for each session. Make sure to check the table above for the correct dates for each session.

Part I: Course Intro

Sessions 1 and 2: What is Comparative Politics?

Main Reading:

- *Foundations*, Chapter 1 (for Session 1).
- Samuels, David. 2013. *Comparative Politics*: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-27) (for Session 2).

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic*: The scientific method, causal inference, and the “gold standard” of experiments
- Complete the short survey by end of day Tuesday.

Recommended:

- *Foundations*, Chapter 2 (for Session 2)

Part II: Political Regimes and Regime Change

Sessions 3 and 4: The State

Main Reading:

- Read *Foundations*, Chapter 4
- Jackson, Robert and Carl Rosberg. 1986. “Sovereignty and Underdevelopment: Juridical Statehood in the African Crisis.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24(1), pp. 1-31.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic*: Does state capacity explain global variation in response to the Corona pandemic?
- Bosancianu et al, “Political and Social Correlates of Covid-10 Mortality”

Recommended Reading:

- Tilly, Charles. 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime” in *Bringing the State Back In* (eds. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol): pp. 169-185.

Session 5: Democracy

Main Reading:

- Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-16).
- Przeworski, Adam et al. 2000. *Democracy and Development*: Chapter 1 (pp. 13-36).

There is no discussion prep this week.

Sessions 6 and 7: Dictatorship

Main Reading:

- Chapter 8 pp 155-174.
- Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. "Elections under Authoritarianism" *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 403-422.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* Classifying countries as democracies or dictatorships: The case of Kenya.
- Pick country for paper assignments.
- Review rubric for first paper.

Sessions 8 and 9: Economic and Cultural Determinants of Regime Type

Main Reading:

- *Foundations* Chapter 5, pp. 71-89.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*: Chapters 2-3 (pp. 15-87) (skim).
- *Foundations* Chapter 6, pp. 97-116.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* Explaining Authoritarianism in Iran: Is it oil or Islam?
- Asanloo, Arzoo. 2013. "Iran," in *Case Studies in Comparative Politics* (ed. by David Samuels): Chapter 11 (pp. 407-447).

Recommended Reading:

- Ross, Michael. 2012. *The Oil Curse*: Chapters 1 (pp. 1-25) and 3 (pp. 63-109).
- Putnam, Robert, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti. 1994. *Making Democracy Work*: Chapters 1 (pp.3-14) and skim Chapter 4 (pp. 83-120).

Sessions 10 and 11: Cultural Determinants (continued)/Regime Transitions

Main Reading:

- *Foundations*, Chapter 7.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* The role of surveys in measuring political attitudes and opinions, and what happens when questions are sensitive.
- Read ["Are Telephone Polls Understating Support for Trump?" \(Pew Research Center\)](#)

Session 12: Debate! Will China Democratize?

Main Reading and Discussion Prep:

- Mertha, Andrew. 2013. "China" in *Case Studies in Comparative Politics* (ed. David Samuels): Chapter 10 (pp. 365-406).
- Rowen, Henry. 2007. "When Will the Chinese People Be Free?" *Journal of Democracy* 18(3): 38-52.
- Pei, Minxin. 2007. "How Will China Democratize?" *Journal of Democracy* 18(3): 53-57.
- Yang, Dali. 2007. "China's Long March to Freedom," *Journal of Democracy* 18(3): 58-64.
- Cowen, Tyler "Why China May Never Democratize" available [here](#).

Sessions 13: Democratic Backsliding

Main Reading:

- Marcinkiewicz, Kamil and Mary Stegmaier. "[Poland appears to be dismantling its own hard-won democracy](#)" *The Washington Post*. July 21, 2017.
- Lust, Ellen and David Waldner. 2015. "Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding" Washington, DC: USAID: 1-15.
- Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. Chapters TBD

Sessions 14-15: Midterm Review/Midterm

Important reminders:

- Monday will be for midterm review; the midterm is on Thursday.
- Review the midterm review format and list of midterm IDs.
- Email me by **Friday 2/25**, 11:59pm with requested review items.
- Your first papers are due on Canvas by **Sunday, 2/27** at 11:59pm.

Part III: Designing Democracy

Sessions 16-17: Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies

Main Reading:

- *Foundations* Chapter 14, pp. 351-364
- *Foundations* Chapter 10

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic*: Are there perils to presidentialism?
- *Foundations* Chapter 14, pp. 379-391

Sessions 18-19: Elections and Electoral Systems

Main Reading:

- *Foundations*, Chapter 11

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* What reforms, if any, should we make to the electoral system in the U.S.? (And it's not just about the electoral college).
- Read "This voting reform solves 2 of America's biggest political problems" (Vox, available [here](#))
- Read "A new voting system could fix American democracy: Ranked-choice ballots" (NBC news, available [here](#))

Sessions 20-21: Social Cleavages and Party Systems

Main Reading:

- *Foundations* Chapter 12
- *Foundations* Chapter 14, pp. 374-377

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* Should Lebanon reform its consociational system and, if so, how?
- Lijphardt. 2004. "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies" *Journal of Democracy* 15(2): 96-109.
- Reilly, B. 2002. "Electoral Systems for Divided Societies" *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 156-170.
- Read "How sectarianism helped destroy Lebanon's economy" (Foreign Policy, available [here](#)) and "As protests continue, Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing stalemate must end" (The conversation, available [here](#)).

Sessions 22-23: Federalism/Iraq Debate

Main Reading:

- *Foundations*, Chapter 13, pp. 321-332.
- Chapter 14, 377-379.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* Did institutional design in Iraq contribute to the rise of ISIS?
- Dawisha, Adeed and Karen Dawisha. 2003. "How to Build a Democratic Iraq" *Foreign Affairs* (May/June).
- Brancati, Dawn. 2004. "Can Federalism Stabilize Iraq?" *The Washington Quarterly* 27(2): 7-21.
- International Crisis Group. 2012. "Déjà vu All over Again: Iraq's Escalating Political Crisis" *Middle East Report* (30 July).
- International Crisis Group. 2014. "Iraq's Jihadi Jack-in-the-Box" *Policy Briefing No. 38* (June 20).

Session 24: Please Vote for Me (Extra Credit Opportunity)

Session 25: Corruption

Main reading:

- Vaishnav, Milan. 2017. *When Crime Pays*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1 and 5 (pp. 3-24 and 157-204).
- Other readings TBD

Sessions 26 and 27: Civil War

Main Reading:

- International Crisis Group. 2012. "Colombia: Peace at Last?" *Latin America Report No. 45*.
- Collier, Paul. 2006. "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy," *unpublished manuscript*.

Discussion Prep:

- *Topic:* Designing effective reintegration interventions for post-conflict societies.
- Read "Creating Jobs to End War" (Chicago Policy Review, available [here](#))
- Recommended: Blattman, Chris and Jeannie Annan. 2016. "Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion? A Field Experiment with High Risk Men in a Fragile State" *American Political Science Review* 110(1): 1-17.

Session 28: Spillover and Final Review

Important reminders:

- There is no lecture session or new reading this week.
- Review the final exam format and list of final IDs.
- Email me by **Friday, 4/22** at 11:59pm with requested review items.
- Your second papers are due on Canvas by **Sunday 4/24** at 11:59pm.

Appendix A: University Policies

Prohibition against Discriminatory Harassment

American University expressly prohibits any form of discriminatory harassment including sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The university is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under federal or local laws in its programs and activities. If you experience any of the above, you have the option of filing a report with the AU Department of Public Safety (202-885-2527) or the Office of the Dean of Students (dos@american.edu or 202-885-3300). Please keep in mind that all faculty and staff – with the exception of counselors in the Counseling Center, staff in the Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence, medical providers in the Student Health Center, and ordained clergy in the Kay Spiritual Life Center – who are aware of or witness this conduct are required to report this information to the university, regardless of the location of the incident. For more information, including a list of supportive resources on and off-campus, contact OASIS: The Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence (www.american.edu/sexualassault, oasis@american.edu or 202-885-7070), or the Office of the Dean of Student (www.american.edu/ocl/dos).

Emergency Preparedness

In an emergency, AU will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (<http://www.american.edu/emergency/>) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university- wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college- specific information.

Disability Services

The Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) supports the academic development and educational goals of all American University students and is committed to providing access for individuals with disabilities within the university's diverse community. Please contact me and ASAC as soon as possible if you would like to arrange access to disability resources and services, including for test-taking. ASAC is located in the Mary Graydon Center (MGC), Room 243 x3360 Fax: x1042 asac@american.edu M–F: 9am–5pm Website: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/>