

FP230: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2019
Nimitz G114
M, W, F: 08:55-09:45; 09:55-10:45
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Objectives and Description

During the last thirty years there have been extraordinary changes in the political systems of the world, especially in countries outside Western Europe and North America. The peaceful collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is among the most dramatic. However, profound changes, though less noticed, have also occurred in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In these regions, democracy seems to be emerging as the preferred type of political system. Paradoxically, at the same time citizens in long-established democracies in Western Europe and the United States have expressed dissatisfaction with the way democracy is functioning.

Political systems throughout the world face a number of similar challenges in establishing and maintaining democracy. This course is based on the premise that through comparison of these challenges we can begin to make some generalizations concerning the variables that affect the relative success or failure of distinct countries in balancing the dual challenges of representation and stability inherent in all democratic systems.

The course is divided into four sections. The first deals with theoretical and methodological issues in the field of comparative politics. We will begin by briefly defining comparative politics and outlining the historical development of approaches to its study. The second section of the course focuses on differentiating political regimes, and the actual mechanics of the wide variety of types of states that exist in the world. The third section focuses on the institutional arrangements and political cultural attributes that affect the governability and potential longevity of regimes, especially in democratic systems. The last section of the course applies what we have learned to a wide variety of case studies, including an industrialized democracy (Great Britain), post-communist and communist societies (Russia and China), and so-called developing world (Nigeria).

Materials

There is only one required textbook for this class, but a number of supplementary materials. Those marked with asterisks (**) in the syllabus are available electronically on the class's Blackboard page. We will use a portion of each class for discussion, so it is important to keep up with the reading assignments. The textbook is:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2019. Foundations of Comparative Politics. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press.

Requirements and Grading

Participation and Attendance	10%
Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	10%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	20%
Group presentation	10%
Final Exam	25%

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Participation (10%): The participatory component of the course is composed of class discussion and participation. Midshipmen are expected to arrive to class having completed the readings assigned for that day.

Written assignments (10% each):

Students will be required to write two essays (no more than 4-5 pages, Times New Roman, double-spaced) in response to prompts and detailed instructions that I will distribute in class. The first essay will be distributed September 4 and due on September 11, and the second handed out on October 2 and due on October 9. I will grade each essay on its organization, writing, logic, and substantive content.

Exam 1 (15%): The first exam will be held on September 18. It will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer, covering materials from class and the readings in your text.

Exam 2 (20%): The second exam will be held in class on October 28. This exam will consist of short-answer questions and possibly an essay question.

Designing Democracy Group Presentation (10%):

On October 21, 23, and 25, we will engage in an in-class exercise/assignment dealing with institutional design. On October 18, the class will be divided into small groups and assigned a specific country. Each group will then design the “ideal” constellation of institutions (Government system; Branches of government; Number of electoral districts; Electoral formula; District magnitude; etc.) to foment democracy and stability, given that country’s political culture and history. Groups will research the socio-linguistic, religious, and cultural realities of that country in order to justify their choice of institution. Groups must be able to explain how their institutions would, for example, help the country avoid factionalism and build consensus, balance political representation with action, and avoid social unrest. You will have the class period of October 21 to work together on this. On October 23 and 25 each group will give a concise eight-minute presentation of their findings, including justification.

Final (25%): The final is cumulative, and will consist of a variety of formats.

The standardized grade scale applies:

90-100	A
80-90	B
70-80	C
60-70	D
Below 60	F

Attendance and Classroom Conduct

This course is interactive, and midshipmen are required to stay awake and participate in a *meaningful* way. Laptop computers, cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices are not allowed during class sessions unless otherwise designated (student cell phone use in class is my pet peeve). Violators will face grade penalties decided by the instructor.

Midshipmen are expected to come to class with a competent understanding of the assigned readings. They should be able to identify key points of each reading and evaluate the claims made within the greater context of the course and the current political environment. Midshipmen are expected to be respectful of the opinions of others. Midshipmen may consume food and drink in class so long as they are not disruptive. In accordance with USNA policy, the use of tobacco products of any type is prohibited in class.

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Academic Honesty

Midshipmen are expected to exhibit the highest integrity in all of their activities concerning this course. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating *of any type*, will not be tolerated and will be cause for the initiation of an honor proceeding. Students should be careful to attribute material properly whenever there is any doubt.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's words, ideas or work – whether accidentally or deliberately – as your own, without acknowledgment of sources. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is an honor violation, and all plagiarists will be treated as honor offenders, in addition to receiving a grade of zero for the plagiarized work. Plagiarism may include:

- Copying written work from another source, published or unpublished, without proper acknowledgment of the original;
- Buying papers online or from a paper mill;
- Resubmitting or double submitting work to two different classes;
- Using gouge or company files;
- Submitting someone else's work as your own. The above list should not be treated as exhaustive.

If you are not sure what plagiarism is, find out. Midshipmen are responsible for knowing and understanding what constitutes plagiarism. If in doubt, document your sources, or see me to ask further questions. Please take a close look at the Library's very helpful web site on avoiding plagiarism, which can be found at <http://libguides.usna.edu/plagiarism>

Late Policy/Make-Ups

All quizzes are to be taken at the scheduled time. The only exception to this is for an academy-approved absence with proper documentation. Be forewarned: the make-up quiz will be tougher than the original. Failure to take an exam or quiz at the scheduled time will result in a grade of zero (0). **I will not accept late papers** (so do not wait to the last minute to write it).

Schedule of Assignments

Below is a schedule of assignments for the class. All readings not from the textbooks can be found on the course's Blackboard page. Note that these are subject to change at my discretion; while I do not anticipate making changes, I will notify you at least one week in advance if it is necessary to do so. However, if there are to be any changes to the below assignments, I will let you know as far in advance as possible. All readings are to be completed by the beginning of each class.

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COURSE PROGRAM

1. BUILDING BLOCKS

A. Intro to Comparative Politics

August 19: No reading

B. Science and Politics

August 21: Science

CGG Chapter 1 (skim) and 2

August 23: Politics

CGG Chapter 3

2. THE STATE AND POLITICAL REGIMES

A: The Nation-State and State Building

August 26: The State

CGG Chapter 4

August 28: The *Predatory* State

**Watch "Game of Thrones: Why Dragons Halt Progress" before reading Tilly:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDdKmx0PW7s>

** Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

B. Political Regimes

August 30: Democracy and Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 8

September 3 and 4: Hybrid Regimes

Essay 1 instructions handed out

**Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2).

C. Economic Origins of Democracy

September 6

CGG Chapter 5

D. Political Culture

September 9, 11, 13:

Essay 1 due in class

CGG Chapter 6

**Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1):65-78.

**Sander, Thomas H., and Robert D. Putnam. 2010. "Still Bowling Alone? The Post-9/11 Split." *Journal of Democracy* 21 (1):9-16.

**Inglehart, Ronald, and Wayne E. Baker. 2000. "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values." *American Sociological Review* 65 (1):19-51.

September 16: Catch up and review

September 18: **Exam 1**

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2. INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

A. Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Hybrid Political Systems

September 20, 23, 27:

CGG Chapter 10

**Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69

**Hiroi, Taeko, and Sawa Omori. 2009. "Perils of parliamentarism? Political systems and the stability of democracy revisited." *Democratization* 16 (3):485-507.

B. Electoral Systems

September 30, October 2, 4:

Essay 2 instructions handed out

CGG Chapter 11

**Blais, André, and Louis Massicotte. 2002. "Electoral Systems." In *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, ed. L. LeDuc, R. G. Niemi and P. Norris. London: Sage Publications (pp.40-69)

C. Political Party Systems

October 7, 9, 11:

Essay 2 due in class

CGG Chapter 12

**Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2

D. Federalism

October 16:

CGG Chapter 13, sections 1 and 2 (pp. 321-339)

**Lijphart, Arend. 1999. "Division of Power: The Federal-Unitary and Centralized-Decentralized Contrasts" in *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press (pp.185-199)

E. Institutional Design: the United States

October 18:

Groups assigned for Designing Democracy project

** Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. *A Different Democracy. American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Chapter 2: 25-56)

October 21: Catch up; Opportunity for groups to finish preparing presentations

October 23, 25: *In class*: Designing democracy presentations

See CGG Chapter 14 as an important reference

October 28: **Exam 2**

4. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

The United Kingdom

October 30, November 1 and 4:

**Danziger and Smith, Chapter 13 (pp. 355-378)

Russia

November 6, 8, and 13:

**Danziger and Smith, Chapter 15 (pp. 416-441)

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China

November 15, 18, and 20:

**McCormick, Chapter 7 (pp. 248-284)

Nigeria

November 22, 25, and 27:

**McCormick, Chapter 10 (pp. 400-442)

Wrapping up

December 2: Catch up day

December 4: Final conclusions; review for exam

Final Exam: Date and time TBD