

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Course Description: In this course, we will study some of the foundational questions of political science through comparison: What explains the emergence of the national state? Why are some countries have democratic systems and others dictatorships? Why do countries sometimes transition from one system to the other? Does democracy lead to economic equality? Why do some seemingly stable countries suddenly undergo events such as revolutions or civil wars?

Course Goals: By expanding the subjects of our analysis beyond the United States, we will gain insights about politics in general. In addition to learning about the questions that have attracted the interests of political scientists, we will sharpen our ability to dissect and build upon comparative arguments.

Assignments: The assignments of this course are designed to put you in the position of a professional scholar, which requires you to comment and write about others' work and how it can be improved. The analytical and writing skills you will develop are useful well beyond academia.

- *Participation* (20 percent): I intentionally list this first because it is extremely important. The advantage of taking a course, rather than just reading a set of books on your own, is that you get to participate in a learning community. Through studying this material together, we have the opportunity to each learn more than we might have on our own. This requires that each of us do what we can to make this an optimal learning environment for each other. At a minimum, this means preparing the course materials before class, coming to class ready to discuss them, listening to each other, and respecting each other.
- *Two Response Papers* (15 percent each): Response papers give you the opportunity to critically evaluate and reflect upon a reading or set of readings from the course. The purpose of your reflection should be to evaluate the question the author has posed, the argument the author offers, and the support upon which this argument is based. The goal is neither to summarize nor to "take down" the author. Rather, it is to think about how we as social scientists can better answer the research question. Being able to respond to the existing literature is the first step to building upon it. The first response paper, which should cover a reading or set of readings from the first 5 weeks of the course, is due at the end of Week 5. The second is due at the end of Week 10. Each response paper must be approximately 2 single-spaced pages composed using Georgia or Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins.
- *Term Paper* (40 percent): For those of you who plan to conduct further academic study of the materials covered in this course, the term paper can be the start of your research agenda. For those of you who do not plan to do so, the assignment will serve as an opportunity for you to compose a writing sample, which will be useful in job applications.

- *Most-Similar Systems Design* (10 percent): In this assignment, you will construct a causal argument using a most-similar systems design to explain a difference between two countries. This could serve as the basis for a future paper.

Diversity Statement: My goal is to create an inclusive environment in which students of all identities and backgrounds feel empowered to participate. Scholarship is a social enterprise that is enriched by mutual respect, a spirit of constructive criticism, and an embrace of diverse perspectives. If you have ideas for how I can better meet your needs or those of your classmates, please let me know by approaching me, sending me an email, or using the anonymous feedback form on the section website.

1. Introduction: What is comparative politics? How is comparative politics studied?

2. What is a state?

Required:

- Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation."
- Scott, James C. 1999. "Cities, People, and Language," in *Seeing Like a State*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

3. How do states form?

- Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 169–191.
- Levi, Margaret. 1988. "Introduction" in *Of Rule and Revenue*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

3. Is state formation in the postcolonial world different from that of Western Europe?

Required:

- Herbst, Jeffrey Ira. 2000. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chp. 1 "The Challenge of State-Building in Africa" (pp. 11–31).
- Centeno, Miguel. 2002. *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America*. State College: Penn State University Press.

4. How did states form in the Arab world and are they uniquely weak?

Required:

- Lustick, Ian. 1997. "The Absence of Middle Eastern Great Powers: Political 'Backwardness' in Historical Perspective," *International Organization* (Autumn): 653–83.
- Ahram, Ariel and Ellen Lust. 2016. "The Decline and Fall of the Arab State," *Survival* 58 (2): 7–34.

5. What is a Nation?

Required:

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 5–33.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. Pp. 1–9.

6. What is different about democratic states?

Required:

- Przeworski, Adam. 2003. “Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense” In *The Democracy Sourcebook*, eds. Robert Dahl, Ian Shapiro and José Antonio Cheibub. Cambridge: MIT Press, 12–17.
- Diamond, Larry. 1990. “Three Paradoxes of Democracy.” *Journal of Democracy* 1 (3): 48–60.

7. How do states become democratic? Is it a matter of a widespread democratic culture or merely of elites deciding to share power with each other?

- Woodberry, Robert. 2012. “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy,” *American Political Science Review* 106 (May): 244–74.
- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: pp 10–50.

8. Does wealth lead to democracy?

- 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.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world_politics/v049/49.2przeworski.html

9. Is economic equality a cause of democracy?

- Boix, Carles. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Introduction (pp. 1–18), Chp. 3 (pp. 110–129).
- Ansell, Ben and David Samuels. 2010. “Inequality and Democratization: A Contractarian Approach,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (12): 1543–74.

10. Is a robust civil society needed to ensure the quality of democracy?

Required:

- Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chp. 1 (pp. 3–16) and Chp. 4: “Explaining Institutional Performance” (pp. 83–120).
Recommended: skim the rest of the book.

11. Why do oil-rich countries seem to be systematically more likely to be dictatorships?

- Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53 (2001): 325–61.
- Stephen Haber and Victor Menaldo, “Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse,” *American Political Science Review* (February 2011): 1–26.

12. Why do transitions to democracy seem to come in bunches?

- Gunitsky, Seva. 2014. “From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century,” *International Organization* 68 (Summer): 561–97.

13. How do democracies work? What is the role of political parties?

Required:

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper Collins, 36–50, 114–141.

14. How do democracies break down?

- Bermeo, Nancy. 2003. *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1–65.

15. In-class midterm

16. Does democracy lead to equality?

- Meltzer, Allan H. and Scott F. Richard, “A Rational Theory of the Size of Government,” *Journal of Political Economy* 89 (October): 914–27.
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (3): 564–81.

17. Why don't the poor vote to take from the rich?

- Shapiro, Ian. 2002. “Why the Poor Don't Soak the Rich,” *Daedalus* 131 (Winter): 118–128.
- De La O, Ana and Jonathan Rodden. 2008. “[Does Religion Distract the Poor? Income and Issue Voting Around the World.](#)” *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (4/5): 437–476.

18. How do nondemocracies work?

- Kapuściński, Ryszard. 1982. *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 7–58.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chp. 1 (1 –31).

19. How do autocracies die?

- Svoboda, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–18.
- Magaloni, Beatriz. 2008. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 175–193.

20. Why do some political groups work more effectively than others?

- Olson, Mancur. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 5–52.

21. Why do some countries experience revolutions?

- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3–43. Orbis online book: <http://orbis.library.yale.edu/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=2884&recCount=50&recPointer=0&bibId=9225993>
- Kuran, Timur. 1991. "[Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989](#)." *World Politics* 44 (1): 7–48.

22. Why did protests erupt in the Arab World in 2011? Why did they only some succeed?

Required:

- Brownlee, Jason, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds. 2013. "[Tracking the Arab Spring: Why the Modest Harvest?](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 24 (4): 29–44.

23. Why do some countries experience military coups?

- TBD

24. What causes civil war?

- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "[Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War](#)." *American Political Science Review*, 97 (1): 75–90.
- Kalyvas, Stathis. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 173–210.

25. Ethnic conflict 1: Why do ethnic groups fight? Ethnic War in Yugoslavia (Nov 29)

Required:

- Posen, Barry. 1993. "[The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict](#)." In *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 103–24.
- Mueller, John. 2000. "[The Banality of Ethnic War](#)." *International Security* 25 (1): 42–70.

26. Ethnic conflict 2: How can ethnic conflict be resolved?

Required:

- Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Chp. 15 (pp. 563–601).