

PS00300: Comparative Politics

Summer 2020 | Department of Political Science | University of Pittsburgh

General Information

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Classes:

Mon/Wed/Fri 11 a.m to 1.15 p.m.
06/22/2020 to 08/01/2020

Office hours:

Mon/Wed, 3-5 p.m., via Zoom
Schedule by e-mail in advance

Course Rationale

In this introductory course of Comparative Politics, students will learn how domestic politics, political institutions (e.g., presidentialism vs. parliamentarism), and political behavior (e.g., identity and culture) operate and interact in different countries. Consider the cases of Hungary and Venezuela. While the two countries have followed completely different historical paths and are governed by parties from opposite ideological views, both have seen the profuse erosion of their democracy in the recent years. Why is it the case? In this course, students will learn how to recognize and interpret political events around the world (as the ones from Venezuela and Hungary) based on the relevant and widely used theories of the field.

Our course will also ask questions putting the U.S. political situation in comparative perspective. Is the (American-like) liberal-conservative cleavage found in every country of the world? Was Barack Obama the first politician from an underrepresented social group to become the head of government of a democratic country? Were Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton the first women to get close to the (vice-)presidential office in the Americas?

We often see political events of different countries in the news, social media, and popular culture. It is not always the case, though, that we have the time to recognize these events and to compare them to the politics of our own country. It does not mean we are not interested! In most cases, it is the lack of time and background knowledge playing a stronger role in our lives. Even though this course will be extremely helpful to Political Science majors, students from different majors (or those who are still undecided about their major or future career) are welcome to join. The course is shaped in a way that, no matter the background, students will be able to respond to those questions by the end

of the term. In this sense, the only prerequisite is that students should be interested in learning how politics work around the world.

Course Structure and Technology

The course's structure is oriented towards helping students to critically assess political events by designing their own research by the end of the term. It is possible due to the course's structure. It is divided into two blocks of three weeks each: (1) Regime Type & Institutions, and (2) Comparative Political Behavior.

Each week will have synchronous and asynchronous classes. Asynchronous classes will be recorded by the instructor via Panopto and made available at Canvas. Whenever possible, they will consist of relatively short instructional videos (10-15 minutes) and YouTube links and will include open-ended questions to be answered at Canvas. In some cases, they will require students to visit websites and collect information during the class in order to respond the questions. Answers are always due at 11:59 p.m. of the day of the class. For instance, on 06/24 students will participate asynchronously in a class on "The Comparative Method." There will be questions on Canvas that students must answer before 11:59 p.m. of the same day (06/24) in order to be awarded the full participation grade.

Synchronous classes will involve debates where all students are expected to engage with each other. In many of these, an external guest will be invited to speak about her/his own experience related to the content of the course. It will be followed by Q&A, when students are expected to engage with the guest in order to be awarded the full participation grade. These sessions will take place in the time of class (11 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.) via Zoom. The Zoom link will be made available at Canvas.

The requirements and grading scheme of the course are described below and include participation in all classes, writing an essay ("Newspaper opinion article") and an academic paper ("Final paper"), and taking the final exam. There is also an opportunity for extra points.

To participate in these activities, students are expected to have Internet access and a device that allows accessing Canvas, videos (e.g., YouTube and Panopto), video conferences (i.e., Zoom), PDFs, and MS Word/Excel (or similar editors).

Goals

This course provides the analytical knowledge and practical skills to interpret comparative politics worldwide. Students will be able to distinguish and use the main concepts of the field, as well as to examine their applications by scholars and practitioners through the scientific method. In the end of the course, students will be able to design their own analysis based on the main concepts of Comparative Politics.

Grading Scale

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D
93-96	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	<60	F
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-		

Graded Activities

▪ **Participation (25%)**

A participation grade is awarded for every class. The final participation grade is the sum of the grade awarded in each class.

During asynchronous classes, the student will be asked to answer questions posted in Canvas. The participation grade will be awarded when the responses are adequate and related to the content of the readings.

During synchronous classes, the student is expected to participate by asking questions, engaging in the discussions by expressing her/his opinion, and relating the content of the readings to the content of the class. Vocal participation (rather than participation in the chat) is encouraged. Presence and participation are not the same – presence is not enough to be graded.

Bonus points may be distributed throughout the semester based on the quality of participation.

▪ **Newspaper opinion article (25%)**

The student must select a country of interest before 06/26 and send it to the instructor. This country will be used both for this assignment and in the final paper and cannot be the United States.

In this activity, students will write an article that could be published in a blog or newspaper (600-800 words). In this article, the student will analyze an important undemocratic event that has taken place in the country choice recently (last 5 years).

The analysis must include (a) a description of the event, (b) the concept of democracy according to one of the readings from the course, (c) a brief discussion on whether the country is democratic based on international rankings (e.g., Freedom House, Polity IV) and this concept, (d) an assessment of the event based on the concept of democracy (i.e., why is it undemocratic?), and (e) a conclusion arguing how this undemocratic event could affect the country's level of democracy.

This article is due on 07/10 at 11:59 p.m. and must be delivered through Canvas. Detailed instructions will be provided.

- **Final paper (25%)**

Using the same country, the student will write a short academic paper (1,500-2,000 words) discussing the institutional framework of the country and how it relates to its behavioral aspects.

During the course, we will discuss different institutions, e.g., federal vs. unitary state, parliamentarism vs. presidentialism, proportional representation vs. majoritarian elections, closed vs. open list. They interact with aspects of how people behave improving or worsening democracy.

In this paper, the student will discuss each of these institutions and argue whether they should remain as they are or be reformed. This discussion must include (a) a description of the country's institutional framework, (b) a discussion of the country's behavioral context, (c) a literature-based discussion of the pros and cons of each institutional type, (d) the implications of each institutional type to the selected country based on its context, and (e) an argumentation on whether one of these institutions should be reformed.

This article is due on 07/31 at 11:59 p.m. and must be delivered through Canvas. Detailed instructions will be provided.

- **Final Exam (25%)**

In the asynchronous classes, students will be asked to reflect on the most important terms of the field (the "key terms"). These "reflections" will be based on different tools: content of the readings, presentations of the instruction, questions to be answered online, etc. In every class, the instructor will present a list of "key terms" that students should be familiar with.

The final exam will contain a number of "key terms" that the student must explain. The explanation should contain the conceptualization of the "key term," how the term relates to another "key term" selected by the student, a practical example of the "key term," and a statement of the term's relevance.

The exam will be posted on Canvas at 9:00 a.m. on 07/31 and the student must submit it before 3:00 p.m. of the same day. Detailed instructions will be provided.

- **Extra: Movie analysis (+5%)**

This is an opportunity for students to supplement their grade.

Students are invited to watch the documentary "Please Vote for Me" (available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD1QsX2hOnk>). This movie describes the first election for class monitor in a 3rd grade class in Wuhan, China. Whereas this is not the type of elections traditionally studied in comparative politics, it includes several features discussed in class.

A list of open-ended questions will be posted on Canvas at 9:00 a.m. on 07/17. They ask students to relate the movie to the content of the course. Students must submit their answers by 11:59 p.m. of that day.

Class Policies

▪ **Nature of times:**

This course takes place during the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the university to adjust many of its practices. The first change was that this course, originally planned to be face-to-face, will be conducted online.

This does not affect the content of the course. Yet, it is totally understandable that some students may face additional difficulties. If the student believes s/he will face or is facing a challenge that is not covered by this syllabus, s/he is invited to contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the matter. Whereas some cases may not be solved by the instructor, he will be mindful of the situation and try to provide solutions on a case-by-case analysis.

▪ **Preparation for class:**

The student must do the readings before the class. For instance, if a chapter from Dahl's "Polyarchy" will be discussed on 06/29, the student should have read the chapter prior to this class. There are approximately 100 pages of mandatory reading per week (some more, some less) and since some of these readings are from actual research in Comparative Politics, they will be challenging. The slides of the instructor, which will be posted on Canvas after every class, do not substitute for the readings.

▪ **Make-up exams:**

If the student has any case of verified emergency or documented medical excuse that forces missing an exam and the student would like to have a make-up exam, the student must send the documented evidence to jog118@pitt.edu at least 72 hours BEFORE the exam. The make-up exam will take place before the official exam. If the emergency occurs in the 72 hours preceding the exam, the student should contact the instructor up to 24 hours after the exam to discuss the situation.

▪ **Late papers:**

Late papers will be penalized with 5% of the grade per day, including weekends and holidays, except in the case of a verified emergency or documented medical excuse.

- **Re-grading policy:**

You have 7 days after your graded work is returned to request a re-grade. You should submit a written statement of at least 150 words to jog118@pitt.edu 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.

- **Academic integrity:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity (<http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>).

- **Special provision:**

If the student has a disability for which s/he are or may be requesting an accommodation, s/he is encouraged to contact both me and the Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify the student's disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

- **Excused absence:**

If the student has any case of verified emergency or documented medical excuse that forces missing one or more classes and the student would like to have her/his absence excused, the student must send the documented evidence to jog118@pitt.edu.

Grading and Deadlines

Date	Topic	Grade (%)
06/26 (Fri)	Choose a country	-
-	Participation*	25%
07/10 (Fri)	Newspaper opinion article	25%
07/17 (Fri)	Extra: Movie Analysis**	+5%
07/31 (Fri)	Final paper	25%
07/31 (Fri)	Final exam	25%

* Participation grade is based on: (1) correctly answering the questions asked in the asynchronous classes; and (2) engaging in the synchronous classes by asking questions, interacting with peers, and relating the content of the discussion to the readings of the course.

** This is a voluntary opportunity to have extra points. Students will be asked to watch a movie and answer short questions relating the movie to the content of the course.

Schedule of Classes

N	Date	Topic	Mode*
1	06/22 (Mon)	What is comparative politics?	S
2	06/24 (Wed)	The comparative method	A
3	06/26 (Fri)	Workshop on writing	S
4	06/29 (Mon)	Democracy and autocracy	A
5	07/01 (Wed)	Transitions to and from democracy	A
6	07/03 (Fri)	Debate on authoritarianism with Nikolay Artemenko	S
7	07/06 (Mon)	Types of government	A
8	07/08 (Wed)	Electoral systems	A
9	07/10 (Fri)	Debate on parliamentarism with Ben Howlett	S
10	07/13 (Mon)	Social cleavages and political parties	A
11	07/15 (Wed)	Debate on social cleavages with Ahmad al Rachwani	S
12	07/17 (Fri)	Political culture and participation	A
13	07/20 (Mon)	Identity politics	A
14	07/22 (Wed)	Pressure groups	A
15	07/24 (Fri)	Debate on mobilization with Fábio Ostermann	S
16	07/27 (Mon)	Debate on institutions and behavior in Iraq	S
17	07/29 (Wed)	What does comparative politics teach us?	S
18	07/31 (Fri)	Final session	A

* In Mode, “A” means asynchronous (recorded classes) and “S” means synchronous (live classes on Zoom).

List of Readings

*Sessions highlighted in gray will be held synchronously via Zoom.

Week 1

Class 1: What is Comparative Politics? (06/22/2020, Monday)

Practical relevance of the comparative method, key concepts of the discipline, and main theoretical approaches.

This class also includes a workshop on how to use the online tools of the Hillman Library with **Christopher Lemery** (Liaison Library – History, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Government Information).

Mandatory Readings

- Fukuyama, Francis. 2020. 30 Years of World Politics: What Has Changed? *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 11-21.
- Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal. 2007. Chapter 1: Institutions Crises in Presidential Regimes. In: *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-13.

Recommended Link and Readings

- Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop, and John McCormick. 2019. Chapter 2: Theoretical Approaches. In: *Comparative Government and Politics*, 11th edition. London: Red Globe, pp. 18-34.
- Listen to the episode “Acemoglu on Why Nations Fail” in the podcast *Econtalk* (56m42s). Link: <https://www.econtalk.org/acemoglu-on-why-nations-fail/>

Class 2: The Comparative Method (06/24/2020, Wednesday)

How political scientists compare countries and other political phenomena, and why this should be a common practice to understand politics.

Mandatory Readings

- Landman, Todd, and Edzia Carvalho. 2017. Chapter 1: Why Compare Countries? In: *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 4th edition. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 3-28.

- Landman, Todd, and Edzia Carvalho. 2017. Chapter 2: How to Compare Countries? In: *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 4th edition. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 29-56.

Class 3: Workshop on Writing (06/26/2020, Friday)

Workshop on academic writing.

Recommended Readings

- Cochrane, John H. 2005. *Writing Tips for Ph.D. Students*. Unpublished manuscript, pp. 1-12.
- Weingast, Barry R. 2010. *Caltech Rules for Writing Papers: How to Structure Your Paper and Write an Introduction*. Unpublished manuscript, pp. 1-4.

Week 2

Class 4: Democracy and Autocracy (06/29/2020, Monday)

The need for ideal types in political science, the main characteristics of democracies and autocracies, and their different sub-types.

Mandatory Readings

- Dahl, Robert A. 1971. Chapter 1: Democratization and Public Opinion. In: *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale, pp. 1-16.
- Przeworski, Adam, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. 2003. Chapter 1: Democracies and Dictatorships. In: *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13-36.
- Samuels, David J. 2012. Chapter 4: Non-Democratic Political Regimes. In: *Comparative Politics*. Boston: Pearson, pp. 91-118.

Class 5: Transitions to and from Democracy (07/01/2020, Wednesday)

When, how, and why countries transition from democracy to autocracy and vice versa.

Mandatory Readings

- Ishiyama, John T. 2012. Chapter 2: Democracy and Democratization in Historical Perspective. In: *Comparative Politics: Principles of Democracy and Democratization*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 26-66.
- Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 5-19.

Recommended Reading

- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1989 [1963]. Chapter 1: An Approach to Political Culture. In: *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Newbury Park: Sage, pp. 1-44.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo A. Delegative Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 55-69, 1994.

Class 6: Debate on Authoritarianism (07/03/2020, Friday)

External guest: Debate on Authoritarianism in Russian politics with **Nikolay Artemenko**. Nikolay is the chairman of Vremya Youth Democratic Movement with a vast experience in Russian politics, including the local coordination of the presidential campaign of Kseniya Sobchak in Saint Petersburg in 2018.

Week 3

Class 7: Types of Government (07/06/2020, Monday)

The functioning, pros, and cons of Parliamentarism vs. Presidentialism, and Federalism vs. Unitarian States.

Mandatory Readings

- Newton, Kenneth, and Jan W. van Deth. 2009. Chapter 5: Presidential and Parliamentary Government. In: *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91-104.

- Newton, Kenneth, and Jan W. van Deth. 2016. Chapter 6: Multi-Level Government: International, National and Sub-National. In: *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 105-133.

Recommended Readings

- Linz, Juan J. 1990. The Perils of Presidentialism. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 1, n. 1, pp. 51-69.
- Stepan, Alfred. 1999. Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 19-33.

Class 8: Electoral Systems (07/08/2020, Wednesday)

The functioning and implications of the main electoral systems.

Mandatory Reading

- Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2018. Chapter 13: Elections and Electoral Systems – Electoral Systems. In: *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 696-737.

Recommended Reading

- Soudriette, Richard W., and Andrew Ellis. 2006. Electoral systems Today: A Global Snapshot. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 78-88.

Class 9: Debate on Parliamentarism (07/10/2020, Friday)

External guest: Debate on Parliamentarism in Britain with **Ben Howlett**. Ben is the Managing Director of Public Policy Projects. He was Member of Parliament for Bath from 2015 to 2017 and Chair of the first Parliamentary Group for Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions. The former chairman of Conservative Future, Ben was among the few Conservative MPs to advocate against Brexit.

Week 4

Class 10: Social Cleavages and Political Parties (07/13/2020, Monday)

How societies are divided, its implications to the formation of parties, and the interaction between cleavages and electoral systems.

Mandatory Reading

- Clark, William R., Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2018. Chapter 14 – Social Cleavages and Party Systems. In: *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 753-817.

Recommended Readings

- Przeworski, Adam, and John Sprague. 1986. Prologue. In: *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-11.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 1996. Chapter 1: Actors and Preferences. In: *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 21-57.

Class 11: Debate on Social Cleavages (07/15/2020, Wednesday)

External guest: Ethno-politics and other cleavages in Lebanese politics with **Ahmad al Rachwani**, president of the International Federation of Liberal Youth (www.iflry.org) and member of the Lebanese political party Future Movement.

Class 12: Political Culture and Participation (07/17/2020, Friday)

The different ways that culture influences participation, institutional performance, and economic development.

Mandatory Readings

- Newton, Kenneth, and Jan W. van Deth. 2009. Chapter 9. Political Attitudes and Political Behaviour. In: *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 171-197.
- Putnam, Robert D. 1994. Introduction: Studying Institutional Performance. In: *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-16.
- Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. 2005. Introduction. In: *Modernization, Cultural change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-12.
- Florida, Richard. 2002. The Rise of the Creative Class: Why cities without gays and rock bands are losing the economic development race. *Washington Monthly*, May 2002, pp. 15-25.

Week 5

Class 13: Identity Politics (07/20/2020, Monday)

The interactions between different social identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, and religion) and politics, including institutional design, partisanship, and electoral behavior.

Mandatory Readings

- Madrid, Raúl. 2012. Ethnicity and Ethnopolitism in Latin America. In: *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-34
- Htun, Mala. 2016. Introduction: Politics of Inclusion in Latin America. In: *Inclusion without Representation in Latin America: Gender Quotas and Ethnic Reservations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-19.
- Smith, Amy E. 2019. Religion, Politics, and the Secular State. In: Ames, Barry. *Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics*. New York: Routledge, pp. 87-102.

Recommended Readings

- Samuels, David J., and Cesar Zucco. 2018. Introduction. In: *Partisans, Antipartisans, and Nonpartisans: Voting Behavior in Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-18.

Class 14: Pressure Groups (07/22/2020, Wednesday)

How civil society organizes itself outside of the partisan arena, its influence over politics, and how it is influenced by political parties.

Mandatory Readings

- Newton, Kenneth, and Jan W. van Deth. 2016. Chapter 10. Pressure Groups and Social Movements. In: *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 198-223.
- Chamorel, Patrick. 2019. Macron versus the Yellow Vests. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 48-62.
- Hassan, Mai, and Ahmed Kodouda. 2019. Sudan's Uprising: The Fall of a Dictator. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 89-103.

Recommended Readings

- Aron, Leon. 2013. Putin versus Civil Society: The Long Struggle for Freedom. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 3, 62-74.
- Pinto-Duschinsky, Michael. 2002. Financing Politics: A Global View. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 69-86.

Class 15: Debate on Polarization and Mobilization (07/24/2020, Friday)

External guest: Debate on Polarization and Mobilization in Brazil with **Fábio Ostermann**. Fábio is a state legislator in the Brazilian southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. He holds a law degree and a master's in political science. Fábio was trained at different American institutions, including Georgetown, Stanford, and Atlas Foundation, and became a lecturer in a Brazilian law school. Before becoming a state representative from Partido Novo, he was either a founder or a leading member of Movimento Brasil Livre, Instituto de Estudos Empresariais, Livres, and Ordem Livre.

Week 6

Class 16: Institutions and Behavior in Iraq (07/27/2020, Monday)

The history of Iraq, its most recent institutional reforms, and their consequences. The class is followed by a debate on how to strengthen democracy in the country based on institutional and behavioral perspectives.

Mandatory Readings

- Brancati, Dawn. 2004. Can Federalism Stabilize Iraq? *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 7-21.
- O'Sullivan, Meghan L., and Razzaq al-Saiedi. 2014. *Choosing an Electoral System: Iraq's Three Electoral Experiments, their Results, and their Political Implications*. Report from the Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, April 2014, pp. 1-32.
- Mansour, Renad, and Christine van den Toorn. 2018. *The 2018 Iraqi Federal Elections: A Population in Transition?* LSE Middle East Centre Report, July 2018, pp. 1-24.

Recommended Link

- BBC. 2018. Iraq profile – timeline. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14546763>.

Class 17: What Does Comparative Politics Teach Us? (07/29/2020, Wednesday)

Review session.

Class 18: Final Session (07/31/2020, Friday)

Final exam