

Introduction to Comparative Political Science

Course Information

Course Number: 2002-01
Class Time: Tuesday, Thursday 12.30-1.45
Place: MOR Building MO104
Course Website: Blackboard
My homepage: <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~mrg217>

Contact Information for Professor

Name: Matt Golder
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Contact Information for Teaching Assistants

Name: Daniel Afshar
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Name: Erica Kirschenbaum
E-mail: sed05k@fsu.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 11.30-12.30

Course Description

This course introduces students to the study of comparative political science. The course will focus on cross-national comparisons with the goal of explaining some of the systematic relationships that exist between social, economic, and political variables around the world. The course will NOT be an in-depth study of 3 or 4 countries (although you will get country-specific knowledge). The universe of cases will be all the countries in the world. The course is unapologetically scientific. It treats epistemological debates quite seriously and makes the argument that to behave scientifically is nothing more nor less than to adopt scholarly practices that invite falsification. I will try to convince you that formulating knowledge about politics in a manner that invites falsification is both intellectually persuasive and normatively satisfying.

NOTE: While this course is an 'introduction' to comparative political science, this does not mean that the material covered will be easy. Indeed, many of the concepts and methods introduced in this class may well be more complicated than those addressed in upper-level classes. 'Introduction' simply means that the

material addressed in this class is foundational and will allow you to better understand the subject matter examined in upper level classes.

The first part of the course briefly examines what we mean by the scientific study of comparative politics. We will ask questions such as (i) What is comparative political science? (ii) What is science? and (iii) What is politics? The second part of the course compares democracies and dictatorships. We will ask questions such as (i) What is the state? (ii) Why are some states democratic but others authoritarian? (iii) What do we mean by democracy and how can we measure it? (iv) How can we explain transitions to democracy? (v) Why do some dictatorships have elections, parties, and parliaments? and (vi) Do democratic states systematically produce different outcomes such as higher economic growth, better health, and more education than dictatorships? The final part of the course focuses primarily on democracies and examines the different institutional forms that they can take. We will ask questions such as (i) What are the differences between parliamentary and presidential democracies? (ii) What are the different types of governments and how do they form? (iii) What is a minority government and why do they exist? (iv) How do different countries elect their representatives and does it matter? (v) Why do some countries have many parties while others have few? (vi) Why is policy change difficult and incremental in some countries but not in others? (vii) How do institutions affect government accountability, representation, and stability? and (viii) Are some forms of democracy more stable than others?

The course will provide you with simple methodological tools for analyzing these questions. For example, you will learn to solve logic problems, employ simple game-theoretic models, and interpret regression results. No prior knowledge is required; all that is required is an open mind and a willingness to learn.

Requirements

Attendance at lectures is both recommended and required. In my previous classes, attendance at lectures has been a good predictor of a student's performance on homework and exams. You will find it difficult to pass this class if you do not attend regularly. If you do miss class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student – 'private make-up lectures' with the professor will not take place. It is assumed that students will do all of the assigned readings and you should come to class prepared to participate in discussions. You are encouraged to volunteer questions and observations; I will call on students at random with questions from time to time. There will be three exams - two midterms and a final - as well as periodic homework assignments. In the interests of fairness, homework assignments that are handed in late will not be graded and exam makeups will only be possible in the most extenuating of circumstances (oversleeping, leaving early for Thanksgiving etc. are not suitable excuses). If you are extremely ill or have a university-accepted excuse for missing an exam, please notify me *prior* to the test date. I will only consider your request if you make it prior to the exam. Material covered on the exams will come from lectures, the assigned readings, and homework assignments.

Grades

Your final grade is a weighted average of the three exams and homeworks: Midterms 1 and 2 are *each* worth 25%; the final is worth 30%; and the homeworks are worth 20%.

I will use the following scale to calculate your course grade:

A	93-100	C	73-76.9
A-	90-92.9	C-	70-72.9
B+	87-89.9	D+	67-69.9
B	83-86.9	D	63-66.9
B-	80-82.9	D-	60-62.9
C+	77-79.9	F	59.9 and below

Exam Dates:

Midterm 1: Thursday, October 1

Midterm 2: Thursday, November 12

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 9, 7.30-9.30

Required Readings:

- Clark, William, Matt Golder & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles in Comparative Politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

This book has been ordered and will be available at the university bookstore.

Schedule:

This schedule should be treated as tentative and flexible. It may be the case that it takes us more or less time for a particular topic than I have allotted here. We will adapt accordingly. Note, however, that I will not alter the exam dates.

Week 1: August 24-28 – Introduction to course. What is comparative politics? What is science?

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Preface, Ch. 1.

Week 2: August 31- September 4 – What is science? Mill's Methods of Agreement and Difference. Induction versus deduction. Logical fallacies.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 2.

Week 3: September 7-11 – What is politics? Exit, voice and loyalty game.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 3.

Week 4: September 14-18 – What is the state? Contractarian and predatory views of the state.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 4.

Week 5: September 21-25 – Measuring democracy. Economic explanations for democracy?

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 5-6.

Week 6: September 28 - October 2 – Cultural explanations for democracy.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 7.

1st Midterm Exam (Thursday, October 1)

Week 7: October 5-9 – Transitions to democracy.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 8.

Week 8: October 12-16 – Does democracy make a difference? Selectorate theory.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 9.

Week 9: October 19-23 – What is democracy? May's Theorem. Arrow's Impossibility Theorem. The dictatorship of the median voter.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 10.

Week 10: October 26-30 – Parliamentary, presidential, and mixed regimes. Government types and the government formation process.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 11.

Week 11: November 2-6 – Elections and electoral systems.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 12.

Week 12: November 9-13 – Social cleavages and party systems.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 13.

2nd Midterm Exam (Thursday, November 12)

Week 13: November 16-20 – Federalism, bicameralism, judicial review. Veto players.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 14.

Week 14: November 23-27 – Varieties of democracy, democratic representation, and economic performance.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 15 (first half).

**** Thanksgiving (No Class): November 26-27 ****

Week 15: November 30 - December 4 – Varieties of democracy, ethnic conflict, and the survival of democracy.

Clark, William, Matt Golder, & Sona Golder. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Ch. 15 (second half).

Final Exam (Wednesday, December 9, 7.30-9.30am)

Additional Information

Students with Disabilities

Instructors will make reasonable accommodations for students with physical, mental or learning disabilities. Students with disabilities which may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements are to inform the instructor (after class or during the instructor's office hours) so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Students should register with the Student Disability Resource Center, 97 Woodward Avenue (644-9546) and bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations in the first week of class.

Department/Collegiate Complaint Procedures

A student who has a complaint against any member of the college's teaching staff is responsible for following the procedures described in the Student Handbook available on the following website: <http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/>. The student should attempt to resolve the issue with the faculty member or teaching assistant involved. Lacking a satisfactory outcome, the student can turn to the department chair. (If the complaint concerns a teaching assistant, the student should contact the supervising faculty member first). If a satisfactory outcome still is not obtained, the student can turn to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Complaints may concern inappropriate faculty conduct (including inappropriate course materials), incompetence in oral communications, inequities in assignments, scheduling of examinations at other than authorized and published times, failure to provide disability accommodations, or grading grievances. FSU has a specific policy regarding sexual harassment - this can be found at <http://www.auditservices.fsu.edu/>.

Plagiarism and Cheating

All students are bound by the Academic Honor Policy (<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/academics.htm>). You are expected to be honest and honorable in your fulfillment of assignments and in test-taking situations. Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic misconduct. Examples of them are given in the Student Handbook:

<http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html>. The department of Political Science works with individual instructors to detect plagiarism and cheating and to ensure that appropriately serious punishments are applied. An instructor who suspects a student of plagiarism or cheating must inform the student (preferably in writing) as soon as possible after the incident has been observed or discovered. Instructors who detect cheating or plagiarism may decide to reduce the student's grade on the assignment or course, even to assign an F. The instructor will discuss the matter with the student, put any agreement regarding academic penalty in writing signed by both the instructor and the student, and report the infraction to the Chair and the University judicial office. If no agreement can be reached, the instructor refers the matter to the Academic Honor System Hearing Panel.

Your Responsibilities

Your responsibilities to this class - and to your education as a whole - include attendance and participation. This syllabus details specific expectations the instructor may have about attendance and participation. You have a responsibility to help create a classroom environment where all may learn. At the most basic level, this means you will respect the other members of the class and the instructor and treat them with the courtesy you hope to receive in turn.

Plus-Minus Grading

All the department's instructors can append plus or minus grades to the letter grades they assign for the course. If the instructor does not specifically indicate in the syllabus that he or she will not assign plusses or minuses, students should assume that this form of grading will be used.

Please visit the Political Science Department's website: <http://www.fsu.edu/~polisci/>. It is frequently updated with new events and procedures in our department, changes in the Schedule of Courses, plus TA and faculty office hours when available. You also may find current information on pre-advising and registration.