

Introduction to Comparative Political Science

Professor Sona Golder

Course Number: CPO 2002.01

Time: Tuesday, Thursday 12:30 - 1:45

Place: Bellamy 102

Course website: Blackboard

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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 2:00 - 3:00 or by appointment

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 that material covered will be *easy*. ‘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? The final part of the course focuses purely 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 basic 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.

Required Text

Clark et al. 2008. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, Inc.

This textbook is *not* available at the local bookstores. Hard copies will not be available until Fall 2008; you will be reading advance copies of this forthcoming book, and will have access to the chapters on the course Blackboard site. You are expected to *print them out* and bring them to class so that you can make notes and refer back to them as needed.

Requirements

Attendance at all class meetings is expected. In my previous classes, attendance has been a good predictor of a student's performance on exams. If you do miss class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student; I will not be conducting private 'make-up lectures'. The one exception to this is if you register for the class after the start of the semester; in this case you are expected to check with me to see what material you have missed. You should bring relevant readings to class, and I encourage you to volunteer questions and observations.

There will be two midterms, a cumulative final exam, and frequent homework assignments. The homework assignments will typically be submitted via the course Blackboard site. Please note that your homework grade is a significant part of the overall course grade and that the homework assignments themselves are good practice for the types of questions you will see on exams.

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 or returning late from a long weekend or Spring Break, etc., are not suitable excuses). If you are exceedingly 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.

Grades

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following components:

Midterm 1: 25%

Midterm 2: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Homework: 20%

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

A: 93.0+ | A-: 90.0 - 92.9 | B+: 87.0 - 89.9 | B: 83.0 - 86.9 | B-: 80.0 - 82.9 | C+: 77.0 - 79.9 | C: 73.0 - 76.9 | C-: 70.0 - 72.9 | D+: 67.0 - 69.9 | D: 63.0 - 66.9 | D-: 60.0 - 62.9 | F: Less than 60.0

Exam Dates

Midterm 1: Thursday, Feb 7.

Midterm 2: Thursday, March 20.

Final Exam: Tuesday, April 22, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon.

News

I encourage you to read national and international newspapers online (or in hard copy). For national sources, the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, or the Washington Post might be good places to start. For international media, I suggest you begin with the BBC online (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>) or the weekly magazine *The Economist*. If you can read languages other than English, check media sources in the relevant countries from time to time. Please feel free to bring interesting articles to the attention of the class.

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.

Schedule:

January 8 – Introduction to course. What is comparative politics?

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 1, *Introduction*.

January 10 and 15 – What is science? Mill's Methods of Agreement and Difference. Logical fallacies.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 2, *What is Science?*

January 17 and 22 – What is politics? Exit, voice and loyalty game. Solving complete-information extensive form games.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 3, *What is Politics?*

January 29 and 29 – What is the state? Contractarian and predatory views of the state. Solving normal form (strategic) games.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 4, *The Origins of the Modern State*.

January 31 and February 5 – What is democracy, and how can/should it be measured? Comparing Polity, Freedom House, and PACL measures. Review of chapters 1-5.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 5, *Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy*.

1st Midterm Exam (Thursday, February 7)

February 12 and 14 – Economic explanations for democracy. Interpreting basic regression results.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 6, *The Economic Determinants of Democracy*.

February 19 and 21 – Cultural explanations for democracy.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 7, *The Cultural Determinants of Democracy*.

February 26 and 28 – Transitions to democracy. Introduction to incomplete-information games.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 8, *Democratic Transitions*.

March 4 and 6 – Does democracy make a difference for material outcomes? Selectorate theory.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 9, *Does Democracy Make a Difference?*

[Spring Break - March 10 - 14]

March 18 – Review of chapters 6 - 9.

2nd Midterm Exam (Thursday, March 20)

March 25 and 27 – Different types of institutional arrangements in democracy - the government formation process in presidential, parliamentary, and mixed regimes.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 11, *Presidential and Parliamentary Regimes*.

April 1 – Electoral and party systems. [Note that class is cancelled on April 3 (Professor attending conference).]

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 12, *Elections and Electoral Laws*.

April 8 and 10 – Identity, Ethnicity, and political representation.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 13, *Social Cleavages and Party Systems*.

April 15 and 17 – Institutional Arrangements and Veto Players.

REQUIRED READING:

Chapter 14, *Institutional Veto Players*.

Final Exam (April 22, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon)

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.