

Government 1313
Introduction to Comparative Politics
Spring 2025

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Professor Thomas Pepinsky

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to comparative politics: the study of the political institutions, practices, and organized interests in countries around the world. Our approach is analytical. We will use history and data from all regions of the world to understand the structure of political systems and analyze the logics that govern them. Along the way, we will learn how to use the comparative method to make meaningful comparisons between political systems and political phenomena in different countries. Topics include the origins of modern states, democratic and authoritarian regimes, parties and elections, violence and political order, identity and representation, economic development and globalization, and others.

Comparative politics is not just the foundation of the academic discipline of political science, it is also essential training for an active and informed citizenry. Comparative politics equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand how politics operates, to design solutions to political problems, and to understand the alternative forms of political order found around the world. This knowledge produces citizens who are better able to criticize *and* to defend their countries' political systems. Comparative politics forces Americans to grapple with the limits of American exceptionalism, and it allows citizens of other countries to engage with American politics using a common intellectual approach.

Most importantly, comparative politics is where political ideas and practical politics meet. Many arguments about order, justice, equality, liberty, representation, and so forth are arguments about what is *right*. Comparative politics gives you a framework, once you have decided what is right, for *how to get it* and *what is feasible*. Comparative politics is the field for people who want to reform elections, start social movements, combat exclusionary populism, stop civil violence around the world, engineer equal representation, criticize the modern state system, and any number of other things (including defending the political status quo). Comparative politics is the field for people who want to understand constitutions, and for people who want to launch revolutions.

The course has five parts. Part I introduces the field of comparative politics and the comparative method. Part II covers states and political regimes. Part III focuses on different forms of government and the logic of democratic and non-democratic politics. Part IV considers important topics in historical and contemporary politics like globalization, war, representation, and accountability. Part V concludes the course by applying these insights to the United States of America.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- use the comparative method to explore differences and similarities among the world's political systems,
- understand key concepts in the discipline of comparative politics,
- understand theories of comparative politics and use empirical evidence to evaluate them,
- describe the normative and political implications of different forms of political order, and
- explain important features of politics in the United States using a comparative framework.

REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites: This course has no formal prerequisites, but it does assume basic knowledge of world history. Students who find themselves lost during lectures or class discussions should see their TA during their office hours immediately (i.e., not right before the first midterm).

Class Format: The class is a lecture meeting twice a week. Exams will be based on materials covered in lecture, but we will not keep track of attendance. Students should arrive to each class already having done the readings for that class, and afterwards, review the readings in the context of the lecture. Class attendance and readings are not substitutes. I will not post lecture notes online.

Section: All students must enroll in a discussion section. Discussions will be led by teaching assistants, whose sole responsibility is to support your learning. Your TAs serve as my representatives in discussion sections, and they are also your first point of contact for questions. Students are allowed one unexcused absence from section during the course of the semester. Beyond this common attendance policy, TAs will have their own policies for how their sections will be structured.

Assignments and Grading: Your final grade is composed of the following graded assignments:

Section Participation	10
Reading check-ins	5
Essay 1	10
Essay 2	10
Midterm 1	17.5
Midterm 2	17.5
Final	30
TOTAL	100

Your section participation grade will be decided by your TA, who will also grade all your written work.

“Reading check-ins” are short-answer questions which I will distribute via Canvas before each class throughout the semester. They will be graded on a “satisfactory, unsatisfactory, no credit” basis. These are easy points.

Essay 1 is a “position paper.” I will provide a handout early in the semester. The last possible day to turn in the first response paper is March 17.

Essay 2 is an “op-ed.” I will provide a handout midway through the semester. This assignment is due the last day of class, May 5.

The two midterms and the final exam are cumulative. They will be a mix of identification, short-answer, and essay questions.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments: Please consult the syllabus for information about the due dates for your assignments. These dates are firm: extensions will only be given in the case of sickness (requiring a doctor’s note; no private medical records are needed), family emergency (requiring an Advising Dean’s note), or religious observance (requiring prior approval from the instructor). Late papers will lose one full letter grade. Papers later than 24 hours will receive a grade of 0/100. There are no exceptions.

Grade Appeals: Any student who believes that a grade does not reflect his or her performance can always dispute his or her grade. All grade appeals should be made in writing to the head TA, and must contain a brief memo explaining why a student should have received a higher grade on that assignment. This must be done in a week after the grade is announced. If the head TA approves the request, they will share it with me for a regrade. I will respond in writing.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work. Students are strictly forbidden from buying or selling course materials. Cheating and plagiarism will be treated according to Cornell University regulations, which I will strictly observe. The penalty for violating the Code of Academic Integrity is an F for the assignment.

Some resources on plagiarism and academic integrity at Cornell:

- Tutorial: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm> for a tutorial on plagiarism.
- The Code of Academic Integrity: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>.

For further information on how to cite materials properly, please consult Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (New York: MLA).

University Policies: I respect and uphold Cornell University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to those with documented learning needs; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination.

- *Students with Disabilities:* In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Students seeking accommodations should submit an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services to Yamile Guibert (ysg5@cornell.edu) within the first two weeks of the semester.
- *Religious Observances:* Students may ask for reasonable and timely accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs. Please review the syllabus closely to determine if your religion will present any scheduling conflicts with any of the assignments. You must inform me of any conflicts within the first two weeks of the semester.
- *Classroom Behavior:* Students, teaching assistants, and the instructor all have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students will treat one another with respect and courtesy. I will ask disruptive students to leave the class.

Other Policies: The penalty for visible text messaging or audible cell phone rings is one percentage point per offense. If this remains a problem, I reserve the right to change the policy to one percentage point per offense for the entire class.

I strongly urge all students to take notes in a physical notebook using a pencil or a pen, and to keep all your electronic devices powered off for the duration of each lecture and in section.

I encourage students to see me during office hours. If you wish to speak with me during office hours, please sign up online at the address at the header of this syllabus. Your TAs will also hold office hours.

READINGS

All required readings are book chapters and journal articles, which I have placed on Canvas. You can access them all by clicking the “Modules” tab from our course homepage. You may read these articles and chapters online, or you may print them out. In the course outline below, you will find the reading assignment listed for a class meeting.

Additionally, this course has one textbook, which is required for purchase:

Samuels, David J. 2021. *Comparative Politics*, updated edition. Pearson.

This textbook will serve as a reference, with clear exposition of key background concepts that I have paired with most course meetings. Students may find it useful to skim the textbook selections before doing the required readings. The textbook is also useful for studying for midterm and final exams.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: Introduction

January 22: Introduction

January 27: What Is Comparative Politics?

- Samuels, David J. 2021. *Comparative Politics*, updated edition. Pearson, pp. 4-26.

Part II: States and Regimes

January 29: The State: Concepts and Features

- O'Neill, Patrick H. 2021. *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. Seventh edition. W.W. Norton. pp. 31-53.
- Samuels, pp. 28-36.

February 3: The State: Emergence and Alternatives

- Chong, Ja Ian. 2012. *External Intervention and the Politics of State Formation in China, Indonesia, and Thailand, 1893-1952*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-19 (skim the rest of this chapter if interested).
- Samuels, pp. 36-48.

February 5: The State: History, Structure, Legacy

- Suryanarayan, Pavithra. 2024. Endogenous State Capacity. *Annual Review of Political Science* 27, pp. 223-243.
- Samuels, pp. 48-52.

February 10: Political Regimes: Concepts and Typologies

- Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press, pp. 1-16.
- Samuels, pp. 56-60.

February 12: Political Regimes: Democracy

- Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2(3), pp. 75-88.
- Samuels, pp. 60-62.

February 17: NO CLASS, FEBRUARY BREAK

February 19: Political Regimes: Origins and Transitions

- Berman, Sheri. 2007. "How Democracies Emerge: Lessons from Europe." *Journal of Democracy* 18(1), pp. 28-41.
- Samuels, pp. 113-127.

February 24: MIDTERM 1

Part III: Political Institutions and Forms of Government

February 26: Mass Politics and Political Behavior

- Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 149-172.

March 3: Patterns of Democracy

- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, second edition. Yale University Press, pp. 9-45.

March 5: Presidentialism versus Parliamentarism

- Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1(1), pp. 51-69.
- Samuels, pp. 63-72.

March 10: Electoral Rules

- Amorim Neto, Octavio, and Gary W. Cox. 1997. "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(1), pp. 149-174.
- Samuels, pp. 74-81.

March 12: Parties and Party Systems

- Katz, Richard S. and Peter Mair. 1995. "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party." *Party Politics* 1(1), pp. 5-28.
- Samuels, pp. 235-242.

March 17: Pluralism, Corporatism, Populism, and Intermediation

- Crouch, Colin. 2003. "Neo-Corporatism and Democracy," in *The Diversity of Democracy: Corporatism, Social Order, and Political Conflict*, edited by Colin Crouch and Wolfgang Streeck. Edward Elgar, pp. 46-70.
- Samuels, pp. 231-235.
- Last day to turn in Essay 1.

March 19: Nondemocratic Politics

- Linz, Juan J. 2000. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Lynne Rienner, pp. 49-63.
- Samuels, pp. 86-98.

March 24: Electoral Authoritarianism

- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. "Elections Under Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, pp. 403-422.
- Samuels, pp. 98-110.

March 26: MIDTERM 2

March 31: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

April 2: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

Part IV: Topics in Comparative Politics

April 7: Violence and Political Order

- North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-29.

April 9: Civil War and Insurgency

- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2003. "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars." *Perspectives on Politics* 1(3), pp. 475-494.
- Samuels, pp. 247-256.

April 14: Social Movements and Contentious Politics

- Chenoweth, Erica. "The Future of Nonviolent Resistance," *Journal of Democracy* 31, 3 (2020): 69-84.
- Samuels, pp. 219-231.

April 16: Categories and Identities

- Htun, Mala. 2004. "Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups." *Perspectives on Politics* 2(3), pp. 493-458.
- Samuels, pp. 140-161.

April 21: Accountability and Representation

- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1994. "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 5(1), pp. 55-69.
- Samuels, pp. 63-81 (review).

April 23: Clientelism and Corruption

- Hicken, Allen. 2011. "Clientelism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, pp. 289-310.

April 28: Political Economy

- Onoma, Ato Kwamena. *The Politics of Property Rights Institutions in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-60.
- Samuels, pp. 275-280, 285-292.

April 30: Globalization

- Walter, Stefanie. 2021. "The Backlash Against Globalization." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24, pp. 421-442.
- Samuels, pp. 331-356.

Part V: Democracy in the United States

May 5: Democracy in the United States

- Essay 2 due