

POLI 121: COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Fall 2021: T/Th 2:25-4:05

Steele Hall 009

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Comparative politics is the study of how politics and governance work in different social and political environments. To illustrate, a comparative political scientist might seek to explain differences in electoral outcomes between Germany and the United States or to identify the sources of political instability in Nigeria. One purpose of comparative politics is to reveal generalizations about politics through hypotheses that can be tested in different environments – for instance, one might hypothesize that *there is a higher probability that weak states (those lacking the power or resources to exert control over their population) will be overthrown through revolutionary movements* (regardless of the country in question). There are several core questions that organize the field of comparative politics, including *how specific norms and laws (institutions) influence the behavior of our political leaders* and *what makes democracy succeed in some places and fail in others?* This course will explore some of these questions and, more importantly, provide you a foundation on which you can continue the study of comparative politics.

There are a number of goals in this course. First, you will study different approaches and methods of comparative politics and, in so doing, hopefully develop skills for asking and answering questions about how politics work in and outside of the United States. Second, you will learn core concepts, such as *state*, *nation*, and *regime*, which will help you understand and explain political processes and events in different countries. Finally, you will become familiar with the political system of a number of different countries and, hopefully through that knowledge, develop a better understanding of politics more broadly.

Required Texts:

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2017. *Principles of Comparative Politics* (3rd edition). CQ Press.

Additionally, selected readings will be available for download on Blackboard, including the following texts:

Caramani, Daniele. 2011. *Comparative Politics* (2nd edition). Oxford University Press.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton University Press.

Assessment:

You may choose one of the following two assessment scales:

- A.) 10% - class attendance and participation
15% - country presentation
15% - weekly memo summarizing each week's readings
15% - mid-term examination
15% - final examination
30% - final paper
- B.) 10% - class attendance and participation
15% - country presentation
35% - mid-term examination
40% - final paper

Grading Scale:

The numerical equivalents of the letter grades are:

A+ = 98%-100%	C+ = 78%-80%	F = 60% or below
A = 93%-98%	C = 73%-78%	
A- = 90%-93%	C- = 70%-73%	
B+ = 88%-90%	D+ = 68%-70%	
B = 83%-88%	D = 63%-68%	
B- = 80%-83%	D- = 60%-63%	

Learning Goals:

This course serves to fill both the Social Interactions and Diversity requirements of the Central Curriculum.

- Be able to use discipline-relevant frameworks and/or theories to recognize:
 - that diversity includes but is not limited to race, gender, culture, ethnicity, age, geographic origin, ability/disability, social/economic class, sexuality, religion, and/or nationality.
 - the fact that diversity markers are intertwining, can be fluid, and often vary across time, place, and culture.
 - how power and privilege function in society.
- Be able to articulate various concepts of social justice.
- Be able to question and critique prevailing notions of diversity: their own and others.
- Identify and define ways in which social interactions between individuals and/or between individuals and institutions help shape the world around them.
- Demonstrate an understanding and evaluate how the methods of analysis from the social sciences are used to identify issues and explore conflict within a contemporary context.

- Give examples of the ways in which the construction of knowledge in the social sciences is based upon prevailing theories and experiences.

Final Paper:

The paper should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced, with normal margins (one inch of space between the text and the edge of the paper). This paper should identify a central question that is relevant to the themes examined within comparative politics, and should conduct a comparison of two (or more) countries that is focused on that question. You should select countries that allow for you to examine variation in your dependent variable. In other words, if your question is whether people living in a democracy are more likely to attend college, then you will want to compare a democratic and non-democratic country. You are allowed to choose the United States as a country, but (if that is the case) you should also choose at least two other countries to be included in your study.

You may use whichever citation style (such as APA, MLA or Chicago) that you prefer, but you should be consistent in the use of that style. Please make sure to use in-text citations whenever you refer to someone else's work. In the following example, the in-text citation is in bold italics: *Prior research finds that culture has a strong effect on the quality of democracy* (***Putnam 1994***).

Structure of the Paper

The paper should begin by presenting the question that is framing the paper. The question can be drawn from the required texts or class lectures, or can be a question not considered in the class. I encourage you to explore your academic interests through the paper, regardless of whether those interests were directly addressed in the course. However, make sure to articulate a specific question. The following example is too broad: *What makes democracy work?* A more specific question would be: *Does requiring high schools students to take a civics class lead to higher voter turnout?* Both of these questions concern the quality of democracy, but the latter question articulates a more specific idea to be tested.

You should then present and elaborate on a theory that offers an answer to that question.

As an example, you might ask “why are some states better able to provide security and stability than others?”

And the thesis statement in response might be: “Higher levels of socio-economic development provide a state with the necessary resources to ensure security and stability.

As a consequence, poorer states are more susceptible to social breakdown”

As part of elaborating on the theory, you will want to review at least a couple pieces of scholarship that directly address the question. **Do not neglect to develop a theory!**

The next section should then present the two (or more) countries you intend to compare. You will want to explain why you selected these countries and how each applies to the question you have asked. You should then offer an introduction to each country. As part of that introduction, you should include background information on the immediate history, any major ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural divisions, and the economy (agricultural vs. manufacturing vs. services, rate of growth, etc.) of both countries. However, most of this section should focus on

politics and governance in those countries. What are the main political institutions? Who holds power? What are the different actors and what are their powers? What is the source of legitimacy for the political leadership? How are elections conducted, if there are elections? How does the ruler maintain power, if non-democratic? Provide a detailed summary of the political environment in each country.

The final section should seek to answer your question and test your thesis statement by conducting a comparison of the two countries you have chosen. In comparing the countries, you will want to first address broad differences. What differentiates the political systems of the two? What conditions might be linked to these political differences? In other words, how has the history, institutions, economy, and culture shaped the political systems in each country? Then, you will want to focus on the particular aspects relevant to your thesis statement – using the example above, you will want to focus the most on how differences in economic development (between your two countries) relate to their stability. Your comparison should present hard evidence in support of or opposition to your thesis – media coverage, economic data, survey data, or academic journal articles are all acceptable sources of evidence. You must have at least two sources of information or data on each of your countries, although you may want to rely on additional sources.

Country Presentations:

With a partner, you must develop a short presentation on the political, institutional, social, and economic environment of a country from the list below. The presentation must include some sort of visual and/or audio-visual element. The presentation may be through PowerPoint. The presentation should last approximately 12-15 minutes.

The presentation should focus on the following aspects of your country:

Political

- What were the circumstances surrounding the country's creation?
- What type of political system is the country?
- If a democracy, is it parliamentary or presidential?
- Who are the power-holders in the country?
- How are elections conducted?

Social

- What ethnic, linguistic, religious, or racial divisions exist in the country?
- Is the population aging?
- What are some common traditions in the country?

Economic

- What is the country's level of development? How does its development compare with other countries?
- Is it an agricultural, industrial, or services-based economy?
- Is it growing, declining, or stagnant?
- What are the debt and deficit levels of the country?

Current Issues

- Has the country experienced any sort of intra or inter-state conflict in recent years?
- What issues are currently troubling the country? Spend some time on this point – what has been going on with current events in your country?

Comparison

- How does the country compare to the United States? How is the political system different? How do differences in the political systems affect life in each country?

You must choose one of the following countries on which to present: Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Syria, the Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela.

The countries are first-come-first-serve, meaning that Egypt will no longer be available once another pair of students select it. So, contact me to make your selection ASAP and no later than the first Friday of classes. Any students that do not choose a country will be randomly assigned one of the remaining countries on the list. I will make an exception and allow a student to present on a country not on this list if you visited that country (or plan to visit that country) as part of the GO program.

The dates for the presentations are listed in the schedule of classes. There will be eight days of presentations with two-three presentations scheduled on each of these days. When you request a country, please also indicate your first and second preferences for the date on which you would like to present. Any student that does not indicate a preferred date will be randomly assigned one of the remaining dates on the list.

General Business:

Please note that class attendance is mandatory. You may miss two classes without providing an excuse. The class participation grade will be reduced by 7 points for every additional class missed, unless due to one of the following two exceptions. If you miss class due to a medical reason and provide documentation from a medical practitioner, your absence will be excused without any penalty. Any absences that result from religious observances shall also be excused without any penalty. Anything covered in class lectures or assigned readings may be part of the examinations. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out anything covered in class from another student. Please contact me immediately if you will need to miss class at any time during this semester.

Those who have selected Assessment Scale A must submit their weekly memo at the start of class on the Friday of each week. Each memo must be 2 pages double-spaced and provide a brief summary of the major concepts, questions, and theories from the assigned readings that week. ***Students must indicate their choice between Assessment Scale A and Scale B by the start of class on the Friday of the first week of classes.***

All assigned readings are required. The *Clark, Golder, and Golder* text (hereafter referred to as CGG) is available for purchase at the SU bookstore. Other selected readings will be available for download on Blackboard. The lectures will, at times, overlap with the readings, but will often include content not in the readings. ***The mid-term and final examinations may cover anything from both the lectures and the readings.***

Any student with a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities should contact me as soon as possible so that we can make accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities are advised to also contact Disability Services at 570-372-4340.

Make sure that you include proper citations in any written or oral work. Plagiarism will result in a failure for that assignment, referral to the administration and other potential consequences. Please consult Sharon Stoerger's online resource for more information on plagiarism: <http://www.web-miner.com/plagiarism> Please also consult the Susquehanna University Code of Student Conduct at <http://www.susqu.edu/studentlife/16594.asp> If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me or the Writing Center located in Fisher Hall, Room 202, phone number 570-372-4342.

I reserve the right to move around different topics and assignments on the syllabus in consultation with the class. Please do not hesitate to ask questions, introduce discussion points, articulate your opinions and comment on the reading materials.

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics

August 30-September 3

Day 1: Introduction to Class and Defining Comparative Politics

Day 2: The Scientific Method

Readings: *CGG* pp. 1-40

Week 2: Conducting Comparative Politics

September 6-10

Day 1: Approaches to Comparative Politics

Day 2: Comparative Methodology and Qualitative vs. Quantitative

Readings: *Caramani* pp. 37-64, *King and Verba* pp. 3-33

Week 3: The State

September 13-17

Day 1: Origins of the State 1

Day 2: Origins of the State II and Country Presentations

Readings: *CGG* pp. 89-120

Week 4: Democratic Systems

September 20-24

Day 1: Comparing Democracies and Dictatorships

Day 2: Country Presentations

Readings: *CGG* pp. 145-169

Week 5: System Type

September 27-October 1

Day 1: Presidential Systems

Day 2: Parliamentary and Semi-Presidential Systems

Readings: *CGG* pp. 453-512

Week 6: Electoral Systems

October 4-8

Day 1: Majoritarian Systems

Day 2: Proportional Systems and Country Presentations

Readings: *CGG* pp. 521-577

Week 7: Review

October 11-15

Day 1: Proportional Systems and Mid-Term Review

Day 2: **Mid-Term Examination**

Week 8: Understanding Coalitions

October 18-22

Day 1: Fall Break

Day 2: Coalitions Game

Week 9: Party Systems

October 25-29

Day 1: Party Systems I

Day 2: Party Systems II and Country Presentations

Readings: *CGG* pp. 585-640

Week 10: Explaining Democracy I

November 1-5

Day 1: Economic Determinants of Democracy I

Day 2: Economic Determinants of Democracy II and Country Presentations

Readings: *CGG* pp. 175-219

Week 11: Explaining Democracy II

November 8-12

Day 1: Cultural Determinants of Democracy I

Day 2: No Class

Readings: *CGG* pp. 223-262

Week 12: Dictatorships

November 15-19

Day 1: Cultural Determinants of Democracy II and Country Presentations
Day 2: Authoritarian Regimes

Readings: *Caramani* pp. 102-118

Week 13: Thanksgiving

November 22-26

Week 14: Democratic Transitions I

November 29-December 3

Day 1: Social Movements

Day 2: Collective Action Theory and Revolutions and Country Presentations

Readings: *Caramani* pp. 292-310 and *CGG* pp. 269-313

Week 15: Democratic Transitions II and Review

December 6-10

Day 1: Liberalization

Day 2: Country Presentations and Final Review

Final Exam: Thursday, December 16, 8:00am - 10:00am

Final Paper also due on this date