

PS2012-880 (Honors) Comparative Politics

Contact Information

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Course Information

August 27-December 17, 2024
Classroom: HUMN 245
Class-time: 12:30-1:45pm

Course Description:

Political science is, at its core, comparative. Oftentimes the questions we are involve a set of comparisons that can shed light on important questions in political science. How do the institutions of one country compare to another and what are the effects? How do voters in one context behave relative to another? How does their behavior change over time?

In this course, we are going to unpack political institutions and their consequences from around the world to better answer questions central to our goal as political scientists. These questions include: why are some countries democracies and others autocracies? Why are some countries rich and others poor? Why do some countries have Presidents and others Prime Ministers? How do elections differ across the world?

By the end of this course, students should:

- Better understand politics from around the world
- Use the comparative method to analyze political phenomena
- Think critically about the study of social science

Course Requirements and Grading:

Participation	10%
Weekly Quizzes	15%
Exams (3)	45%
Country Report	20%
Research Designs	10%

Letter grades will be assigned at the end of the semester based on the following scale. I will **not** round your grade and grades will not be curved.

	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	
A	93-100%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%

Participation (10%)

Active participation in this course is critical! Coming to class well prepared and offering comments and questions in discussions will result in a superior participation grade. Attendance is mandatory. Four “freebie” absences are allowed. Each subsequent absence will result in a decrease in the participation and attendance grade. Note that attendance alone is not sufficient to receive full credit. Students with perfect attendance but no participation in class should expect to receive a 60% on the participation and attendance grade.

Weekly Quizzes (15%)

Each week, there will be a weekly quiz on that week's readings and lecture which make up 15% of the overall course grade. There will be **twelve** quizzes (1/week minus exam weeks), and the two lowest scores will be dropped. Students get two attempts and quizzes are open note. Quizzes will be published on Canvas at the end of class on Thursday and students will have 24 hours to complete each quiz.

Exams (3x 15%)

There will be three exams during this course: two midterms and one final. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and one essay question. Midterms 1 and 2 are not cumulative. The Final will be cumulative.

Exam Dates:

- Midterm: Thursday, **October 3**
- Midterm: Thursday, **October 31**
- Final: Tuesday, **December 15**

Country Report (20%)

There will be one essay for this course which will be worth 20% of the overall course grade. Students are expected to write 2000 words on a country of their choice, applying concepts from the course to explain the state of politics in the country. More specifics will be available on a separate assignment sheet on Canvas. Essays will be due on **December 5 at 11:59pm.**

Research Designs (2x5%)

Students are expected to write two short papers (500-750 words) that serve as mini-research designs for a potential study. Included in these research papers are a brief overview of the research question, hypotheses to answer the question, and a discussion of what kinds of data could be used to test their hypotheses. More specifics will be available on a separate assignment sheet. Students are responsible for writing two short papers during the term, with the first being submitted by **October 17 at 11:59pm** and the second being submitted by **December 5 at 11:59pm.**

Late/Makeup Assignment Policy

All assignments must be submitted by their specified due date as designated in the syllabus. Late assignments will suffer a 10 percent penalty for each day that they are late and will not be accepted after three days. There will be no make-up exams or extensions without a university approved excused absence and these must be communicated to the instructor prior to the due date. If you miss an assignment or exam without a university approved excuse, you will receive a 0.

Email Policy

Emails must have PSCI2012, Comparative Politics, or a logical alternative indicating the email pertains to this course. Emails pertaining to this course must be sent from your official University of Colorado email address. It is class policy that grades will not be discussed over email. I will generally reply to e-mails within 24 hours.

Schedule

Students are expected to obtain the following textbook which will be the main text for the course. Additional readings may be assigned each week and will be made available on Canvas.

- *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, Third Edition. William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, & Sona Nadenichek Golder.

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Week 1: What is Comparative Politics

Tuesday (Aug 26): Course Introduction & Syllabus

Thursday (Aug 28): What is Comparative Politics

- CGG Chapter 1
- CGG Chapter 2

Week 2: What is the State

Tuesday (Sept 3): State Building

- CGG Chapter 4

Thursday (Sept 5): No Class

Week 3: Political & Economic Development

Tuesday (Sept 10): Development (1)

- Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 45-83.

Thursday (Sept 12): Development (2)

Week 4: Determinants of Democracy

Tuesday (Sept 17): Economic

- CGG Chapter 5

Thursday (Sept 19): Cultural

- CGG Chapter 6

Week 5: Democratic Transitions & Backsliding

Tuesday (Sept 24): Democratic Transitions

- CGG Chapter 7

Thursday (Sept 26): Democratic Backsliding

- Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, "The Guardrails of Democracy," in *How Democracies Die*.

Week 6: Exam #1

Tuesday (Oct 1): Catch-Up and Review

Thursday (Oct 3): EXAM 1

Week 7: Varieties of Dictatorship

Tuesday (Oct 8): Varieties of Dictatorship (1)

- CGG Chapter 8

Thursday (Oct 10): Varieties of Dictatorship (2)

- No additional reading, finish CGG Chapter 8

Week 8: Varieties of Democracy

Tuesday (Oct 15): Varieties of Democracy (1)

- CGG Chapter 10

Thursday (Oct 17): Varieties of Democracy (2)

- No additional reading, finish CGG Chapter 10
- **DUE: First Short Paper by 11:59pm**

Week 9: Institutional Design

Tuesday (Oct 22): Institutional Design (1)

- CGG Chapter 13

Thursday (Oct 24): Institutional Design (2)

- No additional reading, finish CGG Chapter 13

Week 10: Exam #2

Tuesday (Oct 29): Catch-Up & Review

Thursday (Oct 31): EXAM 2

Week 11: Elections & Electoral Systems

Tuesday (Nov 5): Electoral Systems (1)

- CGG Chapter 11

Thursday (Nov 7): Electoral Systems (2)

- Chas Geiger and Jennifer Clarke. "How does the UK's voting system affect smaller parties?". BBC.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c977m09v60go>

- “What’s Happening with the European Far Right?” *EuropeElects*. Listen to **14:45**.
<https://europeelects.eu/2024/07/28/ee-podcast-whats-happening-with-the-european-far-right/>

Week 12: Parties & Party Systems

Tuesday (Nov 12): Parties & Party Systems

- CGG Chapter 12

Thursday (Nov 14): Are Party Systems Changing?

- Jae-Jae Spoon and Heike Klüver. Dec 3, 2019. “What Explains Mainstream Party Decline across Europe?” <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2019/03/12/what-explains-mainstream-party-decline-across-europe/>

Week 13: Voting & Voter Behavior

Tuesday (Nov 19): Turnout

- Aldrich, J. H. (1993). *Rational Choice and Turnout*. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(1), 246–278.

Thursday (Nov 21): Vote Choice

- Rabinowitz, G., & Macdonald, S. E. (1989). *A Directional Theory of Issue Voting*. *The American Political Science Review*, 83(1), 93–121.

THANKSGIVING BREAK (Nov 26 and 28)

Week 14: Special Topics: Populism Around the World

Tuesday (Dec 3): The Rise of Populism

- Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. “The Rise of Populism and the Revenge of the Places That Don’t Matter”.
<https://ppr.lse.ac.uk/articles/10.31389/lseppr.4>

Thursday (Dec 5): Is Populism Dangerous?

- TBD
- **DUE: Country Reports by 11:59pm**
- **DUE: Second Short Paper by 11:59pm**

Week 15: Concluding Thoughts

Tuesday (Dec 10): Buffer & Concluding Thoughts

Thursday (Dec 12): Review

FINAL EXAM: Sunday, December 15th 4:30pm-7:00pm

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, or political philosophy. For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

Accommodation for Disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or DSinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

If you have a temporary illness, injury or required medical isolation for which you require adjustment, please let me know as soon as possible via e-mail.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns: CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part in adhering to the Honor Code. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: StudentConduct@colorado.edu. Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

Note: Use of AI in your written answers is considered plagiarism in this course and is not permitted and will result in an “F” in the course!

Discrimination and Harassment: CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC)

addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email CUreport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and [support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and graduate instructors must inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these policies regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive outreach from OIEC about resolution options and support resources. To learn more about reporting and support for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

Religious Holidays: Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner. In this class, **please let me know by the end of week 3 of any religious accommodations you may require.** See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Mental Health and Wellness: The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7. Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The Academic Live Care site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.