

GOVERNMENT 20: FOUNDATIONS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

(Fall 2024)

Professor Steven Levitsky

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This course introduces students to major theories and concepts in comparative politics, as well as the basic tools of comparative analysis. It explores competing theoretical approaches (Modernization, Marxist, cultural, institutionalist, and leadership-centered) to four major phenomena in world politics: (1) economic development; (2) democratization; (3) social revolution; and (4) ethnic conflict. It also explores debates about the role of political institutions (e.g., presidential/parliamentary systems, political parties, electoral systems), states and state-building, and civil society in shaping political outcomes. These theoretical debates are examined through an analysis of cases from across the globe, including Africa (Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, South Africa), the Americas (Chile, United States), Asia (China, India, South Korea, Taiwan), Western Europe (Italy, Germany, Great Britain), Eastern Europe (Russia, Yugoslavia), and the Middle East (Egypt, Iran, Lebanon). The final week examines the United States in comparative perspective.

Course Format

Lectures: Lectures will be held every Tuesday and Thursday (10:30-11:45)

Discussion Sections: All students must attend a weekly hour-long discussion section, run by a Government 20 Teaching Fellow. All sections will be held on Thursday and Friday. Section attendance is mandatory.

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:00 and Thursday 4-5pm. Come to office hours! It's good to meet your prof and introduce yourself. You don't need a reason beyond that. Office hours fill up, so please write to Leslie Kress (kress@fas.harvard.edu) to reserve a slot.

Course Requirements

- 1) Section participation (15 percent of grade)
- 2) Two short papers (6-8 pages), based on course materials, on topics to be handed out in class. Due **October 8 (10 percent of grade) and November 12 (20 percent of grade)**
- 3) In-Class Midterm Examination: **Thursday October 17** (20 percent of grade)

4) Final exam (35 percent of grade). The final exam will be scheduled by the FAS Registrar for a three-hour block during the Finals Examination Period (December 11-20). Exam dates are announced mid-semester and will be available via the Registrar's website.

Late Policy: All late papers will be marked down a third of a grade (ex. A to A-) for each day following the due date. Teaching Fellows are not responsible for submission errors or corrupted/unreadable electronic files.

Collaboration in Written Work: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your short paper topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own work and reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you receive significant help with your writing (e.g., feedback on drafts), you should also acknowledge this assistance.

Writing plays a central role in our thinking and learning. Do not rely on AI tools as a substitute. Not only do AI tools produce inferior papers that do not meet the assignment's requirements, particularly in terms of critical thinking and analysis, but AI-assisted papers are easily to detect. Using AI to write your paper constitutes plagiarism, which can result in a referral to the College's Administrative Board for sanctions. You are, however, free to use tools, such as Grammarly, that help identify spelling and grammar errors.

Readings

All readings are available on the Canvas site. You will be assigned substantial parts of the following three books, which you may purchase online (we recommend this) or access via the Library Reserves tab on the Canvas site.

Alberto Alesina and Edward L. Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982/2008).

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point* (Crown, 2023).

Reading and Writing Workshops

The way to successfully read and write in this class is likely different from what you have learned in past courses, particularly if this is the first political science course you are taking. The course teaching fellows thus offer the following workshops to provide guidance and support in the process. All sessions will be held in CGIS S020.

How to Read in Gov20—September 10 7-8:30pm

How to Write in Gov20: Thesis Statements—September 24 7-8:30pm

How to Write in Gov20: Using Evidence—October 1 7-8:30pm

How to Write in Gov20: Introductions and Counter-arguments—October 24 7-8:30pm

Schedule and Assignments

Week 1: Introduction and Approaches to Comparative Politics (September 3, 5)

September 3: Why You Should Care About Comparative Politics

September 5: Approaches to Comparative Politics

Readings

David Samuels, *Comparative Politics* (Pearson, 2013), pp. 4-25.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Part I: The Problem (all) (Penguin 2002 version: pp. 1-36)

Part II: The Idea of the Calling in Ascetic Protestantism

1. The Religious Foundations of Innerworldly Asceticism (read Calvinism but skip Pietism, Methodism, and Baptists) (Penguin version: pp. 67-87)
2. Asceticism and the Capitalist Spirit (all) (Penguin version: pp. 105-122)

Note: This is tough reading (it is a translation of early twentieth century German sociology). I include it because it is both a classic work and an excellent example of a cultural approach to economic development, which we will discuss in Week 2. The rest of the semester's readings will be easier. Give this a try, and perhaps return to it after I discuss Weber in week 2 lecture. Don't get bogged down in details--focus on Weber's main argument, which links early Protestant beliefs to the emergence of the kinds of economic practices we now associate with capitalism.

Week 2: The Politics of Economic Development: Modernization Theory and its Alternatives (September 10, 12)

September 10: Classical Approaches to Development: Cultural and Modernization Theories

September 12: Challenges to Modernization Theory: The International System and Dependency

Readings

Finish/review Weber's *Protestant Ethic*

Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Free Press, 1958), pp. 19-65.

W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 1-12.

Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 5-30.

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 15-33 and 39-61.

- A contemporary application of Modernization Theory

Week 3: The Politics of Late Development: State- versus Market-Led Approaches (September 17, 19)

September 17: State-Led Industrialization: The East Asian Miracles

September 19: Market-Led Development and the Centrality of Institutions

Readings

Chalmers Johnson, "Political Institutions and Economic Performance: The Government-Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan." In Frederic C. Deyo, ed. *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 136-164.

Alice Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 3-18 and 79-85.

Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (University of California Press, 1981), pp. 11-44, 62-77.

Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers," *Politics & Society* 21, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 245-258 and 264-266.

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), pp. 7-63; 70-83.

Recommended

Jeffrey Sachs, "Government, Geography, and Growth: The True Drivers of Economic Development." *Foreign Affairs*, Sep/Oct 2012.

- A critique of Acemoglu and Robinson

Week 4: The State, State-Building, and State Weakness (September 24, 26)

Monday September 23 at 7pm (same place: CGIS S-010): Why Strong States Matter

This is a rescheduled lecture, as Professor Levitsky will be out of town on September 26. Try to attend in person, but it will be videotaped for those who cannot attend.

Tuesday September 24: The Origins of Strong and Weak States

Thursday September 26: No Lecture

Readings

Francis Fukuyama, "The Imperatives of State-Building." *Journal of Democracy* 15, No. 2 (April 2004), pp. 17-31.

Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169-191.

Miguel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (Penn State University Press, 2002), pp. 1-26, 33-47.

Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 11-28, 97-106; 112-121, 254-255.

Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-27.

Mark Dinecco and Yuhua Wang, "Violent Conflict and Political Development Over the Long Run: China Versus Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018), pp. 341-352.

Pavithra Suryanarayan, "Hollowing Out the State: Franchise Expansion and Fiscal Capacity in Colonial India." Working Paper, Johns Hopkins University, 2021.

Week 5: Democracy and Democratization (October 1, 3)

****Monday, September 30: Paper #1 Topics Handed Out**

October 1: Theories of Democratization

October 3: Democratization in England, Germany, and India

Readings

Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 1-9; 14-40; 48-61.

Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, No. 1 (March 1959), pp. 69-105.

Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49 (1997), pp. 155-184.

Read for the argument. You may skim/skip the math and models.

Sheri Berman, "How Democracies Emerge: Lessons from Europe." *Journal of Democracy* 18, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 28-41.

Dawn Langan Teele, *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 1-12 and 15-47.

The Case of India

Ashutosh Varshney, "India's Democratic Longevity and Its Troubled Trajectory," in Scott Mainwaring and Tarek Masoud, eds. *Democracy in Hard Places* (Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 34-72.

Week 6: Democratization and Democratic Breakdown in the Contemporary World (October 8, 10)

****Tuesday, October 8 Paper #1 Due**

October 8: *The Third Wave of Democratization*

October 10: *Democratic Backsliding in the 21st Century*

Readings

Seva Gunitsky, *Aftershocks: Great Powers and Domestic Reforms in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 1-31.

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 31-46; 59-108.

Elisabeth J. Wood, "An Insurgent Path to Democracy: Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador." *Comparative Political Studies* 34, No. 8 (October 2001): 862-888.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-24.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018), pp. 1-6, 11-32, and 72-96.

Milan Svolik, "Polarization versus Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 30, No. 3 (July 2019), pp. 20-32.

Week 7: Authoritarianism (October 15, 17)

October 15: *Durable Authoritarianism: The Middle East and China*

October 17: *Midterm Exam (In Class)*

Readings

Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, No. 3 (2001), Only pp.325-337; 356-357.

Bryn Rosenfeld, *The Autocratic Middle Class: How State Dependency Reduces the Demand for Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), pp. 1-27, 37-55.

Read at least one of the following sections (Middle East or China).

The Middle East

Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36, No. 2 (January 2004): 139-57.

Ellen Lust, "Missing the Third Wave: Islam, Institutions, and Democracy in the Middle East," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46 (2011), pp. 163-190

Tarek Masoud, "Egyptian Democracy: Smothered in the Grave or Stillborn?" *Brown Journal of International Affairs* XX, No II (Spring/Summer 2014), pp. 3-17.

Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III, "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang on." *Journal of Democracy* 23, No. 4 (October 2012), pp. 74-88.
China

Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, No. 1 (January 2003), pp. 6-17.

Minxin Pei, "China: Totalitarianism's Long Shadow" *Journal of Democracy* 32, No. 2 (2021), pp. 5-21.

Xiao Qiang, "The Road to Digital Unfreedom: President Xi's Surveillance State," *Journal of Democracy* 30, No. 1 (January 2019), pp. 53-67.

Jennifer Pan, *Welfare for Autocrats: How Social Assistance in China Cares for its Rulers* (Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 1-26.

Week 8: Explaining Social Revolution I (October 22, 24)

October 22: Theories of Revolution

October 24: Skocpol's Theory and the Case of Russia

Readings

Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 17-25 (Parts I-IV)

- Olson's theory of collective action

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in Christopher Pierson, ed., *The Marx Reader* (Polity Press, 1997), pp. 128-146.

James Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review* 27, No 1 (1962), pp. 5-19.

Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," in Skocpol, ed. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 133-166.

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1995), Chapters 1-3 (pp. 16-93) and Chapter 6 (pp. 150-174).

Week 9: Explaining Social Revolution II (October 29, 31)

October 29: Third World Revolutions and the Case of Iran

October 31: The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes

Readings

Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World," in Skocpol, ed. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 259-278.

Eric Selbin, "Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In," In John Foran, ed. *Theorizing Revolutions* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 123-136.

Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1996), pp. 42-75.

Theda Skocpol, "Rentier State and Shia Islam in the Iranian Revolution. *Theory and Society* 11, No. 3 (May 1982).

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship* (Princeton University Press, 2022), Introduction (pp. 1-39).

Week 10: Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict (November 5, 7)

****Monday, November 4: Paper #2 Topics Handed out**

November 5: Theories of Ethnic Politics: Why and How Ethnicity Becomes Politicized

November 7: Explaining Ethnic Violence and the Case of Rwanda

Readings

Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," in Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 274-294.

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), pp. 255-277.

Joane Nagel, "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Re-Creating Ethnic Identity and Culture." *Social Problems* 41, No. 1 (February 1994), pp. 152-176

Robert H. Bates, "Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa," in Donald Rothchild and Victor A. Olorunsola, eds. *State Cersus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Westview Press, 1983), pp. 152-171.

Daniel Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98, No. 4 (2004): 529-545.

Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019)
Pp. 21-24 (end at top of page 24)
Pp. 34-45 (start at "A Theory of Dominant Group Identity")
Pp. 260-277

Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 41-59; 73-75; 87-102; 185-218.

Week 11: Do Institutions Matter? (November 12, 14)

****Tuesday, November 12 Paper #2 Due**

November 12: Constitutions and Democracy: The Perils of Presidentialism?

November 14: Institutions and Ethnic Conflict: The Debate over Consociationalism

Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1, No. 1 (Winter 1990), pp. 51-70.

Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-15 and 28-54.

Benjamin Reilly, "Electoral Systems for Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 13, No. 2 (April 2002): 156-170.

Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 1-2; 16-52.

Lisa Morjé Howard, "The Ethnocracy Trap." *Journal of Democracy* 23: 4 (Oct 2012), pp. 155-169.

Week 12: Parties, Electoral Systems, and Political Representation (November 19, 21)

November 19: Political Parties and Electoral Systems

November 21: The Rise of Populism: Understanding its Causes and Consequences

Readings

Pippa Norris, "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems," *International Political Science Review* 18, No. 3 (1997): 297-312.

Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies," in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (2nd Ed.) (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 162-174.

Quentin Quade, "PR and Democratic Statecraft," in Diamond and Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, pp. 181-186.

Amel Ahmed, *Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice: Engineering Electoral Dominance* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1-29 and 64-88.

Henry E. Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1-22.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 3-13 and 32-56.

Week 13: Civil Society and Social Capital (November 26)

November 26: Civil Society and Social Capital

November 28: No Class (Thanksgiving)

Readings

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton University Press, 1993), Chapters 1 (pp. 3-7 only), 3, 4, and 6 [Chapter 5 is recommended]

Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics* 53 (April 2001), 362-98.

Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997), 401-429.

Week 14: The United States in Comparative Perspective (December 3, 5)

December 3: Social Policy and Welfare State Development in the United States and Europe: Explaining "American Exceptionalism"

December 5: The Crisis of U.S. Democracy in Comparative Perspective (*)

(*) Non-mandatory lecture

Readings

Alberto Alesina and Edward L. Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (Oxford University Press, 2004), Pp. 1-2; 77-166; 177-216.

Kathleen Thelen, “The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective. *Perspectives on Politics* 17, No. 1 (2019), pp. 5-27.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point* (Crown, 2023).