

PL223 Intro to Comparative Politics

Bogdan G. Popescu

bogdan.popescu@johncabot.edu

Instructor: Bogdan G. Popescu

Hours: MW 08:30-09:45M

Total Hours of Contact: 2:30 per week

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00PM

1 Course Description

Comparative Politics is both a subject and a method of study. Its goal is to understand variation in important political outcomes across countries and time. The course examines the nature, development, structure and functioning of the political systems of countries with very different cultures, social and economic profiles, political histories and geographic characteristics. The course attempts to answer the following large questions:

- What distinguishes democratic from non-democratic regimes? Why do some countries democratize whereas others do not? Do democracies perform better than non-democratic regimes in the provision of public goods?
- What are the causes and consequences of different political institutions? What determines their subsequent development?

Before addressing such questions, we need to think about how we should address them. Broadly speaking we address questions by generating hypotheses and then testing them with empirical evidence. These give rise to two further general issues:

- What hypotheses should we test? Hypotheses are associated with different theoretical schools or approaches within political science.
- What evidence should we use in generating and testing hypotheses? Should we focus on a small number of cases and study them in depth? Or should we include as many cases as possible, using statistical techniques to analyze the data? These are questions of comparative method, and multiple methods are used in Comparative Politics.

2 Summary of Course Content

The course will convene twice a week. The first session will be a lecture, while the second session will have presentations from students and a discussion. The aim is that by the end of the course you should be able to engage critically with questions falling under the headings of the broad questions outlined above. You should be able to respond to particular questions about the different topics of the course, drawing on the relevant literature and upon empirical evidence in order to develop and support cogent answers to those questions. You should also be able to think about theoretical arguments as well as empirical testing and evidence regarding such arguments.

3 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course the students will be able to:

- Engage critically with questions falling under the headings

- Use the comparative method for political topics
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of different theoretical frameworks and research methodologies
- Think about theoretical arguments as well as empirical testing and evidence regarding such arguments.

4 Assessment

You will be graded based on how well prepared you come to class. During the first session, there will be mostly a lecture, while the second session will be dedicated to student presentations and to a discussion. During the second session, students will have to demonstrate their knowledge of the readings, and their ability to engage in independent, critical thinking. References to current global issues will be a constant. Contributions to class discussion especially during the second session will represent 33% of the final grade.

There will be a mid-term in-class, closed-book exam, which will serve to test the improvement of students' knowledge of the theories and facts developed in the first half of the course. There will also be a final exam and will be comprehensive of all topics covered in the course. The exam will serve to test students' knowledge as well as their ability to engage in pro-active, independent critical thinking. Both the mid-term and final exam represent 33% of the grade.

4.1 Assessment Criteria

A: Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B: This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C: This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D: This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F: This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

5 Attendance Requirements

Students are required to attend classes following the University's policies. Students must attend classes and all exams in person on campus (unless otherwise required by the University). Students with a justified need to attend any exam remotely may do so only if express permission has been obtained from the Dean's Office prior to the exam.

6 Academic Honesty

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

7 Students with Learning Difficulties and other Disabilities

The University does not discriminate on the basis of disability. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

8 Required Books

There are no specific required book for the course. See the items for every specific week's session.

Week 1: Class 1: Introduction to the Comparative Politics

Questions:

'Only small-N studies can be detailed enough to attain real understanding of complex political systems.' Discuss.

'Comparative political analysis relies excessively on whole countries as units of comparison, but generating satisfactory alternative variables to countries is extremely difficult.' Discuss.

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. Principles of Comparative Politics. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 2

King, G., Keohane, R. and Verba, S. 1994. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. Princeton: Princeton UP. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 1: Class 2: Introduction to the Comparative Politics

Questions:

'Only small-N studies can be detailed enough to attain real understanding of complex political systems.' Discuss.

'Comparative political analysis relies excessively on whole countries as units of comparison, but generating satisfactory alternative variables to countries is extremely difficult.' Discuss.

Student presentations of:

King, G., Keohane, R. and Verba, S. 1994. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, Princeton: Princeton UP. Chapter 3

Brady, H.E. and Collier, D. 2004. Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield. Chapter 1.

Week 2: Class 1: State Formation and State Building

Questions:

What explains heterogeneity in the form and timing of the creation of early state institutions?
Do nations create states - or vice versa?

Class Reading:

Spruyt, H. 2007. 'War, Trade and State Formation' in Boix, C. and Stokes, S. The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics Oxford: Oxford University Press, 211-35.

Tilly, C. 1985. 'War making and state making as organized crime', in Evans, P., Rueschemeyer, D. and Skocpol, T. Bringing the State Back In. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.

Week 2: Class 2: State Formation and State Building

Questions:

What explains heterogeneity in the form and timing of the creation of early state institutions?
Do nations create states - or vice versa?

Class Reading:

Centeno, M.A. 1997. 'Blood and Debt: War and Taxation in Nineteenth-century Latin America.' American Journal of Sociology, 102(6): 1565-1605

Levi, M. 1981. 'The predatory theory of rule.' Politics and Society, 10(4), 431-65.

Week 3: Class 1: Colonialism

Questions:

What effects did colonial occupation have on the trajectory of democracy in colonized countries?'
Do the terms "metropole" and "periphery" describe accurately the relationships developed between colonial powers and the countries in which they established their settlements?

Class Reading:

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2012. Why nations fail. New York: Crown Business. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 3: Class 2: Colonialism

Questions:

What effects did colonial occupation have on the trajectory of democracy in colonized countries?
Do the terms "metropole" and "periphery" describe accurately the relationships developed between colonial powers and the countries in which they established their settlements?

Class Reading:

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism. Princeton University Press. Chapters 3 and 4

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2012. Why nations fail. New York: Crown Business. Chapters 3, 4, 9.

Week 4: Class 1: Conceptualizing Democracy

Questions:

How do we define democracy? What are the criteria we can use to decide whether a concept is valid or not?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. Principles of Comparative Politics. Washington DC: CQ Press, Chapters 5.

Sartori, Giovanni, 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," The American Political Science Review. Vol. 64, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), pp. 1033-1053

Week 4: Class 2: Conceptualizing Democracy

Questions:

How do we define democracy? What are the criteria we can use to decide whether a concept is valid or not?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. Principles of Comparative Politics. Washington DC: CQ Press, Chapters 6.

Collier, David, LaPorte, Jody M., and Seawright, Jason. Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor. Political Science Quarterly. Vol. 76, No. 1, pp. 217-232

Week 5: Class 1: Democratization

Questions:

Does growth cause democracy?

Do "elite-driven" factors matter most for democratization?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. Principles of Comparative Politics. Washington DC: CQ Press, Chapter 8.

Geddes, B., 2009. 'What Causes Democratization?' Boix, C. and Stokes, S.C. eds. The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 14.

Week 5: Class 2: Democratization

Questions:

Does growth cause democracy?

Do "elite-driven" factors matter most for democratization?

Student presentations of:

Lipset, S.M., 1959. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. London: Heinemann, Chapter 2
Przeworski, A. et al., 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and well-being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2

Week 6: Class 1: Autocracies and Hybrid Regimes**Questions:**

Why would an autocrat, or an elite, choose to grant power to the wider electorate?

What factors explain why some countries democratize whereas others remain under the label of competitive authoritarianism?

Class Reading:

Gerschewski, J. 2013. 'The three pillars of stability: legitimization, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes', *Democratization*, 20(1), 13-38.

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S., 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 10: "Varieties of Dictatorship"

Week 6: Class 2: Autocracies and Hybrid Regimes**Questions:**

What are the institutions and their mode of operation within authoritarian regimes?

Many authoritarian regimes have institutions which look democratic on paper but are different in practice. What explains that?

Student presentations of:

Svolik, M. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Gandhi, J., 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3

Week 7: Class 1: Political Parties and Party Systems**Questions**

How are parties formed, how do they link with particular groups in society, and how do they reflect social divisions in a given country?

How do parties organize themselves for the purposes of competing for power?

Class Reading:

Roberts, Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 13

Boix, Carles, 2007. "The Emergence of Parties and Party Systems." In *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 499–521

Week 7: Class 2: Political Parties and Party Systems

Questions:

How do parties compete?

What are the different ways of conceptualizing this competition and the link between party appeals and voter behavior?

Student presentations of:

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row. Chapters 7 and 8.

Green-Pedersen, Christoffer. 2007. "The Growing Importance of Issue Competition: The Changing Nature of Party Competition in Western Europe." *Political Studies* 55 (3): 607–28

Week 8: Class 1: Electoral Systems

Questions

How should electoral systems be classified?

What are the origins of electoral systems?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 13
Lijphart, A. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 8

Boix, C. 1999. 'Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies', *American Political Science Review*, 93(3), 609-624.

Week 8: Class 2: MIDTERM

Week 9: Class 1: Executives

Questions:

What different institutional forms do executives take?

Is the categorization of democratic regimes into 'presidential', 'parliamentary', and 'semi-presidential' analytically satisfactory?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 13.

Tsebelis, G. 2002. *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction and Chapter 3

Week 9: Class 2: Executives

Questions:

What are the effects of executive format?

Student presentations of:

Linz, J. 1990. 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, 1(1), 51-69.

Eaton, K. 2000. 'Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism in the Policy Arena', *Comparative Politics*, 32(3), 355-376

Week 10: Class 1: Legislatures**Questions:**

What shapes the role that legislatures play in democratic governance?

How does the structure and composition of legislatures affect the character and quality of democratic governance?

Class Reading:

Laver, M. 2006. 'Legislatures and Parliaments in Comparative Context', in Weingast, B. and Wittman, D. eds. *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 7.

Cox, G.W. 2006. 'The Organization of Democratic Legislatures' in Weingast, B.R. and Wittman, D.A. eds. *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 8.

Week 10: Class 2: Legislatures**Questions:**

What shapes the role that legislatures play in democratic governance?

What is the relationship between party discipline and parliamentary government?

Student presentations of:

Bowler, S., Farrell, D.M. and Katz, R.S. 1999. *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Carey, J.M. 2007. 'Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting,' *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), 92-107.

Week 11: Class 1: Federalism**Questions:**

Why are federal arrangements adopted and what determines their subsequent evolution?

What different forms does federalism take?

Class Reading:

Roberts Clark, W., Golder, M. and Golder, S. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 15.

Beramendi P. 2007. 'Federalism' in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 31.

Week 11: Class 2: Federalism

Questions:

What different forms does federalism take?

What are the consequences of federalism?

Student presentations of:

Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. 2003. 'Unraveling the Central State, But How? Types of Multi-Level Governance,' *American Political Science Review*, 97(2), 233-243.

Baake, K.M. and Wibbels, E. 2006. 'Diversity, Disparity and Civil Conflict in Federal States,' *World Politics*, 59(2), 1-50.

Week 12: Class 1: Judiciaries

Questions:

What do we mean by the judicialization of politics? How widespread is the phenomenon, and what are its causes?

How important are courts to democratic success and to 'output', and how do they sustain their political position and legitimacy?

Class Reading:

Ferejohn, J., Rosenbluth, F. and Shipan, C. 2007. 'Comparative Judicial Politics' *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shapiro, M. and Stone Sweet, A. 2002. *On Law, Politics and Judicialization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 2

Week 12: Class 2: Judiciaries

Questions:

What do we mean by the judicialization of politics? How widespread is the phenomenon, and what are its causes?

How important are courts to democratic success and to 'output', and how do they sustain their political position and legitimacy?

Student presentations of:

Stone Sweet, A. 2000. *Governing with Judges: Constitutional Politics in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

Week 13: Class 1: Electoral Corruption and Clientelism

Questions:

Does clientelism benefit the poor?

Under what conditions is vote buying more likely to emerge?

Class Reading:

Kitchelt, H. 2000. 'Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Politics', *Comparative*

Political Studies, 33(6-7), 845-879

Stokes, S. 2007. 'Political Clientelism' in Boix, C. and Stokes, S. eds., The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Week 13: Class 2: Electoral Corruption and Clientelism

Questions:

Does clientelism benefit the poor?

Under what conditions is vote buying more likely to emerge?

Student presentations of:

Hicken, A. 2011. 'Clientelism', Annual Review of Political Science, 14, 289-310

Isabela Mares and Lauren Young. 2016. 'Buying, Expropriating, and Stealing Votes,' Annual Review of Political Science. 267-287

Week 14: Class 1: Designing Democracy

Questions:

Should constitutions be easily amendable?

What explains different constitutional choices made by new and old democracies?

Class Reading:

Sartori, G. 2002. Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes, 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 1, 3, 5, 6, 7.

Lerner, H. 2010. 'Constitution-writing in deeply divided societies: the incrementalist approach', Nations and Nationalism. 16(1), 68-88.

Week 14: Class 2: Review for Exam

Week 15: FINAL EXAM