

# PS 50: Comparative Politics

Graeme Blair

Winter 2017

## Contact Information

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## Schedule

- Lectures: Tues. and Thurs. 9:30-10:45am in Perloff Hall 1102

## Course Description

Why are some countries democracies and some dictatorships? Why are governments sometimes headed by presidents, like in the United States, and sometimes prime ministers, like in the United Kingdom? Do these institutional differences matter for important outcomes like political stability and economic inequality? These are questions of comparative politics. In order to answer them, political scientists have developed a set of analytical tools of comparison that help us learn through the comparison of cases about the causes and consequences of different kinds of institutions, the political behavior of elites and citizens, and public policies.

The goal of this introductory course is to help you learn about the questions that occupy scholars of comparative politics but also to help you develop the tools to answer these kinds of questions for yourself. This course will not directly give you deep knowledge of any country. Instead, it will give you tools to think about institutions and political behavior in other countries – as well as this country. Because there is so much to cover, it is also a very demanding course; more demanding, in fact, than most upper division political science courses.

## Course Requirements

The course requires one short analytic paper, an in-class midterm, and a comprehensive final examination. It also requires attendance at, and active participation in, section discussions. Your section participation grade will be assessed by your teaching assistant on the basis of your active, constructive participation. Mere attendance in section, if passive or unproductive, will yield no points for this portion of your course grade.

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

- section participation (20%)

Attending sections is required. You are expected to have done the required readings for the week before your section meets and taken notes on them. Your TA may set additional assignments for section including pop quizzes on the readings. Computers are not permitted, so bring the textbook and your notes with you.

- in-class midterm exam (25%)

The midterm exam for the course is scheduled for Tuesday, February 7 during the lecture.

- short analytic paper (15%)

A short paper drawing on the readings and lectures in the course will be due by midnight on Friday, March 10 via the CCLE course Web site.

- final exam (40%)

The final exam for the course is scheduled for Thursday, March 23 from 3-6pm.

All students must take the midterm and final exam at the dates and times noted above. **If you know that you have a conflict with either date/time, then you should not enroll in the course.** If you cannot take the exam because you are sick, you must provide a note from your doctor stating that you were unable to take the exam.

Grade appeals are permissible only if you believe that an error was made. You must hand-deliver to your TA a typed note (maximum one page, double spaced) describing why your grade ought to be revised upwards within one week of receiving the graded item. We reserve the right to re-grade the entire assignment/question, so it is possible that your score will go down.

Attendance in lecture is highly recommended. A good deal of the material on the exams will come solely from lecture. Do not show up late, which means you should plan to arrive at least two minutes early. If you must leave early, please ask permission before class begins, and sit as close to the door as possible so as to minimize your intrusion on others' attention.

**No electronic devices are permitted in lecture or discussion section, not even for note-taking.** No laptops, tablets, or cell phones. If you have them with you, please turn them off and stow them out of reach.

There is a single required text for the course: Clark, Golder and Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics*, 2nd Edition (CQ Press 2013), which is available at the UCLA Bookstore. All additional readings are posted on the course web page (UCLA log in required) and are available for your own use.

## Campus resources

For any substantive or administrative concerns specific to the class, please come to see one of us – the instructor or a TA. Each of us holds two hours of office hours every week and we look forward to meeting with you.

If you have concerns about or difficulty with academic writing, you can visit the writing center. More information is available at <http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html>

Contact the college academic counseling office for help with any academic concerns you have via <http://www.ugededucation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html>.

If you are having other difficulties and need to speak with a therapist or counselor, you can contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) here: <http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/>

UCLA is committed to providing help to students with disabilities. If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform either Professor Blair or your TA and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at A-255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501 (voice); (310) 206-6083 (TTY); <http://www.osd.ucla.edu>.

## Lecture topics and readings

### Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics

January 10: Introduction to the Course: What Comparative Politics is All About

January 12: If Every Country is Unique, How Do We Compare?

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 1 (only pp. 2-8).
- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 2 (entire).
- David Plotz, "Greens Peace," New York Times Magazine, 4 June 2000.

### Part II: Democratic Political Institutions

January 17: Presidents vs. Prime Ministers

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 457-465) and ch 16 (only pp. 805-825).
- "Prime Minister's Question Time," in John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), p. 53.

January 19: Electoral Systems

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 13 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 778-801).
- "Unclear Result in Britain Puts Focus on Electoral Rules," New York Times, 7 May 2010.
- article on Hamas win in Palestinian elections in 2004/5

January 24: Political Parties, Party Systems, and Social Cleavages

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 14 (entire).

January 26: Institutional Veto Points and Federalism

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 15 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 801-805).

January 31: Public Policies and Policy Implementation

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 16 (only pp. 766-778).
- Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Boncheck, "Principal-Agent Relationships," in *Analyzing Politics* (New York: WW Norton, 1997), pp. 360-70.
- Jeffrey Goldberg, "Learning How to be King," New York Times Magazine, 6 February 2000.

February 2: Government Formation

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 465-524).

February 7: In-class midterm exam

### **Part III: Democracy and Dictatorship**

February 9: The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch 5 (only pp. 145-149) and ch. 6 (entire).

February 14: The Social and Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 7 (entire).

February 16: Democratic Transitions

- Clark, Golder and Golder, chs. 3 (only pp. 50-75) and ch. 8 (entire).

February 21: Democracy or Dictatorship: Does it Make a Difference?

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 9 (entire).

February 23: Varieties of Dictatorship

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 10 (entire).

### **Part IV: Globalization**

February 28: NO LECTURE

- Watch all chapters of "Commanding Heights" Episode 3 online at: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/story/ch\\_menu\\_03.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/story/ch_menu_03.html)

March 2: What is Globalization?

- Patrick O'Neil, "Globalization and the Future of Comparative Politics," in *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 4th edition (New York: WW Norton, 2013), pp. 323-350.
- Neil Irwin, "How A Rising Dollar is Creating Trouble for Emerging Economies," *New York Times*, 16 March 2015.

March 7: Globalization, Development and Inequality

- Branko Milanovic, "Global Income Inequality by the Numbers: in History and Now: An Overview," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6259 (November 2012).
- "For Richer, For Poorer," *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.
- "Crony Tigers, Divided Dragons: Why Asia, Too, is Becoming Increasingly Unequal," *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.
- "Lessons from Palanpur: More Inequality in an Indian Village is Balanced by Greater Mobility," *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.
- "Gini Back in the Bottle: An Unequal Continent is Becoming Less So," *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.
- "Revisiting Ricardo: Why Globalization is Not Reducing Inequality within Developing Nations," *The Economist*, 23 August 2014.

March 9: How Does Globalization Affect Domestic Politics?

- Dani Rodrik, "Sense and Nonsense in the Globalization Debate," *Foreign Policy*, Summer

1997.

March 14: Globalization of Far-Right Ideas: 2016 through a Comparative Lens (Readings TBD)

March 16: Course wrap-up