



Harvard Extension School
HARVARD DIVISION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

GOVT E-20
Foundations of Comparative Politics

Fall Term 2023

Course Information

CRN: 16983

Section Number: 1

Format: Online

Credit Status: Undergraduate, Graduate, Noncredit

Credit Hours: 4

Course Description: This course is designed to offer an introduction to major concepts and theories in comparative politics, as well as to familiarize students with the basic tools of comparative analysis. During our time together, we ask and attempt to answer questions such as when do revolutions occur? Why are some countries democratic while others are not? What is the interplay between culture and politics? How do economic factors influence political development? To what extent are political processes the result of individual volition versus larger structural forces? In doing so, we examine cases from around the globe and across time. The objective of this course is two-fold: to provide students with a theoretical grounding through which to understand the political world we inhabit, as well as to introduce the academic field of comparative politics, along with its empirical expectations and modes of argumentation.

Instructor Information & Office Hours

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Section Meetings

PLEASE NOTE: WHILE THIS COURSE FEATURES PRE-RECORDED LECTURES, A *LIVE* DISCUSSION SECTION COMPONENT WILL BE SCHEDULED BASED ON STUDENT AVAILABILITY.

Course Goals / Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to provide an introduction to major concepts in comparative politics, as well as to familiarize you with the basic tools of comparative analysis. During our time together we will read a number of foundational works, as well as contemporary scholarship. We will also focus on both theory and empirical case studies from around the globe as we survey and address some of the most pressing political questions of today, including: What causes revolutions? Why are some countries democratic and others not? What is the role of leadership in regime change? How do economic factors influence political development?

Govt E-20 is both reading and writing intensive; it is critical that you keep up with the readings and attend section. PLEASE NOTE: WHILE THIS COURSE FEATURES PRE-RECORDED LECTURES, A *LIVE* DISCUSSION SECTION COMPONENT WILL BE SCHEDULED BASED ON STUDENT AVAILABILITY.

Course Evaluation:

Section participation (25 percent of grade): Quality and quantity of contributions both matter!

Four short papers (25 percent of grade total): Approx. 2 pages each, responding to assigned topics.

Online midterm exam (20 percent of grade)

Online final exam (30 percent of grade)

Late Policy: Late papers will generally not be accepted. Only in exceptional circumstances will extensions be granted, and they must be approved beforehand by the TF or Instructor.

Academic Honesty/Collaboration: The free and open exchange of ideas is essential to academic life, and you are encouraged to discuss course-related matters outside of class. However, you must be responsible for all your own work. Collaborative writing is specifically prohibited as is the use of AI-based writing aids such as ChatGPT. It is your responsibility to make sure you correctly cite sources in your papers. For more information, see <https://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-conduct/academic-integrity> (you may also find this link from Harvard College helpful: <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/what-constitutes-plagiarism>).

Graduate Students: Students enrolled in Govt E-20 for graduate credit will complete the same assignments as those enrolled for undergraduate credit, but will be evaluated at a level commensurate with their status.

Course Materials: The following books are required and should be purchased prior to class (online retailers such as Amazon or Barnes & Nobles usually have the best prices; make sure to buy the correct edition!). All other readings will be available via the course website to registered students:

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

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail* (Crown 2012)

Alberto Alesina & Edward Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe* (Oxford 2004)

James Gelvin, *The New Middle East* (Oxford 2017)

Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (Vintage 1999)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford 2017 [4th ed.])

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton 1994)

Mode of Attendance & Participation Policy

There are no scheduled class meetings. Instead, pre-recorded videos of course content are available for you on demand. It is essential that you keep up with posted weekly deadlines for assignments and exams.

Please be sure to review important information on [Student Policies and Conduct](#).

Grading & Grade Definitions

Grade Definitions

Students registered for undergraduate or graduate credit who complete the requirements of a course may earn one of the following grades:

A and A– Earned by work whose superior quality indicates a full mastery of the subject—and in the case of A, work of extraordinary distinction. There is no grade of A+.

B+, B, and B– Earned by work that indicates a strong comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course materials, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.

C+, C, and C– Earned by work that indicates an adequate and satisfactory comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course materials, and that indicates that the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.

D+, D, and D– Earned by work that is unsatisfactory but that indicates some minimal command of the course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit.

E Earned by work that is unsatisfactory and unworthy of course credit. This grade may also be assigned to students who do not submit required work in courses from which they have not officially withdrawn by the withdrawal deadline. Zero or E grades are assigned to students for missing work. These grades are included in the calculation of the final grade.

Graduate Credit Requirements

Graduate students are welcome in the class and will be evaluated at a level commensurate with their standing.

Academic Integrity Policy

You are responsible for understanding Harvard Extension School policies on [Academic Integrity](#) and how to use sources responsibly. Violations of academic integrity are taken very seriously. Visit [Using Sources Effectively and Responsibly](#) and the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#) to review important information on academic citation rules.

Accessibility Services Policy

The Division of Continuing Education (DCE) is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The [Accessibility Services Office \(ASO\)](#) is responsible for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Students must request accommodations or adjustments through the ASO. Instructors cannot grant accommodation requests without prior ASO approval. It is imperative to be in touch with the ASO as soon as possible to avoid delays in the provision of accommodation.

DCE takes student privacy seriously. Any medical documentation should be provided directly to the ASO if a substantial accommodation is required. If you miss class due to a short-term illness, notify your instructor and/or TA but do not include a doctor's note. Course staff will not request, accept, or review doctor's notes or other medical documentation. For more information, email accessibility@extension.harvard.edu.

Publishing or Distributing Course Materials Policy

Students may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: lecture notes, lecture slides, video, or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students' work, and answer keys. Students who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to

disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw. Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Tues., September 5 to Fri., September 8 (*University holiday, Mon., Sept. 4*)

Jeffrey Kopstein, Mark Lichbach & Stephen Hanson, "What Is Comparative Politics?" in *Comparative Politics: Interests, Identities, and Institutions in a Changing Global Order* (Cambridge UP, 2014 [4th ed.]), pp. 1-13

Juan Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), pp. 38-54

Week 2: Mon., September 11 to Fri., September 15

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Penguin, 2002 [1905]), pp. 1-36, 67-87, 105-122

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in *The Marx Reader* (Polity, 1997), pp. 128-146

W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge UP, 1960), pp. 4-12

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

Week 3: Mon., September 18 to Fri., September 22

Rudiger Dornbush, "The Case for Trade Liberalization in Developing Countries," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 6.1 (Winter 1992): 69-85

Kiren Chaudhry, "The Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers," *Politics and Society* 21.3 (1993): 245-274

Chalmers Johnson, "Political Institutions and Economic Performance" in *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (Cornell UP, 1987), pp. 136-164

Sven Beckert & Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (U. of Pennsylvania 2018), pp. 1-27

Week 4: Mon., September 25 to Fri., September 29

First Short Response Paper Due

Seymour Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53.1 (March 1959): 69-72, 75-80, 83-105

Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2.3 (April 1970): 337-363

Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (Yale UP, 1971), pp. 1-16, 33-47

Samuel Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 2.2 (Spr. 1991): 12-34

Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theory and Facts," *World Politics* 49.2 (1997): 155-183

Carles Boix & Susan Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55 (2003): 517-549

Week 5: Mon., October 2 to Fri., October 6

Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (Vintage, 1999), pp. 11-60, 78-130, 157-167

James Gelvin, *The New Middle East* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 24-109

Recommended:

Jorgen Andersen & Michael Ross, "The Big Oil Change: A Closer Look at the Haber-Menaldo Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 47.7 (2014): 993-1021

Week 6: Tues., October 10 to Fri., October 13 (*University holiday, Mon., Oct. 9*)

James Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *ASR* 27.1 (1962): 5-19

Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18.2 (Apr. 1976): 175-210

John Foran, "A Theory of Third-World Social Revolutions: Iran, Nicaragua, and El Salvador Compared," *Critical Sociology* 19.2 (1992): 3-27

Week 7: Mon., October 16 to Fri., October 20

Second short response paper due

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford UP, 2017 ed.), pp. 15-92, 149-172

Said Amir Arjomand, "Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective," *World Politics* 38.3 (Apr. 1986): 383-414

Nikki Keddie & Richard Modern Iran: *Roots and Results of Revolution* (Yale UP, 2006 ed.), pp. 214-262

Week 8: Mon., October 23 to Fri., October 27

Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail* (Crown, 2012), pp. 7-44, 70-123, 368-390, 404-414

Guillermo O'Donnell, "The Quality of Democracy: Why the Rule of Law Matters," *Journal of Democracy* 15.4 (2004): 32-46

Week 9: Mon., October 30 to Fri., November 3

Third short response paper due

Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1.1 (1990): 51-70

Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), pp. 162-174

Scott Mainwaring & Matthew Shugart, "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal," *Comparative Politics* 29.4 (July 1997): 449-471

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

Week 10: Mon., November 6 to Fri., November 10

Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (U. of CA, 1985), pp. 3-12

Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in Michael Brown (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton UP, 1993), pp. 103-124

Daniel Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *APSR* 98.4 (2004): 529-545

James Fearon & David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *APSR* 97.1 (2003): 75-90

Week 11: Mon., November 13 to Fri., November 17

V.P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19.3 (Winter 1994/1995): 130-166

Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav Drama* (McGill-Queens UP, 1994), pp. 141-188

Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Cornell UP, 2015), pp. 273-321

Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton UP, 2001), pp. 76-102, 185-218

Week 12: Mon., November 20 to Tues., November 21 (*Thanksgiving Break, Wed.-Fri., Nov. 22-24*)

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton UP, 1994), pp. 83-185

Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond," *World Politics* 53 (Apr. 2001): 362-398

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

Gabriel Almond & Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton UP, 1963), pp. 1-30

Week 13: Mon., November 27 to Fri., December 1

Alberto Alesina & Edward Glaser, Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference (Oxford UP, 2004), pp. 77-216

Week 14: Mon., December 4 to Fri., December 8

REVIEW SESSION

Final Exam

Final exam will be a closed-note, closed book exam.