INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS
(PSCI-0100-001-202430)

Prof. Guy Grossman

Fall 2024
Date updated: 10/31/2024

Class Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:45 pm-2:45 pm
Class Room: Annenberg (ANNS), soom 110
TAs: Yaxiong (Luke) Chen, Griffin Brewer, and Kameron Gonzalez

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-3 & by appt.
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Blurb

This is an undergraduate course designed to introduce students to critical questions, theories, and concepts in comparative politics, as well as tools of comparative political analysis. It explores competing theoretical explanations for important phenomena in world politics, such as state-building, democratization, democratic backsliding and breakdown, identity politics, and good governance. It also explores debates about the role of political institutions, state structure, civil society, and (gender, ethnic, and religious) identities in shaping political outcomes.

Drawing on political science, economics, sociology, and history, these theoretical debates are examined by analyzing cases from across the globe, including Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. In addition to knowledge of countries and history, this course teaches students how to be critical consumers of political information, use the scientific method to analyze politics, and produce sound political analysis. For Political Science majors, "Introduction to Comparative Politics" fulfills one of their two core courses for the major or the Comparative Politics subfield requirement for the major. For non-PSCI majors, the course fulfills the Society Sector Requirement.

Key Learning Objectives

1. Cultivate an interest in comparative politics and social science more broadly.

2. Apply the logic and tools of comparative political analysis to core social scientific questions.

3. Identify key research questions in comparative politics and demonstrate a command of the most influential answers to those questions.

4. As an introduction course, another objective is improving your writing and communication skills and participating in class debates constructively and respectfully.

Course structure

This class will meet twice weekly for lectures with the professor and once weekly for a recitation session devoted to discussions with TAs in smaller groups. You will be randomly assigned to TAs, and the TAs will be your main point of contact. Students are welcome to schedule meetings with Prof. Grossman during his office hours.

Course Requirements

1. **Lecture attendance**: 10%

   - At the start of each meeting, I will pass a signup sheet since you are expected to attend the class lectures.

2. **Active participation and preparedness in recitation**: 10%

   - The Syllabus lists required reading that we will discuss in class and recitation. You will be expected to have read the assigned readings before class to the point where you can be called on to discuss any reading in broad terms. Your preparedness will be assessed both in class and in recitations.

3. **In-class midterm exam**: (30%)

   - This exam will draw from assigned readings and class lectures up to that point in the course.
   - The format will be several short essay questions.

4. **Reading response reports**: 20% (4 × 5 points each)

   - Each student will be required to write four short reading response reports (no longer than three pages) over the term. These papers should engage the debates presented in at least one of the readings for the week.
   - The response notes should be thought pieces and will be used to help recitation discussions.

- Reading responses should be submitted on Canvas by 1:44 pm on the day of the lecture in which we discuss the materials you are writing on: by 1:44 on Monday (for a Monday reading) and 1:44 on Wednesday (for a Wednesday reading).
- You must submit at least two reading response reports before the midterm.

5. **In-class final exam**: 30%

- This exam will draw from assigned readings and class lectures from the entire semester.

Logistics

Office Hours

Please sign up for office hours. Meetings occur in person or over Zoom (it's up to you). Outside of office hours, I will be busy doing other parts of my job (writing scientific papers, applying for grants, supervising graduate students, serving on committees, writing tenure assessment letters, etc.). Office hours are the time I have set aside to focus on you and your questions. To sign up for office hours, please use calendly.com/ggros.

Communication

I will communicate with the class via Canvas. Please be certain that your UPenn email address is one you check frequently. Please consult the syllabus and Canvas before contacting me; the odds are good that questions about deadlines, grades, or class assignments are answered in the syllabus or on the course Canvas website.

Grade policy

- The grade you earn is the grade you will receive in this course. Grades are not negotiable, and I do not award points based on your intention to do well. The only thing that matters in determining your grade is your performance in the course.

- Every effort will be made to grade fairly and impartially; however, mistakes sometimes occur. If you have a serious reservation about how you have been graded, write a comprehensive description of the mistake as you see it. Re-grade requests will only be accepted within a week after the graded work is returned.

Etiquette

Please be considerate of your fellow students. Arrive to class on time, do not leave the session early unless necessary, and turn off cell phones during lectures.

Accommodation for students with disabilities

The University of Pennsylvania encourages the full participation of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disabilities Service and discuss accommodations needed for successful participation in this course. For more information on the services you are entitled to, please refer to the following guide.

Religious Accommodation

The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please notify me in the first week of class if you require any accommodation on these grounds. For more information, please refer to Penn's Policy on Religious Holidays.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. As the Student Handbook outlines, "cheating" and "plagiarism" will result in severe disciplinary action. Either offense will be grounds for receiving a failing grade (zero points) on the assignment or examination and possibly an "F" for the course, depending on the severity of the offense.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

There is no official UPenn policy on using Generative AI (e.g., OpenAI, Calude, Glean, etc). On the one hand, large language models (LLMs) are becoming valuable and even necessary tools for the future. However, as is, it does not do a good job of writing papers and, importantly, citing sources correctly. So, if you choose to use these tools, only use them as a thesaurus to help develop alternative short expressions. Do not use them to generate ideas; those should be your own, and you should feel ownership over them. Don't rely on LLMs for the writing part for your benefit, either. Writing is thinking, and through the process of writing, you will refine your ideas.

Course material

Class readings are available electronically through the class website on Canvas.

Class Schedule

Lecture 1: Course Introduction (August 28)

Learning objectives:

- Go over the syllabus

- Set course expectations

Labor-day – no class (September 2)

Lecture 2: Science and the Scientific Method (September 4)

Learning objectives:

- What makes a statement "scientific"?

- What is a theory? How does a theory differ from an opinion or a fact?

- What is the difference between positivist and normative theorizing?

- What does "theory testing" entail?

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 2 (pp. 13–31).

Week 2 Recitation Plan:

- Introductions

- Reviewing syllabus and deadlines

- Recitation ground rules

- Review the scientific method

Week 3

Lecture 3: Politics and Comparative Politics (September 9)

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by "politics"?

- What makes something "political"?

- What do we mean by "comparative politics"?

- What methods do we use for studying comparative politics?

Required readings:

- Samuels, David. (2010). *Comparative Politics*, chapter 1 (pp. 2–23).

- Green, Amelia H. (2013). "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps."

Building blocks: states, institutions, regimes

Lecture 4: States Origin (September 11)

Learning objectives:

- What is (and is not) a state?

- Myths of state origin (Hobbes)

- Contractarian (e.g., Rousseau) vs. predatory (e.g., Olson, Tilly) theories of state origin.

- PSCI department presentations (Bess Davis)

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 4 (pp. 53–69).

- O'Neill, Patrick H. (2021). *Essentials of Comparative Politics.* chapter 2 (only pp. 29–38).

Week 3 Recitation Plan: States

- Clarify the definition of a state and a review of theories of state origin.

- Weber, Max. (1946). "Politics as a Vocation," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), pp. 77–83.

- Samuels, David. (2010). *Comparative Politics*, chapter 2, pp. 33-42.

Week 4

Lecture 5: State formation in Europe (September 16)

Learning objectives:

- What led to the emergence of (early) modern European states?

Required readings:

- Tilly, Charles (1990). *Coercion, Capital and European States*, chapter 3.

Lecture 6: State building in post-colonial countries (September 18)

Learning objectives:

- In what ways did late state building differ from early episodes of state formation?
- Why did post-colonial countries have problems building strong states?

Required readings:

- Centeno, Miguel Angel. "Blood and debt: War and taxation in nineteenth-century Latin America." (1997). *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1565–1605.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. (1990). "War and the State in Africa. *International Security* 14(4): 117-139.

Week 4 Recitation Plan:

- Review theories of European states and how these are different from the formation of post-colonial states
- Spruyt, Hendrik. (2009). "War, Trade, and State Formation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, pp. 211–235.

Week 5

Lecture 7: Democratic Institutions (September 23)

Guest lecture: Prof. Daniel Smith

Learning objectives:

- Introduction to tradeoffs inherent in core democratic institutions

- Proportional Representation (PR) vs. Majoritarian systems

- Presidential vs. parliamentary systems

Required readings:

- Samuels, David. (2010). *Comparative Politics*, chapter 3 (pp. 63–82).

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 14 (pp. 355–364).

Lecture 8: Institutions (September 25)

Guest lecture: Prof. Alice Xu

Learning objectives:

- Exposure to cutting-edge research in comparative politics

Required readings:

- Xu, Alice Z. "Segregation and the spatial externalities of inequality: A theory of interdependence and public goods in cities." (2023). *American Political Science Review.*

Week 5 Recitation Plan:

- What do we mean by institutions?

- Clark, Tom, and Jennifer Gandhi. (2015). "Studying Institutions." in *Routledge Handbook of Comparative Political Institutions*. pp 31–42.

- North, Douglas (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, chapter 1.

Week 6

Lecture 9: Democracies (September 30)

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by the term "regime"?

- What makes a country a democracy?

- Democratic regimes: trends

Required readings:

- Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. (1991). "What democracy is . . . and is not." *Journal of Democracy* 2(3): 75-88.

- Merkel, Wolfgang. (2004). "Embedded and defective democracies." *Democratization* 11(5): only 33-49.

Explore:

- Our World in Data https://ourworldindata.org/democracy

- Varieties of Democracy: https://v-dem.net

Lecture 10: Democratic Transition (October 2)

Learning objectives:

- Defining political liberalization, democratization, consolidation

- How and when do (some) countries transition to democracy?

Required readings:

- Foundation of Comparative Politics, chapter 7.

- Geddes, Barbara. (2009) "What Causes Democratization?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, chapter 14: pp. 317–339.

Week 6: No Recitation (Fall Break)

Week 7

Lecture 11: Econmic determinants of democracy (October 7)

Learning objectives:

- Are richer countries more likely to be democracies, or vice versa?

- What mechanisms link economic development with democracy?

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 5 (pp. 71–96).

Lecture 12: Cultural determinants of democracy (October 9)

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by political culture, and how does it, if at all, contribute to democracy?

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 6 (pp. 97–122).

Week 7 Recitation Plan:

- What is political culture, and what's its relationship to democracy?

- Sabetti, Filippo. (2009). "Democracy and Civic Culture," in The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics, pp. 340–362

Week 8

Lecture 14: Civil Society and Social Capital (October 14)

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by civil society?

- What do we mean by social capital?

- How and why does civil society strengthen democracies?

Required readings:

- Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Rafaella Y. Nanetti. (1992). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy.*, chapter 4.

- Berman, Sheri. (1997). "Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49(3): 401–429.

Lecture 14: Midterm (October 16)

Week 8 Recitation Plan:

- Is civil society always a force for good?

- Carothers, Thomas. "Civil Society: Think Again," *Foreign Policy*, Winter/1999-2000.

Week 9

Lecture 15: Authoritarian Regimes (October 21)

Guest lecture: Prof. Jane Esberg

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by the term "authoritarian regimes"?

- What are the different kinds of authoritarian regimes?

- Are the different kinds of authoritarian regimes consequential?

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 8 (only pp. 155–174).

Lecture 16: Authoritarian resiliance (October 23)

Learning objectives:

- What are the fundamental challenges that all authoritarian regimes face?

- How do non-democracies survive given these challenges?

Required readings:

- Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. (2019). *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 8 (only pp. 174–194).

- Wintrobe, Ronald. (2000). *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*, chapter 1 (pp. 1–39).

Week 9 Recitation Plan:

- What are Non-Democracies and How do they Survive?

- Gandhi, Jennifer & Adam Przeworski. (2007) "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies* 40:11.

Week 10

Lecture 17: Populism (October 28)

Guest lecture: Prof. Daniel Hopkins

Learning objectives:

- What do we mean by "Populism"?

- How and why does populism contribute to democratic erosion?

Required readings:

- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction.* (2017). chapters 1 and 5.

Lecture 18: Democratic Erosion (October 30)

Learning objectives:

- What does democratic erosion mean?

- Why are democratic norms eroding in many democracies?

- What is the "democratic erosion playbook"?

Required readings:

- Bermeo, Nancy (2016). "On democratic backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27(1): 5-19.

Week 10 Recitation Plan:

- Review democratic backsliding case studies

- Shifter, Michael. "Nicaragua Is Turning into a Real-Life House of Cards." *Foreign Policy.* September 5, 2016.

- McCarthy, Michael. "6 things you need to know about Venezuela's political and economic crisis." *The Washington Post*. May 18, 2016.

- Marcinkiewicz, Kamil and Mary Stegmaier. "Poland appears to be dismantling its own hard-won democracy." *The Washington Post*. July 21, 2017.

Week 11

Lecture 19: Polarization, Majoritarianism and Democratic Erosion (November 4)

Guest lecture: Prof. Yphtach Llkes

Learning objectives:

- Why do citizens who value democracy support actions that contribute to democratic erosion?

- What do we mean by "Polarization", and why it contributes to democratic erosion?

Required readings:

- Svolik, Milan W. (2019). "Polarization Versus Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 30(3): 20-32.

- Braley, Alia, Gabriel S. Lenz, Dhaval Adjodah, Hossein Rahnama, and Alex Pentland. (2023). "Why voters who value democracy participate in democratic backsliding." *Nature Human Behaviour* 7(8): 1282–1293.

Lecture 20: Disinformation and fake news (November 6)

Learning objectives:

- How do disinformation campaigns contribute to democratic erosion?

Required readings:

- Bandeira, Luiza, Donara Barojan, Roberta Braga, Jose Luis Peñarredonda and Maria Fernanda Pérez Arguello. (2019). Disinformation in Democracies: Strengthening Digital Resilience in Latin America. Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council. pp. 6-19.

- Clayton, Katherine, Nicholas T. Davis, Brendan Nyhan, Ethan Porter, Timothy J. Ryan, and Thomas J. Wood. (2021). "Elite rhetoric can undermine democratic norms." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(23): e2024125118.

Week 11 Recitation Plan:

- Review disinformation campaigns case studies

- Kremlin ABC: Adapt Focus. Blame Others. Cancel Events (https://euvsdisinfo.eu/kremlin-abc-adapt-focus-blame-others-cancel-events/)

- Pomerantsev, Peter. "The Disinformation Age: A Revolution in Propaganda." *The Guardian*. July 27, 2019.

- DiResta, Renée. "What We Now Know About Russian Disinformation." *NYTimes*. December 17, 2018.

Week 12

Lecture 21: Anti-migrant backlash (November 11)

Learning objectives:

- The political effects of immigration in host countries

- Why has immigration been a winning message for far-right and populist parties?

Required readings:

- Alesina, Alberto, and Marco Tabellini. (2024). "The Political Effects of Immigration: Culture or Economics?" *Journal of Economic Literature*, 62(1): 5-46.

Lecture 22: Hybrid Regimes (November 13)

Learning objectives:

- The "end of the transition paradigm."

- What do we mean by hybrid regimes?

- Why did hybrid regimes become the modal regime type after the 1990s?

Required readings:

- Carothers, Thomas. (2002). "The end of the transition paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* 13(1): 5-21.

- Diamond, Larry. (2002). "Elections without democracy: Thinking about hybrid regimes." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21–35.

Week 12 Recitation Plan:

- Competitive authoritarianism

- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. (2002). "Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51–65.

Week 13

Lecture 23: Nationalism (November 18)

Learning objectives:

- What is a nation?

- What is nationalism?

- Where did nationalism come from?

Required readings:

- Greenfeld, Liah, and Jonathan Eastwood. (2009). "National Identity," in The *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, chapter 11: pp. 256–273.

- O'Neill, Patrick H. (2021). *Essentials of Comparative Politics.* Chapter 3: "Nations and Society," only pages 63-75.

Lecture 24: Ethnicity (November 20)

Learning objectives:

- What is ethnic identity? When is it politicized?

- How does ethnic identity affect politics?

Required readings:

- Chandra, Kanchan. (2006). "What is ethnic identity, and does it matter?." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9(1): 397–424.

- Kalin, Michael, and Nicholas Sambanis. (2018). "How to think about social identity." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21(1): 239–257.

Week 13 Recitation Plan:

- How and when are ethnic identities politicized?

- Posner, Daniel N. (2004). "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.

Week 14

Lecture 25: Religion and Politics (November 25)

Learning objectives:

- How do religions shape the strategies of key political actors?

- When does religion become politically salient?

Required readings:

- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. (2012). "Why comparative politics should take religion (more) seriously." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15: 421-442.

- Grossman, Guy. (2015). "Renewalist Christianity and the political saliency of LGBTs: Theory and evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa." *The Journal of Politics* 77(2): 337-351.

No class - Thanksgiving Break (November 27)

Week 14: No recitation due to Thanksgiving

Week 15

Lecture 24: Gender and Politics (December 2)

Learning objectives:

- What explains differences in the political preferences of men and women?

- Spatial and temporal variation in gender (descriptive) representation

- Why do (some) countries adopt gender quotas, and does it matter?

Required readings:

1. Clayton, Amanda. (2021). "How do electoral gender quotas affect policy?." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24(1): 235–252.

2. Hughes, Melanie M, Paxton, Pamela, Clayton, Amanda B, & Zetterberg, Par. (2019). Global gender quota adoption, implementation, and reform. *Comparative Politics*, 51(2): 219–238.

Lecture 25: Q&A session (December 4)

Learning objectives:

- I will be answering any questions you may have about course materials in preparation for the final exam.

Week 14 Recitation Plan: Q&A session

- TAs will answer any questions you may have about course materials in preparation for the final exam.

Final exam (option1) (December 9)

Final exam (option2) (December 19)