

INTRODUCTIONS

Comparative Politics

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What are we covering today?

- Introductions: the course, the instructor, the participants
- What to expect from this course?
- What is comparative politics, and how does it matter?

Introductions to: the course, the instructor, the participants

What is this course all about?

- Introduction to **comparative politics**
 - We will examine key sources of variation across political systems, their origins, and their consequences
 - We will work with cases from different 1) geographic contexts, 2) levels of development, and 3) historical moments
 - We will talk not just about political systems, but also how they matter for economic, social, and human development
- The course emphasizes **empirical evidence** as a common basis to make sense of political realities
 - We will be discussing not just theories and ideas, but also their relationship to empirical evidence
 - We will be dissecting political and policy arguments, as well as empirical analyses

A bit about your instructor

- **Assistant Professor** (i.e., academic researcher). at IE since 2022
- **Personal background**: Born and raised in Madrid, but lived 14 years in the US, Brazil, the UK, and France
- **Education**: BA UCM 2009, MPhil Oxford 2011, PhD MIT 2020
- **Professional experience**: Formerly faculty at Vanderbilt, staff at the World Bank
- **Research agenda**: bureaucracies, anti-corruption actors and policies – in Brazil and Spain mostly
- **Policy work**: Current collaborations with prosecutors and auditors in Brazil

How to get in touch with me?

- **In person:** before or after class
- **Email:** gtoral@faculty.ie.edu
 - I typically respond within 48 hours
 - Please don't email me about isolated absences – I trust you sometimes need to miss sessions; just catch up looking at the slides & code, and getting notes from a classmate
 - Do not use Blackboard messages to get in touch with me – I don't check those regularly
- **Office hours** are by appointment (email me)
 - We can meet in person at my office or on Zoom
- **Office:** 28.20 in the Tower
 - Stop by if you have an urgent matter you want to talk about

Tell me a bit about you

- **Collectively:**

- Have you taken other courses related to politics? And to data / research?
- What other courses are you taking this semester?
- What fears do you have about this course?
- What kind of support would you find useful?

- **Individually:**

- Fill in a short, anonymous survey at www.guillermotoral.com/cpsurvey

What to expect about this course?

What are the learning objectives?

1. **Describe the key dimensions of variation in political systems** around the world and how major countries in all continents differ along them.
2. **Reflect critically about the origins and consequences of differences in political systems**, with reference to established theories in political science.
3. **Apply key concepts and theories of political science to debates** about politics around the world.
4. **Demonstrate social scientific literacy**, including basic quantitative literacy, and apply it to the study and discussion of politics.
5. **Use critical reading, autonomous research, and academic writing skills** to build and present cogent and evidence-based arguments about politics.

How is the course structured? First half:

- **Comparative politics and the state:**
 - The approach and method of CP
 - The nature, formation, and development of states
- **Political regimes:**
 - Authoritarianism, types, and survival
 - Democracy, democratization, and survival
- **Varieties of representation:**
 - Parliamentarism and presidentialism
 - Elections and electoral systems
- **Review session**
- **Midterm exam** (session 15, after a 2-week break)

How is the course structured? Second half:

- **Political actors:**

- Political parties and party systems
- Voters and political behavior
- Subnational authorities
- Courts
- Interest groups and social movements
- Bureaucrats

- **Review session**

- **Final exam** (session 30, after a 2-week break)

What are the course requirements?

- **In-class:**
 - Lectures
 - Group discussions and exercises
 - Individual quizzes
- **At home:**
 - Readings and preparing for quizzes
 - Research and writing for the research design
 - Studying for the exams
- **In-person exams:**
 - Midterm exam
 - Final exam

How will your learning be assessed?

- **Final exam (40%) and Midterm exam (20%):**
 - Cover all sessions and all readings up until that session (final exam covers the whole semester)
 - Closed-book, mostly if not all multiple choice
- **Quizzes (10%) and Exercises (10%)**
 - Quizzes are individual, unannounced, closed-book, on Blackboard, multiple choice
 - Exercises are in groups, grades [\times (0), \checkmark^- (50), \checkmark (100), \checkmark^+ (150)]
 - I will drop each student's lowest quiz score and lowest exercise score when calculating final grades
- **Research design (20%):**
 - Short write-up, but significant background research and thinking
 - Done in pairs – more details coming next week

What is this course's AI policy?

Generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., chatGPT) **may be used in this course for brainstorming and generating an outline, with appropriate acknowledgement.**

GenAI may not be used for taking quizzes or exams, or for generating any text submitted as own's writing. If a student is found to have used AI-generated content inappropriately, it will be considered **academic misconduct**, and the student might fail the respective assignment or the course.

Students in doubt about the use of GenAI tools in this course can get in touch with the instructor to discuss.

What are you expected to read, when, and why?

- We will read chapters from **two textbooks**:
 - Caramani, *Comparative politics* (2020)
 - Clark, Golder, and Golder, *Foundations of comparative politics* (2019)
- **Make sure to get hard copies or PDF copies**: through the Library, an online store, the Internet, previous cohorts...
- I expect you to **do the readings before the corresponding session** (see syllabus):
 - Readings will help you do better in discussions, exercises, and exams
 - There will be a few unannounced quizzes throughout the semester on the readings for that session

What is this course's policy and attendance?

- As per IE policy, **you can miss up to 20% of the sessions**, no questions asked
- No need to let me know about absences
- For justified absences that you want to exclude from your 20% allowance, you need to get in touch with the program's office
- Attendance is taken exclusively using **Qwickly at the beginning of each session**
 - The Qwickly QR code will be up at the back of the classroom for the first 10 minutes of class (and only then)
 - If Qwickly does not work for you for whatever reason, let me know while the QR code is up and I'll write down your name and later change that record
- **Attendance and participation are not directly graded but strongly encouraged** – proven to contribute to grades indirectly

A note on diversity and inclusion

- **Diversity of nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. are all assets** that I celebrate as valuable in and of themselves, but also as key ingredients for rich discussions about politics
- **I am committed to making this course a safe environment for all**, and I ask that you all treat each other with respect.

A note on academic integrity

- As a professional researcher and writer, **I care a lot about academic integrity:**
 - Attribution of ideas and recognition of creativity
 - Fairness among students
- In this course, any case of **plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty would be taken very seriously**, in agreement with IE policy.
- **Consequences of academic dishonesty** can include a 0 in the assignment, a failing grade in the course, and going to third call

What is Comparative Politics?

What is not Comparative Politics?

- International relations
- Political philosophy
- Political commentary
- Exclusively dedicated to:
 - National-level politics
 - Macro-level phenomena
 - Formal institutions
- Interested in individual countries in and of themselves

So what is Comparative Politics?

- A **subfield of political science** preoccupied with the causes and consequences of different aspects of political systems
- A **scientific enterprise**, leveraging clear theory and credible empirical strategies to learn about general political phenomena (and not just individual cases)
- An **active field of research** and a large **community of scholars**, all leveraging a diversity of theoretical models and empirical methods, applied to data anywhere in the world or throughout history to **draw credible lessons about politics**

Where do you find research Comparative Politics?

- **Academic journals** – there are many, but these are some of the best:
 - *American Political Science Review*
 - *American Journal of Political Science*
 - *Journal of Politics*
 - *British Journal of Political Science*
 - *Comparative Political Studies*
- **Academic books** – best presses include Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard.
- **Policy reports** by think tanks (e.g., Rand), international organizations (e.g., World Bank), civil society organizations (e.g., Transparency International)
- **Journalistic accounts of politics** (sometimes...)

Exercise in groups

- Find the website of the **American Political Science Review**, and locate the *Latest issue*
- Open some of the articles published to **take a quick look at the format, abstract, and analyses contained in those articles**
- Think through and **take notes on your answers to these questions:**
 - What are some features that these articles have in common?
 - How do these academic articles differ from newspaper articles about similar topics?
 - In what ways are these articles easy / difficult to digest?
 - Are these articles relevant to non-academic communities? Why or why not?

Next steps

- Next we will be discussing **the approach and method of comparative politics**
 - What is comparative politics?
 - Is the scientific study of politics possible?
 - How do we go about systematically studying politics?
 - How is comparative politics useful to citizens, to professionals, and to societies?
- **Do the readings** (posted on Blackboard) and come prepared for a potential quiz:
 - *Comparative politics* – chapter 2
 - *Foundations of comparative politics* – chapter 2
- **Get copies of the 2 textbooks**
- **Talk to me or email me** if you have any questions or concerns