

## COMPARATIVE POLITICS

### Dual Degree Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor in International Relations LLBBIR [2504110] SEP-2023 CP-NLBIR.2.M.A

Area Comparative Politics

Number of sessions: 30

Academic year: 23-24

Degree course: SECOND

Number of credits: 6.0

Semester: 2º

Category: BASIC

Language: English

Professor: **GUILLERMO TORAL**

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[Guillermo Toral](#) is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the IE School of Politics, Economics, and Global Affairs, and a Faculty Affiliate at MIT GOV/LAB. He obtained his PhD in Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2020, and an MPhil in Comparative Government at the University of Oxford (with distinction) in 2011. Prior to joining IE, Guillermo worked as Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University. Before doing his PhD, he spent several years working on human development policy and programs at the World Bank, in Washington DC and across Latin America.

Guillermo works in the fields of comparative politics and political economy, with a regional focus on Latin America and Southern Europe, and a substantive focus on issues of development, governance, and corruption. His research focuses on relationships among state actors (politicians, bureaucrats, and anti-corruption agents) and how they shape public service delivery and human development. In his work, Guillermo uses big administrative datasets, surveys, and extensive qualitative fieldwork to shed light on dynamics of government accountability.

Some of Guillermo's research has been published or is forthcoming in leading journals, including the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, and the *Annual Review of Political Science*. He has also published a number of policy reports and book chapters.

### Office Hours

Office hours will be on request. Please contact at:

For office hours, sign up using the following link: <https://calendly.com/guillermo-toral/office-hours>

Alternatively, if the available slots are not convenient, feel free to email at [gtoral@faculty.ie.edu](mailto:gtoral@faculty.ie.edu)

## SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

This course allows students to explore and scrutinize some of the key contemporary debates in comparative political science – or comparative politics. Comparative politics involves describing, comparing, and explaining political phenomena around the world. In today's climate of increased political volatility and heightened political risk, a course in comparative politics forms an essential part of the education of any aspiring professional (both in the public and the private sectors) with an international outlook and a keen interest in cross-border affairs. It asks questions such as how do different countries' political systems compare to one another and why are they similar or different? What effect does having a presidential form of government rather than a parliamentary one? Why do some countries have a multiparty political system while others have a two-party system? How do rules for elections differ across countries and what effects do they have on politics and representation? Students will get acquainted with studying human behavior embedded in institutions and what that entails for the larger system of representative democracy.

How do political systems around the world differ? What are the origins of such differences? What consequences do political systems and institutions have for economic, social, and human development? How can we make sense of historical and contemporary patterns of political development? And how can leverage all that knowledge to intervene in the world and make it a better place to live?

This course introduces students to comparative politics, a broad subfield of political science preoccupied with providing answers to these and many other questions related to politics and its impact on human livelihoods.

The semester is organized in 5 blocks:

- First, a block of 5 sessions focuses on the field of comparative politics and the nature, emergence and development of the most important arena of contemporary politics -- the state.
- A second block of 4 sessions is dedicated to political regimes (democracy and authoritarianism, with their respective subtypes) and their survival.
- Next, a block of 4 sessions turns to varieties of political representation (parliamentarism and presidentialism, different types of elections, and electoral systems).
- Fourth, an 8-session block considers major political actors, including parties, voters, subnational authorities, courts, interest groups, and social movements.
- Finally, a block of 5 sessions wraps up the semester with group project presentations, a review session, and a final exam.

Through a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, workshops, and individual and group research, this course will build students' ability to leverage the concepts, theories, and methods of comparative politics to think systematically through complex political and social problems, and to advance original, evidence-based arguments about them. The skills we build in this class will be useful for those seeking careers in sectors where analyzing complex social problems is valuable, be it in business, government, international organizations, or research.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Knowledge and understanding of a number of key contemporary debates and theories
- Ability to critically evaluate theories and concepts through original, independent and critical thinking
- Practice in the use, interpretation, and presentation of quantitative measures and indicators of concepts in comparative politics
- Ability to digest and use academic readings
- Oral and written communication skills
- Library and information retrieval skills
- Practice of independent research

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

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.

## TEACHING METHODOLOGY

IE University teaching method is defined by its collaborative, active, and applied nature. Students actively participate in the whole process to build their knowledge and sharpen their skills. Professor's main role is to lead and guide students to achieve the learning objectives of the course. This is done by engaging in a diverse range of teaching techniques and different types of learning activities such as the following:

??This course will help you answer the questions posed above and will provide you with the tools to tackle more complex questions in comparative politics. The course will take a scientific approach to studying comparative politics and emphasize important concepts, theories, empirical questions and research findings. To this end, sessions will combine the explanation of theoretical concepts with practical activities such as doing exercises and class activities where appropriate. Students will prepare the readings before class.

Learning Activity	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	30.0 %	45.0 hours
Discussions	4.0 %	6.0 hours
Exercises in class, Asynchronous sessions, Field Work	20.0 %	30.0 hours
Group work	20.0 %	30.0 hours
Individual studying	26.0 %	39.0 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150.0 hours

## **PROGRAM**

### **SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge

#### **Introduction to the course's objectives, requirements, rationale, and participants**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics - introduction*

### **SESSIONS 2 - 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **The approach and methods of comparative politics**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics - chapter 2 ("Approaches in comparative politics")*

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics - chapter 2 ("What is science?")*

### **SESSIONS 4 - 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **The nature, formation, and development of states**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 4 - "The nation state")*

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 4 - "The origins of the modern state")*

### **SESSIONS 6 - 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge

#### **Regimes: Authoritarianism, types, and survival**

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 8 - "Varieties of dictatorship")*

### **SESSIONS 8 - 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

#### **Regimes: Democracy, democratization, and survival**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 5 - "Democracies")*

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 7 - "Democratic transitions")*

### **SESSIONS 10 - 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

#### **Representation: Parliamentarism and presidentialism**

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 10 - "Parliamentary, presidential, and semi-presidential democracies")*

## **SESSIONS 12 - 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Representation: Elections and electoral systems**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 10 - "Elections and referendums")*

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 11 - "Elections and electoral systems")*

## **SESSION 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

**Review session for the mid-term exam**

## **SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

**Mid-term exam**

## **SESSIONS 16 - 17 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Actors: Political parties and party systems**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapters 12 and 13 - "Political parties" and "Party systems")*

## **SESSIONS 18 - 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Actors: Voters and political behavior**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 18 - "Political participation")*

## **SESSIONS 20 - 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Actors: Subnational authorities**

*Book Chapters: Foundations of Comparative Politics (chapter 13 - "Institutional veto players")*

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 11 - "Multilevel governance")*

## **SESSIONS 22 - 23 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Actors: Courts**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapter 9 - "Constitutions, rights, and judicial power")*

## **SESSIONS 24 - 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Actors: Interest groups and social movements**

*Book Chapters: Comparative Politics (chapters 14 and 16 - "Interest groups" and "Social movements")*

## **SESSIONS 26 - 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Group project presentations**

## **SESSIONS 28 - 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Review session for the final exam**

## **SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### **Sustainability Topics:**

- Governance
- Social Challenge
- Economic Development

### **Final exam**

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Students' final grade will be a function of their performance in (i) a final exam covering all the semester's material, including readings, lectures, workshops and in-class discussions (40% of the grade), (ii) a midterm exam covering all material covered to date (20% of the grade), (iii) individual quizzes covering the week's reading and individual or group exercises done in class (20% of the grade); and (iv) a group research project (20% of the grade).

More information on each of these components will be provided in the first session of the semester and before the corresponding deadlines.

criteria	percentage	Learning Objectives	Comments
Final exam	40 %		
Research paper	20 %		
Mid-term exam	20 %		
In-class quizzes and exercises	20 %		

## RE-SIT / RE-TAKE POLICY

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Students are required to obtain the minimum grade of 5 required to pass the course. Students whose grade in the Final Exam is below 5 will fail the course. Dates and location of the final exam will be posted in advance and will not be changed.

Students must attend at least 80% of the sessions. Students who do not comply with the 80% attendance rule will receive a 0.0 on their first and second attempts and go directly to the third one (they will need to enroll in this course again the following academic year).

Students who are in the third or fourth attempt must contact the professor during the first two weeks of the course.

### EXTRAORDINARY EXAMINATION POLICY:

Any student whose weighted final grade is below 5 will be required to sit for the extraordinary exam to pass the course (except those not complying with the attendance rules, whom are banned from this possibility).

Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:

- The extraordinary call will consist of a comprehensive exam or equivalent assignment. The grade will depend only on the performance on this exam; continuous evaluation over the semester will not be taken into account.
- Dates and location of the retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed.
- The exam/assignment will be designed bearing in mind that the passing grade is 5 and the maximum grade that can be attained is 8 out of 10.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Compulsory

- Caramani, Daniele. (2020). *Comparative Politics*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0198820607 (Digital)
- Clark, William Roberts; Golder, Matt; and Golder, Sona Nadenicheck. (2019). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press. ISBN 1544326866 (Digital)

## BEHAVIOR RULES

Please, check the University's Code of Conduct [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Please, check the University's Attendance Policy [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

### **ETHICAL POLICY**

Please, check the University's Ethics Code [here](#). The Program Director may provide further indications.

