

Timea Balogh

This sample syllabus indicates how I would teach an introductory Comparative Politics course.

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Instructor: Prof. Timea Balogh
Email: tbalogh@ucdavis.edu
Office: 667 Kerr Hall
Office Hours: Thursdays, 10am-12pm (and by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Comparative politics, one of the traditional sub-fields in political science, involves the systematic study and comparison of political systems around the world. Unlike international relations, which focuses on interactions between countries and other global actors, Comparative Politics tries to explain variation in the domestic politics and the political systems within countries, including their political institutions, mass and elite political behavior, and policy outputs. In this course, we will focus on some of the central questions that motivate research in this field: How do political institutions differ across countries and why are these variations significant? What factors determine whether a country is a democracy or a dictatorship? And how do historical, social, and economic factors influence the stability and effectiveness of political systems? I do not attempt to introduce all aspects of comparative politics in a 10-week quarter. Instead, the goal is to acquaint you with key questions and for you to begin to develop analytical tools that will allow you to reach your own conclusions about the world.

We will focus on two primary and interrelated branches of Comparative Politics: institutions and behavior. Focusing on institutions, such as elections and party systems, allows us to understand variation across countries, as well as how this variation may shape political outcomes. Meanwhile, the behavioral approach will allow us to understand how and why actors such as political parties or voters behave the way that they do in the contexts in which they are embedded. Together, both branches help provide a holistic understanding of Comparative Politics.

This course should provide a good foundation for more advanced courses in political science and give you the tools to identify and account for variation in political systems, behavior, and outcomes. This is an introductory course, and as such, I do not assume that you have any background in political science. However, I do assume that you are interested in the differences between countries and are curious to learn more.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS*Attendance*

This course is taught in two lectures each week, on Monday and Wednesday. I hope you attend and actively participate in each class because I have found it is the best way to engage you in learning. I will take attendance each week by passing around an attendance sheet sometime after

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the first 10 minutes of class for you to sign, which will contribute to your final participation grade.

Course Assignments

The assignments for this course consist of two reading memos, four quizzes, of which your lowest score will be dropped, and a final analytic essay. More details will be provided in a separate assignment regarding the reading memos. You will also need to attend lectures, as well as actively participate in class activities. Your participation grade will be assessed based on your attendance as well as your active, constructive participation in class debates and activities.

There will also be three surveys I will send out throughout the quarter to gauge your feelings and thoughts about the course. This exercise is designed to make sure the course is meeting your needs and that you are learning and should not be thought of as an assessment. To thank you for your time, you will receive a point of extra credit for completing these surveys.

Contacting Me

Throughout the quarter, you will likely encounter situations where you need to contact me via email or by attending office hours. The following outlines what each mode of communication entails and a general recommendation for which activities are best suited to each mode.

Office Hours

Office hours are when I set aside two hours each week to be available to students. Office hours are often underutilized by students in college, even though I find they strongly correlate with better performance and engagement in the course. Consider this your time. You do **not** need an appointment to come by but are welcome to make one by emailing me.

My office hours are indicated at the top of this syllabus. If you prefer to meet outside of these hours and/or in-person, I am happy to schedule an alternate meeting with you, just email me.

Office hours are best for...

- Discussing or clarifying concepts or lecture material in greater detail
- Reviewing readings and their key arguments/concepts
- Brainstorming paper ideas or going over drafts and outlines
- Reviewing assignment grades
- Conversing about current events or comparative politics
- Providing constructive feedback on the course

I strongly encourage everyone to review the following document on the **hidden rules for office hours** - <https://www.wm.edu/sites/neurodiversity/documents/hidden-rules-for-office%20hours.pdf>

Email

If your question cannot wait until office hours or class, then you can use email to contact me. When emailing, I encourage you to introduce yourself and try to be as clear as possible with your

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inquiry so that I can best help you. To help me see your email, please include the **class name** in your email subject line.

Email is best for...

- Asking quick, clarifying questions about lecture material or class assignments
- Setting up a meeting with me outside of office hours

Email is not a good alternative for having a direct conversation or an in-depth discussion, or exhaustively reviewing material from lecture. That is better suited for office hours.

I will do my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours. I usually reply to emails during standard “business hours” (9-5 Monday-Friday), so if you send an email very late or on a weekend, responses may take longer. If I have not responded within a reasonable time frame, please do not hesitate to send a follow-up email. I am a person too and it is very likely I simply forgot or missed it and appreciate the reminder.

Canvas & Accessing Course Material

All readings and necessary documents for this course can be accessed through the Canvas page for the course. I will also frequently send messages and make announcements using Canvas, so please make sure your information is up to date and that you have notifications turned on or are otherwise regularly checking Canvas.

You may also contact me via Canvas message instead of email, although if you are trying to contact multiple people at the same time (other students, multiple professors, etc...) I strongly encourage email to make replying all easier.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING STATEMENT

Your success in this class is important to me. It is my responsibility to ensure that you have the resources you need to be able to succeed in this course. Some of us may require accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. I encourage you to visit the UC Davis Student Disability Center website at sdc.ucdavis.edu for more information regarding the resources available to you and to determine how you could improve your learning as well.

There are also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center and the Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers, which assist students by helping them improve their study skills, academic writing, and other specific topics.

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

There is one required text for this course: Clark, Golder and Golder, Principles of Comparative Politics, 4th Edition, (<https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/principles-of-comparative-politics-4-259276>) which is available at the UC Davis Bookstore. All additional readings will be posted on the course Canvas page, either as links or the documents themselves.

GRADING

Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Participation	15%
Reading Memos (x 2)	30% (15% each)
Quizzes (best 3 out of 4).....	25%
Final Analytic Essay.....	30%

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The list below indicates when we will be covering which topics in class, as well as the deadlines for readings and other assignments. All readings and assignments are due on the day that they are listed, so please do each day's readings before class on the specified day. You can find this table, with associated links to readings and assignments, on the course Canvas page.

Date	Topic(s)	Readings and Assignments Due
Week 1		
Monday	Course Introduction & What Comparative Politics Is About	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syllabus• Start of Quarter Introductory Survey (on Canvas)
Wednesday	How and why compare?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daniel L. Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Differences: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," American Political Science Review 98, (November 2004), pp. 529-545.• David Plotz, "Greens Peace," New York Times Magazine, 4 June 2000
Week 2		
Monday	Presidents vs. Prime Ministers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 11– "Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies"• Juan Linz. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." Journal of Democracy. 1.1: 51-69.• Optional: Watch Rishi Sunak's last Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) as British Prime Minister

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Wednesday	Impacts on Political Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gerring, J., Thacker, S. C., & Moreno, C. (2009). Are Parliamentary Systems Better? <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>, 42(3), 327-359.
Week 3		
Monday	Elections and Electoral Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 12 – “Elections and Electoral Systems” Paula Surridge, “Labour wins big but the UK’s electoral system is creaking” The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jul/05/labour-wins-big-uk-electoral-system-creaking
Wednesday	Devolution vs. Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Jeffery, “Devolution in the United Kingdom: Problems of a Piecemeal Approach to Constitutional Change.” <i>Publius</i> vol. 39, no. 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 289–313. Atul Kohli, “India: Federalism and the Accommodation of Ethnic Nationalism,” in Ugo M. Amoretti and Nancy Gina Bermeo, <i>Federalism and Territorial Cleavages</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), pp. 281–299
Week 4		
Monday	No Class-Holiday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Wednesday	Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 13 – “Parties, Party Systems, and Party Competition” Jae-Jae Spoon and Heike Klüver. Dec. 3, 2019. “What Explains Mainstream Party Decline across Europe?” LSE Democratic Audit. https://www.democraticaudit.com/2019/03/12/what-explains-mainstream-party-decline-across-europe/
Week 5		
Monday	Democracy vs. Autocracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-Quarter Check In Survey Due (on Canvas) Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 5 – “Democracy and Dictatorship: Conceptualization and Measurement”
Wednesday	Measuring Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skim & make note of any questions: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/FIW_2024%20MethodologyPDF.pdf Robert Dahl, <i>Polyarchy</i> Participation and Opposition (Yale University Press, 1971) p. 1-9 Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “What Democracy Is...and Is Not,” <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 2, 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 75-88.
Week 6		
Monday	Determinants of Democracy Pt. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 6 – “The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship”
Wednesday	Determinants of Democracy Pt. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clark, Golder, and Golder Ch. 7 – “The Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship”
Week 7		

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Monday	Democratic Decline & Risk of Authoritarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stevin Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> (2018), p. 72-92• Steven A. Cook, “How Erdogan Made Turkey Authoritarian Again,” <i>The Atlantic</i>, 21 July 2016.• “Freedom in the World 2022: The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule” - https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule
Wednesday	Hybrid Regimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Levitsky and Way, “The New Competitive Authoritarianism” <i>Journal of Democracy</i> (2020)• Podcast: https://www.economist.com/podcasts/2024/03/15/whats-the-point-of-russias-election-if-we-know-vladimir-putin-will-win
Week 8		
Monday	Voting and Voter Turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore for 20-30 minutes: https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout-database• Oprea, Alexandra, Lucy Martin, and Geoffrey H. Brennan. 2024. “Moving toward the Median: Compulsory Voting and Political Polarization.” <i>American Political Science Review</i>: 1–15.
Wednesday	Protests and Social Movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Podcast: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/11/arts/music/reggaeton-loud-podcast.html?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur• Alan Taylor. “Images from a Worldwide Protest Movement.” <i>The Atlantic</i>. June 8, 2020.• https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2020/06/images-worldwide-protest-movement/612811
Week 9		
Monday	Special Topics (determined by survey result)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBD
Wednesday	Special Topics (determined by survey result)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBD
Week 10		
Monday	Analytic Essay Peer-Review Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring full draft of analytical essay to class for peer-review
Wednesday	Wrapping Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End of Quarter Exit Survey (on Canvas)