

**Political Science 0300**  
**Introduction to Comparative Politics**  
**FALL 2023**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00 – 10:50 AM**  
**Scaife 3785 Auditorium**

Instructor: Dr. Anthony Ocepek  
Office: Wesley Posvar Hall #4614  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00AM – 1:00PM  
Or by appointment: [ano38@pitt.edu](mailto:ano38@pitt.edu)

TA: Vivian Chen  
Email: [vic47@pitt.edu](mailto:vic47@pitt.edu)  
Office: 4432 Wesley Posvar Hall  
Office Hours: Fridays 3:00PM – 6:00PM

**Course Description:**

Comparative politics is a crucial element of political science because it is through the comparative method that we can more fully analyze and understand the various components of politics and the behavior of different political systems. This introductory course provides students with a foundational knowledge of the different comparative methods and theories used by researchers in the field. We will explore topics such as political culture, institutions, and social movements and will draw examples from authoritarian states as well as from both developing and developed democracies.

The course is divided into three segments. The first part introduces key concepts and an overview of varied comparative methods and theories used in the field to examine political phenomena. The second part then introduces topics on regimes, both democratic and authoritarian. The final part of the course then focuses more specifically on features of democracies.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Identify and define concepts and approaches to the comparative method.
2. Identify the defining features of institutional choices like democracy vs authoritarianism and presidentialism vs parliamentarism.
3. Formulate analytical arguments on how the choice of political institutions influence regime transitions, government stability, the capacity of voters to select and hold politicians accountable, and the probability of civil conflict.

## **Reading Materials:**

### **Required Textbooks:**

This course uses two different texts:

Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop and John McCormick. 2019. *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*. London: Red Globe Press, 11<sup>th</sup> edition. (referred to in the syllabus as “**HHM**”)

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2018. *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. (referred to in the syllabus as “**CGG**”)

As we will not be utilizing the entire texts in the course, electronic copies of the chapters included in the syllabus are made available on Canvas. It is still encouraged that you purchase the texts for your own future reference on topics that are not discussed within the course.

### **Required Supplemental Readings:**

For some weeks, the course has specific required readings that complement the general textbook readings. Please see the course syllabus to learn which readings you are required for each respective week. These required readings for the class will be posted on Canvas.

### **Recommended:**

As part of learning about comparative politics, you are strongly encouraged to follow international current events throughout the course. We will be discussing relevant world events in lectures and recitations. There are many on-line resources for international news including *The New York Times*, *Economist*, *BBC*, *Der Spiegel*, *Politico*, *CNN*, *Hurriyet Daily News*, *Al Jazeera*, and *The Japan Times*. Feel free to check out non-English language sources as well.

## **Course Requirements:**

Your grade for this class can be broken down as follows:

Recitation/Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Short Essays	20%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

### **Recitation/Participation:**

Given the size of the class, attendance will not be taken in lecture. Attendance is required for each recitation. If you notify the recitation’s TA **in advance** with a valid reason to have missed the recitation, your absence may be excused. However, you are responsible for submitting any

assignments that are due for that day. Each unexcused absence **after the three unexcused absences** will subtract 1% from your total Recitation/Participation grade (10%). Makeup opportunities for essays, presentations, and exams will be allowed in the case of excused absences such as illness (with a doctors' note), a family emergency (with documentation), or university-sponsored travel (with a signed note from the appropriate university authority).

With regards to participation, please make sure that you have read the required material for the designated day. Moreover, you are expected to participate in both lecture and recitations by asking/responding to questions as well as engaging in the varied in-class activities and discussion groups.

### **Quizzes:**

There will be 10 quizzes that will be administered at any time during the lectures. We will drop the lowest 2 scores (only 8 will be counted). These quizzes will cover material from the assigned readings for that lecture. There will be no make-ups.

### **Short Essays:**

You will be required to write two short essays. The essay must be 12pt, Times New Roman font, 1" margins and double-spaced. For these essays, you will be provided a prompt by the instructor at least three weeks prior to the due date of the response essay detailing the question to be answered along with points that you should consider within your response. Instructions offering greater detail of the expectations for the essay and the grading rubric will be made available on Canvas and reviewed during lecture. Essays will be submitted online on Canvas.

### **Midterm/Final Exams:**

The Midterm/Final Exams will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions (in which students will be asked to write a few sentences for each question), and a longer written response essay. The tests are designed to be comprehensive, but never to be tricky.

### **Grading Scale:**

Each assignment will be evaluated on a scale of one hundred points. The correlation of the scale with the letter grade for the final course grade is as follows:

93-100% A	87-89% B+	77-79% C+	67-69% D+	0-59% F
90-92% A-	83-86% B	73-76% C	63-66% D	
	80-82% B-	70-72% C-	60-62% D-	

## **Important Information:**

### **Office Hours:**

I offer multiple hours per week. If you cannot make these hours, I can schedule appointments via e-mail. I will advise the class should my hours not be available as normal. If you are struggling with a text or the class, or simply have more questions than we can get to in class, I am happy to work with you. During weekdays, please allow me a period of 12 hours to respond to any email. Emails sent during the weekend will be responded to by the following Monday.

### **Class Discussions:**

For you to get the most out of this class, it is important that you keep current with the readings and are willing to participate in class discussions. The classroom is intended to be an open space for discussion, where all ideas and questions are valid. Being a course examining a range of international political issues, serious and often conflict-prone issues will be discussed. It is important that all people in the class—instructors and students—treat everyone’s viewpoint with respect. This doesn’t mean that viewpoints won’t be critically assessed, but it does mean that no one should feel afraid to voice their opinion in the class. However, no personal attacks or *ad hominem* arguments (i.e. “you’re wrong because you have red hair”) will be tolerated. Due to the size of the course, however, this may be difficult, and I will attempt to ensure ample opportunities for students to share their perspectives and critiques within small group settings in addition to the overall lecture.

### **Extensions and Alternate Dates:**

In general, we will not allow extensions on assignments or alternate exam dates. However, should you find yourself in a situation where you will not be able to turn an assignment in on-time or be present for an exam, please discuss this with your TA as soon as you can.

### **Late Policy:**

A late assignment will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day it is late. After one week, it will no longer be accepted.

### **Academic Standards:**

Students in this course are expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>). Turning in the work of another and calling it your own violates the academic standards of this class, as does any manner of cheating on exams. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated by the instructor, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. More information and the complete policy can be found at <http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai.html>.

## **Disability Resources and Services:**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412-648-7890, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users), [drsrecp@pitt.edu](mailto:drsrecp@pitt.edu), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodation for this course. For more information, please see <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/drs/>

## **General Rules:**

- Please be on time for class
- Please keep your cell phone turned off during class
- No food will be permitted in lecture, Drinks are perfectly OK (I will always have my cup of tea/coffee)

## **Important Dates:**

Thursday, September 28 – Essay #1 Due

Thursday, October 19 – **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Tuesday, November 21 & Thursday, November 23–**THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS**

Thursday, November 16 – Essay #2 Due

**Final Exams Week, Date and Location TBA**

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics**

**Week #1** – Introduction to Course & Key Concepts

Tuesday, August 29:

\*\*\* INTRODUCTION TO COURSE \*\*\*

Thursday, August 30:

Readings:

I. HHM (2019) Chapter 1 – Key Concepts

## **Week #2** – Theoretical Approaches and the Comparative Method

Tuesday, September 5:

### Readings:

1. HHM (2019) Chapter 2 – Theoretical Approaches

Thursday, September 7:

### Readings:

1. HHM (2019) Chapter 3 – Comparative Methods

## **Part II: Political Regimes and Regime Change**

## **Week #3** – Origins of the State

### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 4 – Origins of the Modern State
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 4 – The State **(Please skim this chapter)**

### For Recitations:

Activity – Fragile States Index

## **Week #4** – Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 5 – Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

### For Recitations:

1. Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” *World Politics* 49, no. 2: 155-183. **(Please read pages 155-167)**
2. Mitter, Rana and Elsbeth Johnson. 2021. “What the West Gets Wrong About China: Three fundamental misconceptions.” *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 2021 Issue. **(Please read myths 1 & 2)**

## **Week #5** – Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

### **Essay #1 Due September 28<sup>th</sup>**

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 6 – Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

#### For Recitations:

Activity – World Values Survey

## **Week #6** – Authoritarian Regimes

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 8 – Varieties of Dictatorship
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 6 – Authoritarian Rule (**Please skim this chapter**)

**\*\*\* FALL BREAK OCTOBER 6<sup>th</sup>, NO RECITATIONS \*\*\***

## **Week #7** – Regime Transitions

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 7 – Democratic Transitions
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 5 – Democratic Rule (**Please Read Pages 79-87**)

#### For Recitations:

1. Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49, no. 3: 401-429.

## **Week #8** – Midterm Examination

Tuesday, October 17: **Midterm Review**

Thursday, October 19: **Midterm Examination**

## **Part III: Democracy and its Varieties**

### **Week #9** – Types of Democracies

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 10 – Parliamentary, Presidential and Semi-Presidential Systems
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 5 – Democratic Rule (**Please skim pages 70-78**)

#### For Recitations:

Activity – Freedom House

### **Week #10** – Elections and Electoral Systems

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 11 – Elections and Electoral Systems
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 15 – Elections (**Please skim this chapter**)

#### For Recitations:

1. Economist. 2015. “With different rules, some big elections in 2015 would have had very different outcomes.” *Economist*, December 28, 2015.

Activity – Elections and Calculating Vote Shares

### **Week #11** – Social Cleavages and Party Systems

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 12 – Social Cleavages and Party Systems
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 16 – Political Parties (**Please skim pages 279-285**)

#### For Recitations:

Activity – Comparative Manifesto Project



## **Week #12** – Political Participation and Voters

### **Essay #2 due November 16<sup>th</sup>**

#### Readings:

1. HHM (2019) Chapter 13 – Political Participation (**Please read pages 216 – 223**)
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 17 – Voters (**Please read pages 287-298**)

#### For Recitations:

1. Posner, Daniel. 2004. “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi.” *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4: 529-545.

## **Week #13**

### **NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK**

## **Week #14** – Institutional Veto Players

#### Readings:

1. HHM (2019) Chapter 7 – Constitutions and Courts
2. HHM (2019) Chapter 11 – Sub-national Governments

#### For Recitations:

1. Lijphart, Arend. 2004. “Constitutional Design for Divided Societies.” *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2: 96-109.

## **Week #15** - Consequences of Democratic Institutions

#### Readings:

1. CGG (2018) Chapter 14 – Consequences of Democratic Institutions

## **Final Exams Week, Date and Location TBA**