

# Comparative Politics

**Professor Danielle Higgins**  
**School of Public Affairs**  
**American University**  
**Fall 2018**

**Mondays and Thursdays:** 9:45-11:00 AM

**Classroom:** Kerwin 4

**Email:** dh6087a@american.edu

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2-4pm or by appointment.

**Office Location:** Hurst 206g (Located in the SPA office suite on the second floor)

## Course Information

### What We Will Cover in This Course:

Why are some countries democratic and others are not? What are the causes of political violence, ethnic conflict, revolution, and mobilization? Just what is “the state” and how does it exert control over society? And how does society shape it? Why do some nations develop economically while others fail? Why are some societies more equal than others, on gender, racial and class lines?

These are just some of the questions political scientists who specialize in comparative politics explore. This course provides an introduction to the methods, theories, and basic concepts of comparative politics. This includes learning to analyze concepts, patterns and trends in global politics from a comparative perspective as well as identifying how social and cultural differences affect political systems. We will evaluate competing perspectives about the larger forces that have shaped, and continue to shape, global politics such as the development of the state, political contestation, varied political regimes, ideologies, movements, issues of representation, and the relationship between the individual and the state.

The field of comparative politics is large and no one course can possibly cover all that there is to explore. This course will primarily focus on the linkages between the state and society: how do different institutional arrangements affect outcomes for citizens? How can citizens contest, resist and participate in institutions in order to affect change? This course therefore serves as a starting point to begin to answer these overarching questions, to think about history and current events from a comparative perspective, and to engage with scholarship in a critical manner, evaluating the arguments of others and raising your own original questions and ideas.

In the second part of the course, we apply overarching theories of comparative politics to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to explore authoritarian institutions and the possibilities for contestation even within oppressive systems.

### What You Will Learn:

I realize that a lot of the material we cover may be new to you. All you need is curiosity about diverse societies and political systems, a desire to learn about the fundamental concepts and theories of political science to better understand the political world, and a willingness to engage with the material in a critical, analytical, and reflective way.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with some major questions, themes and issues in comparative politics and define key political concepts
2. Analyze how dynamics of identity (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender) structure political systems and govern their functioning
3. Apply theory to specific case-studies, analyzing the relationship between economic, political and social features of political systems
4. Locate and employ appropriate empirical evidence to evaluate claims and draw conclusions about the structures and functions of political systems
5. Convey coherent analytical arguments about comparative politics in writing and in speech.

Intended as the introduction to comparative politics in the Government Department, this course also fulfills a Gen Ed requirement in Foundational Area 3: The Global and Cross-Cultural Experience. In addition to the specific learning outcomes for this course, the course also develops the following General Education learning outcomes:

- Communication skills: Interchanging ideas and information through writing, speech, and visual and digital media. Communication skills will be assessed through participation, informal in-class presentations on the readings, and two short essays.
- Critical Inquiry: Systematic questioning and analysis of problems, issues, and claim. Both in- class discussions and your written assignments, including exams, will assess your critical inquiry skills.

These are the general learning outcomes shared by all sections of GOVT-130. Beyond introducing you to the field of Comparative Politics, my goal in this course is to teach you how to approach scholarly work with a critical eye, to boil down complex topics to their main arguments, to pick arguments apart and ultimately make original arguments of your own. These are skills that will benefit you regardless if you continue on in Political Science, skills that you can carry with you to your other classes, now and in the future. To that end, I will spend some time early on in the semester teaching you how to read academic articles. Your job in class discussions is to explain and critique the arguments. My job is to guide you through this, along with providing you context as to how particular articles fit into larger debates in the field.

### What to Do When You are Confused:

I strive to answer questions via email as quickly as possible, but I very much prefer speaking with students in office hours, especially if your questions are substantive in nature. Please reach out if you have questions, are struggling with the course material (it is not easy!), want to discuss concepts further or for any other reason!

There will also be an anonymous discussion board where you can post clarifying questions if you are confused by a reading or idea. This material is not easy, but we will go through it together. Because the discussion board is anonymous, neither I nor your classmates will know who posted the question, so don't worry about posting a question you might think is "silly" or "too obvious" There are no bad questions! It is important for me to know what you might be struggling with. More than likely, another student has the same question, so posting one is also doing service for your classmates.

## Course Requirements, Assignments and Grading

### Required Readings:

There are no required books for this class. Readings are primarily articles and they will be available on Blackboard.

### Assignments:

Your assignments for this course include two short papers (10% and 15%), an in-class midterm exam (15%), a take-home final (25%) and serving as a "resource" for your classmates two times during the semester (20%), along with class participation (15%).

**The first paper (10%),** due in the first half of the course, is a three to four-page synthesis essay, which will ask you to put several of the scholars we have covered in conversation with one another. You will outline their arguments and drawing attention to the debates between them as well as the tensions that emerge.

**The second paper (15%),** due in the second half of the course, is a country case study. You may select any country of your choice to write a five-page essay in which you apply some of the concepts and theories we have covered in the course to explain the politics of the country today. This will require you to conduct some research to understand the modern political landscape and select an important issue to explore.

**The midterm examination (15%)** will take place in class, on MONDAY, OCTOBER 15th. The purpose of having an in-class exam is for me to assess your understanding of the concepts we have covered, without the aid of notes, so I can know what I may need to go back over.

**The final (25%)** will be a take-home exam. I will provide you with the questions a week before the due date, which is the last day of class, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6th. By the time of the final exam, you will have honed your abilities to analyze and synthesize arguments, and this is the skill that you will demonstrate in your final exam. As you will have the aid of notes and time, I expect you to construct your own original arguments about the material we have covered and raise new and interesting questions.

**“Resource Duty” (20%):** Two times throughout the semester, you will be responsible for taking notes on one of the readings for the week. A sign-up sheet will be passed out in the second week of class. These notes should be completed the day before the class that we will be covering the reading. You will post these notes to a shared Google Drive folder, which all of your classmates will have access to. In addition to taking notes on the reading, you will submit discussion questions about the reading to me, no later than the evening before the class we will be covering the reading. During class, you will briefly summarize the argument for your classmates and help me to kick off the discussion.

Finally, **participation (15%)** is an important element of this course. The more engaged you are, the more interesting the class will be. I define participation in a broad way, because I know that students have various levels of comfort when it comes to participating in and outside of class. Class participation includes contributing to classroom discussion, meeting with me during office hours, and emailing me about current events that pertain to topics we are covering in class. Any of these activities can contribute to your participation grade. Excessive absenteeism may adversely affect your participation grade. Please let me know if you know you are going to be missing class.

**Grading Policy:**

Here are the grade cutoffs that I will use when calculating your final grade:

Exemplary		Good		Acceptable		Unacceptable	
A	93%-100%	B+	87%-89%	C+	77%-79%	D	65%-69%
A-	90%-92%	B	84%-86%	C	74%-76%	F	Under 65%
		B-	80%-83%	C-	70%-73%		

## How to Submit Assignments:

With the exception of the notes you take while on “resource duty,” which you will upload to a shared folder, you will submit your assignments via Blackboard. There will be assignment submission page for your two papers and your final exam. It is much easier for me if you post your assignment as a Word Document so I can provide in-text comments. Microsoft Office is available for students to download free of charge, via the technology tab in the AU Portal.

Please do not submit assignments via email. I will only provide feedback and grades on once they are submitted on Blackboard. The SafeAssign plagiarism detection tool, which is integrated into Blackboard, compares your work against other student papers, as well as academic articles and internet resources, to generate an "Originality Report" that identifies areas of potential overlap. See the American University Academic Integrity Code policy: <https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>

## Course Policies

### What Happens If I Submit an Assignment Late?

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade each day it is late (in other words, a B+ becomes a B, a B- becomes a C+, etc.)

### What About Extensions?

I understand that you have many other classes and responsibilities outside of this course. I may be willing to grant extensions, but only if you communicate with me at least 24 hours prior to the due date. Otherwise, the assignment grade will be penalized in accordance with the above late work policy.

If you experience an unexpected emergency or other personal crises that prevents you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible.

### What If I Need Accommodations?

In this class, I aim to provide the most inclusive environment possible and equal access to the curriculum for all students. If, at any point during the semester, you find yourself struggling to fully access the content of this course for any reason, you are welcome (but not required) to send me an email, talk with me after class or come by my office hours to discuss your specific needs. If you need an accommodation, I'll try make it happen. It is especially helpful if folks with non-visible disabilities or who pass or mask speak with me so I can address your needs.

Likewise, if English is not your first language and reading and/or writing in English presents difficulties for you, it helps me to know that.

You may also contact the Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) at [asac@american.edu](mailto:asac@american.edu) which can assist you in obtaining documentation to receive the accommodations you need for all of your courses. For certain accommodations, such as extra time for exams, you need to obtain this documentation. I encourage to contact ASAC so you can ensure that your instructors in all of your courses can meet your needs.

I understand that personal circumstances may also arise, often unexpectedly, that affect your ability to engage with the course. Again, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me to discuss what would help you complete your coursework. You may also contact the Dean of Students (DOS) at [dos@american.edu](mailto:dos@american.edu).

Both the ASAC and the DOS handle your information in a confidential way. They will ask your instructors to provide the accommodations that you need, but they do not disclose the reason.

A full list of student services is available here: <https://www.american.edu/ocl/iss/support-services.cfm>

### **Our Classroom Environment:**

When interacting with your classmates I expect you to always respect others' ideas, opinions, and comments. While tolerance toward the opinions of others does not preclude expressions of disagreement, which are, indeed, encouraged, it does require that these expressions be based on the content of the ideas expressed.

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Please also inform me of your preferred gender pronoun (or if you do not utilize gender pronouns) at any point during this course.

The use of laptops is not permitted in class, unless you have specific accommodations. More often than not, laptops wind up being detrimental to learning and affect your engagement with the class. Because this class is primarily discussion-based, it is important to be fully present.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: 8/27 & 8/30 What is Comparative Politics?

**Thursday:** Is Political Science Relevant? [www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/books/20poli.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/books/20poli.html)

John Dryzek, "Revolutions without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100:4 (2006), 487-492.

Arend Lijphart: "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 65, no. 3 (1971) pp. 682-693

### Week 2: 9/3 & 9/6 (NO CLASS MONDAY 9/3, Labor Day) Where Does "the State" Come From?

**Thursday:** Charles Tilly, "War Making and the State as Organized Crime" in *Bringing the State Back In* edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. (2001). "Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review*, 91 (5), 1369-1401.

### Week 3: 9/10 & 9/13 What Role Does Identity Play in Nation-Building?

**Monday:** Geertz, C. 1963, 'The integrative revolution: Primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new states', in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*

Anthony Marx, "Race-Making and the Nation-State," *World Politics* 48:2 (1996)

**Thursday:** Daniel Posner, "The Politics of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi," *American Political Science Review* 98:4 (2004).

Edward Miguel, "Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania," *World Politics* 56:3 (2004), 327-362.

**Week 4: 9/17 & 9/20**  
**What is Democracy? Can it be Measured?**

**Monday:** Schmitter, Philippe and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is... And is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2(3):75-88

Collier, D. and S. Levitsky, 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49: 430-51

**Thursday:** Mike Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, Adam Przeworski. 1996. *Classifying Political Regimes. Studies in Comparative International Development. Volume 31(2):3-36*

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Fish, S., Hicken, A., . . . Teorell, J. (2011). *Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach. Perspectives on Politics, 9(2), 247-267*

**Week 5: 9/24 & 9/27**  
**Are There Prerequisites for Democracy?**

**Monday:** Lipset, S. (1959). *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. The American Political Science Review, 53(1), 69-105*

Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. (1997). "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49 (2): 155-183

**Thursday:** Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. *Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy. Perspectives on Politics, 8(2), 551–567. doi:10.1017/S1537592710001258*

Hadenius, Axel and Jon Teorell. 2005. "Cultural and Economic Prerequisites of Democracy: Reassessing Recent Evidence." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 39 (4): 87-106.

**Week 6: 10/1 & 10/4**  
**How Do Transitions to Democracy Happen?**

**FIRST PAPER DUE VIA BLACKBOARD SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th at MIDNIGHT**

**Monday:** Geddes, Barbara. (1999). "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 115-44.

Schmitter, Philippe C. (2010), "Twenty-Five Years, Fifteen Findings" *Journal of Democracy* 21(1), pp. 17-28

**Thursday:** Smith, B. (2005). Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence under Single- Party Rule. *World Politics*, 57(3), 421–451. doi:10.1353/wp.2006.0004

Eisenstadt, Todd A., Carl LeVan, and Tofigh Maboudi. 2015. “When Talk Trumps Text: How Participatory Deliberation on New Constitutions Advances Democratization,” in *American Political Science Review* 109:3

### **Week 7: 10/8 & 10/11**

#### **What is Authoritarianism? Why Do Authoritarian Leaders Have Elections?**

**Monday:** Svobik, Milan W. 2009. “Power Sharing and Leadership Dynamics in Authoritarian Regimes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (2): 477-494

Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. “Elections Under Authoritarianism.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, 203-422.

**Thursday:** Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way: “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 2 (April 2002), pp. 51 – 65

Selections from Susan Hyde’s *The Pseudo Democrat’s Dilemma*

### **Week 8: 10/15 & 10/18**

#### **Can Clientelism Lead to Democratic Accountability?**

**MIDTERM MONDAY OCTOBER 15th**

**Thursday:** Leonard Wantchekon, “Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin,” *World Politics* 55:3 (2003), 399-422.

### **Week 9: 10/22 & 10/25**

#### **What is the Role of Civil Society in Democratization (or its Collapse)?**

**Monday:** Berman, Sheri, 1997. “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” in *World Politics* (49): 3, April 1997: 401-429

**Thursday:** Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). (SELECTIONS)

Jamal, A. A. (2009). *Barriers to democracy: The other side of social capital in Palestine and the Arab world*. Princeton University Press. (SELECTIONS)

### Week 10: 10/29 & 11/1

#### How Do Revolutions Happen and What Forms Can Resistance Take?

**Monday:** Skocpol, Theda (1976) "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18(2), pp.175-210.

**Thursday:** Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49.1 (1996) 31-55.

Selections from James Scott's *Domination and the Art of Resistance*

### Week 11: 11/5 & 11/8

#### Why Are So Many Middle Eastern Countries Dictatorships?

**Monday:** Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53 (2001), 325-361. Fish, M. (2002). Islam and Authoritarianism. *World Politics*, 55(1), 4-37.

**Thursday:** Bellin, Eva. 2004. "The robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in comparative perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36:2, pp.139-157

### Week 12: 11/12 & 11/15

#### What Can We Learn About Democracy, Autocracy and Revolution from the Arab Spring?

**Monday:** Weyland, Kurt. 2012. "The Arab Spring: Why the Surprising Similarities with the Revolutionary Wave of 1848?" *Perspectives on Politics* 10:4, 917-934.

Ismail, Salwa. "Urban Subalterns in the Arab Revolutions: Cairo and Damascus in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no.4 (2013): 865-94.

**Thursday:** Bellin, Eva R. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism Reconsidered: Lessons of the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics* 44, 2 (2012): 127-149.

Sean Yom and F. Gregory Gause, "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On," *Journal of Democracy*, 23: 3 (October 2012), pp. 74-88

**Week 13: 11/19 (No Class Thursday, 11/22: Thanksgiving)  
Why Are Women So Underrepresented in Politics in the MENA Region?**

**SECOND PAPER DUE SUNDAY, 11/18 AT MIDNIGHT**

**Monday:** Ross, M. (2008). Oil, Islam, and Women. *The American Political Science Review*, 102(1), 107-12

Kang, A. (2009). Studying oil, Islam, and women as if political institutions mattered. *Politics & Gender*, 5(4), 560-568.

**Week 14: 11/26 & 11/29  
How Does Women's Representation Increase?**

Monday: Tajali, M., & Hoodfar, H. (2011). Electoral Politics: Making quotas work for women. *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*.

Thursday: Hughes, M. (2011). Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide. *The American Political Science Review*, 105(3), 604-620.

**Questions for final take-home exam will be distributed in class on 11/29**

**Week 15: 12/3 & 12/6  
Outstanding Questions & Conclusions**

**FINAL, TAKE-HOME EXAM WILL BE DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS, 12/6**