

Introduction to Comparative Politics
POL 140
Tuesday and Thursday, 9-10 AM
1210 Chem

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12:00

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This class is an introduction to the study of Comparative Politics. As such it aims to introduce the student to both the central findings of comparative politics and the basic method of comparative politics – cross-national comparison. We will attempt to accomplish both of these tasks by examining a set of questions crucial to the study of comparative politics. First we will examine the question of why some countries are democracies, while some are not. Second, we will examine whether democracy produces systematically different outcomes than non-democracies. Does democracy increase economic growth? Does it encourage better health and education outcomes? Third, we will examine the range of variation *within* the set of democratic countries and ask whether the *type* of democracy matters. Are some sets of institutional arrangements better at holding politicians accountable to voters? Are some forms of representative government more representative? Are some democratic institutions associated with better economic performance? Finally, do some sets of institutional arrangements encourage the survival of democracies?

Requirements: Every student in the class is required to enroll in, attend, and participate in a semi-weekly discussion section. Your participation grade will be based on a) discussion section attendance and participation, and b) performance on homework assignments. In addition, in the past, attendance at lecture has been a very good predictor of performance on exams. Not showing up for section leads to a “double whammy” as far as your grade is concerned – directly through the participation grade and indirectly through its expected effect on your exam performance. Attendance at lectures is required. There will be three exams - two mid-terms and a final. Finally, there will be periodic homework assignments.

First mid-term: 25%
Second midterm: 25%
Final exam: 30%
Participation: 20%

Required Readings:

There is no required text for this course. All readings are available on the course's Course Tools website – some on the “Resources” page and some on the “Library Reserves” page.

**SCHEDULE (NOTE DATES FOR TOPICS/READINGS ARE TENTATIVE,
DATES FOR EXAMS ARE NOT)**

Introduction, (Thursday, January 4)

What is Comparative Politics

1. What is Science? (Tuesday, January 9 and Thursday, January 11)

William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Golder. Forthcoming. *Principles of Comparative Politics* (Congressional Quarterly Press, Washington, D.C.) (here after CGG) Chapter 2

2. What is Politics? (Tuesday, January 16 and Thursday, January 18)

CGG Chapter 3

3. What is the State? Living without it (Tuesday, January 23 and Thursday, January 25)

CGG Chapter 4

Democracy: Cause and Effect

4. Measuring Democracy (Tuesday, January 30)

CGG Chapter 5

5. Why are some countries democracies and some countries not?

a. Wealth (Thursday, February 1)

CGG Chapter 6

b. Production Profile (Tuesday, February 6)

CGG Chapter 6 (cont.)

Thursday, February 8 First Mid-term

c. Culture and Religion (Tuesday, February 13 and Thursday, February 15)

CGG Chapter 7

6. Democratic Transitions (Tuesday February 20 and Thursday, February 22)

CGG Chapter 8

Tuesday, February 27 Mid-Winter Break – no class!

Thursday, March 1 Mid-Winter Break – no class!

7. Does Democracy Make a Difference?

- a. Democracy and Distribution (Tuesday, March 6)

CGG Chapter 9

- b. The Selectorate Model (Thursday, March 8)

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randall Siverson, and Alastair Smith 2001. "Political Competition and Economic Growth," *Journal of Democracy* 12:1: 58-72.

- c. Democracy and Economic Performance & Healthcare Outcomes (Tuesday, Chapter 13)

CGG Chapter 9 (cont.)

Second Mid-term Thursday, March 15

Varieties of Democracy

8. Shortcomings and Solutions?

- a. The Problem with Majority Rule (Tuesday, March 20)

Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics* Chapter 4

- b. The Importance of the Median Voter (Thursday, March 22)

Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics* Chapter 5.

9. Institutional Variants

- a. Parliamentary v. Presidential (Tuesday, March 27 and Thursday, March 29)

CGG Chapter 11

b. The Mechanical Effect of Electoral Laws (Tuesday, April 3)

GCC Chapter 12

c. Ethnic & Religious Diversity (Thursday, April 5)

Kanchan Chandra and Cilanne Boulet, 2003. "A Model of Change in an Ethnic Demography". Manuscript.

Collier, Paul "Ethnic Diversity: An Economic Analysis" in O'neil & Rogowski, pp. 84-105.

d. Political Parties (Tuesday April 10)

William Clark and Matt Golder. 2006. "Rehabilitating Duverger's Theory: A Global Test of the Sociological and Institutional Determinants of Party Systems" 2006, *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(6): 679-708.

f. Consequences of the Varieties of Democracy (Thursday, April 12)

Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote, 200, "Why doesn't the US have a European-style welfare state?" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 2, pp.1-69.

John D. Huber and G. Bingham Powell, Jr. 1994 "Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy" *World Politics* 46:291-326.

Jonathan Rodden, "Red States, Blue States, and the Welfare State: Political Geography, Representation, and Government Policy around the World"

10. Democratic Consolidation (Tuesday April 17)

Mainwaring, Scott 1993. "Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficulty Combination," *Comparative Political Studies* 26(2): 198-228.