

Political Science 2012-130R
Spring 2024
ARNT N200
MWF, 11:15AM-12:05PM

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PSCI 2012 130R: INTRO TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to comparative politics. Broadly speaking, researchers in comparative politics study the domestic political institutions of countries around the world and try to explain how their interplay leads to specific outcomes.

Why do some countries have democratic forms of government while others are autocratic? What are the consequences of different constitutional designs and political institutions? What determines the political culture of a given society? These are some of the questions that students of comparative politics address, and, this course, shall examine different theoretical and thematic approaches to the study of these issues.

The first part of the course focuses on two broad themes: (1) the basic concepts in comparative politics and (2) the main institutional pillars in most modern democracies. The readings on democratic institutions take as examples the old and established democracies in Western Europe and the United States but the theory behind them is generalizable to other parts of the world. The second part of the course reviews some of the non-democratic regimes and discusses both how and why they are different from democracies. In this part we will cover authoritarian, communist, and newly industrialized and less developed countries. The course also features a few documentaries and one fictional movie, which all serve to illustrate and reiterate important points raised by the readings and lectures.

At the end of the class, you will have a solid understanding of the major issues in this field and will be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical approaches to studying them. The course is designed to challenge you and your

preconceived notions, so you will further develop your intellectual skills, particularly through critical thinking. You will also broaden your knowledge of particular countries.

Course Requirements

Presentations: 15%

Midterm 1: 25%

Midterm 2: 25%

2 Movie Entries: 10%

2 Papers: 10%

Participation and Attendance: 15%

Presentations:

You will be expected to give a 10 min presentation on how the various domestic political institutions that we will cover have influenced how politics and economics play out in a country of your choice. You will do this in groups of two. The presentations will be 15% of your final grade. They have to be accompanied by a PowerPoint, which will be shown to the class, and submitted to me before the presentation is due *with all the group members cc-ed*.

Sign up sheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jdx8A0tUpIU0079rMhYt1N0Dw3TlfM1RKN8boXaA5IA/edit#gid=0>

These are group presentations. You have to meet with your group and organize how your group will make its argument. You will be receiving a single grade for the group, so each of you has an interest in making sure the group does well. One of you will email me the group's powerpoint on the day it is due and cc all group members. I will reply all with your grade.

Exams:

There will be two exams in this class. The midterm will cover the basic principles of comparative politics, as presented by Patrick O'Neil in *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, and the political institutions in modern democracies, mainly Western Europe and the United States. The second midterm will be **cumulative** and will cover the topics discussed in the first half of the semester plus the main themes in the second half – authoritarian and communist regimes, as well as newly industrialized and less developed countries. Both exams will be 25% of your grade.

2 Papers:

You will be expected to write two 4-page double-spaced in this class.

Paper 1 will be focusing on how a specific political institution of a democracy affect various political outcomes (economic growth, inequality, social relations and peace, trust, corruption, employment, happiness etc). In your discussion please make sure that you focus on 1 institution, such as parliamentarism vs. presidentialism, differing electoral systems, party competition, government formation.

For Paper 2 you will choose an autocratic state and also analyze how one of its autocratic institutions, such as one-party state, surveillance, cooptation, corruption, oligopolies and monopolies, controlled economy etc. affects outcomes for citizens (economic growth, inequality, social relations and peace, trust, corruption, employment, happiness etc).

These papers will be 10% of your grade.

Movie Entries:

We will see a number of documentaries in this class. You are responsible to submit two short reactions (1.5-2 pages double spaced each) to two documentaries of your choice connecting your impressions of with our course. These documentaries serve an important goal – to demonstrate the real world applications of the theories and concepts we will be discussing in class. You will submit these in a single word document whenever you have completed the two reaction entries but **before Apr 15**. 10% of your grade.

Grading rubric:

The paper must have the following parts (each roughly 1 page):

1. What ideas/theories did the movie reinforce and how,
2. What did it challenge and how,
3. What other or new questions did it raise?

NB Trigger warnings: Due to the subject matter of the class, some documentaries or segments will inevitably cover topics, language, and imagery (including violence and nudity) that may be considered controversial or disturbing to watch. Viewer discretion is advised.

Participation (In class 7.5%+Online Exercises 7.5%):

Many of the lectures will be presented in a style that will give plenty of opportunities for in-class participation to the students. The frequency and quality of your comments during our lectures, as well as your attendance, will shape 7.5% of your participation grade.

Importantly, we will have a few Online Exercises this semester. During those you will complete an assignment on your own time and then be expected to part take in an online

discussion on Canvas. The quality of your participation on Canvas will determine the other 7.5% of your participation grade.

Required Readings

One book is required for this course. You can purchase it online via Amazon. There will also be a few articles and book chapters which will be available online on the course's website.

O'Neil, Patrick. 2015. Essentials of Comparative Politics. W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 5th edition. (abbreviated Essentials).

https://www.amazon.com/Essentials-Comparative-Politics-Fifth-Patrick/dp/0393938972/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1502316503&sr=8-1&keywords=Essentials+of+Comparative+Politics.+W.W.+Norton+%26+Company

Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century
Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, 2022

Some weeks I will be assigning additional readings based on current events.

Original Work + Honor Code

It is expected that all work you do in this course represents original work not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course. All work for this course falls under the University's Honor Code. If you have questions about your responsibility under the honor code, please bring them to your instructor or consult with the office of the Dean of Students. Your full participation and observance of the honor code is expected.

Questions and Absences

If you have questions about the course, please come see me after class or during office hours. I will also be happy to answer questions via email. If you have to miss class on the day of an exam, then you must write and explain beforehand in all but the most unusual circumstances. Attendance is required.

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan 17 Introduction

Concepts and Definitions

Jan 19-22 What is Comparative Politics?
Essentials: "Chapter 1: Introduction"

Jan 24 + 26 The State
Essentials: "Chapter 2: States"

Yuval Harari on the war in Ukraine:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQqthbvYE8M&ab_channel=TED

Stephen Pinker on the history and future of violence: tbu

Did the Romans live better than medieval citizens?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmKxmxGmzi8&ab_channel=FilaximHistoria

Game theory can explain humanity's biggest problem | Steven Pinker

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7N_NNVeKat8&ab_channel=BigThink

Jan 29 Ethnicity and nationalism
Essentials: "Chapter 3: Nations and Society".
"Daniel Pozner's Chiwa and Tambuka" case-study

Jan 31 + Feb 2 + 5 Political Economy
Essentials: "Chapter 4: Political Economy,"

The World of Democracy

Feb 7 Online Exercise: Watch and Discuss on Canvas: Documentary: Sick around the world.

Think of how these systems compare in terms of:

1. Quality
2. Affordability
3. Sustainability

Why do you think politicians in some countries (e.g. US) might be more concerned to not alienate the interests of doctors or healthcare businesses (like hospitals, insurance companies, or pharmaceuticals) while politicians in other countries are more afraid of making healthcare less affordable for their citizens? Which of the systems presented did you like and why?

Feb 9 Democratic regimes – origins...
Essentials: "Chapter 5 – Democratic regimes"

Feb 12 +14 +16 Executive
GLM, Ch. 2, The Executive (pp. 23-46)

Feb 19 Legislature
GLM, Ch. 3, Parliaments (pp. 47-78)

Feb 21 + 23 Elections
GLM, Ch. 11, Elections, Electoral Systems, and Referendums (pp.366-406)

Why US political candidates are getting more extreme
Problems with minority rule in FPTP systems (Zakaria Explains):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO-946uuv4o&ab_channel=CNN

Feb 26+ Feb 28 + Mar 1 + 4
GLM, Ch. 8, Party Families (pp. 238-75) and parts of Ch. 9, Cleavage Structures and Electoral Change (pp. 278-92)

Inglehart, R. 2008. "Changing Values among Western Publics 1970-2006." West European Politics 31: 130-46.

Feb 28 Online Assignment: Watch and Discuss on Canvas:

Political ideologies: Socialism, liberalism, conservatism, libertarianism.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7rHGydPFjY&index=3&list=PLi3U-nPPrbS6Uk6vGaihfQ0CjcIAIJYcr>

Johnathan Haidt: Moral Roots of liberalism and conservatism: How one's personality determines one's political views?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vs41JrnGaxc>

Dannagal Young: The psychological traits that shape your political beliefs

https://www.ted.com/talks/dannagal_g_young_the_psychological_traits_that_shape_your_political_beliefs

Do you think that argument of the speaker makes sense? Can you think of any examples based on your own experiences that support or defy this argument?

UK Party system:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LrZVn4u8qQ>

German Elections and the Party System: German Politics: Elections & Voting In Germany | Meet the Germans

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiCZUN9mUqM&ab_channel=DWEuromaxx

Mar 6 +8 Coalitions
GLM, Ch. 12, Making and Breaking Government (pp. 412-54)

Online Assignment: Watch and Discuss on Canvas:

Movie: Five Days that changed Britain:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRHUNxVCnxw>

Why did the UK have to seek a rare coalition government after this election? Why did both the Conservatives and Labour feel that they could make an alliance with the Liberal Democrats?

Mar 8 Paper 1 due

Mar 11 +13+ 15 + 18+20 Welfare States

Esping-Anderson, G. 1990. The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. Princeton: Princeton UP, 9-34.

Online Assignment: Watch and Discuss on Canvas:

Oprah: The happiest people: Denmark:

<https://vimeo.com/28851587> Michael Moore

And: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pm0Mn0-jYU&ab_channel=CNBCMakIt

Where to Invade Next – Germany

Workers' power in Germany:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NqIoxo29FU>

How do the Danes and the Germans differ from their US counterparts in their views on what matters most for quality of life? If you could choose to live in Denmark or Germany as opposed to the US, what will make you happy about this? What will make you miss the US?

Mar 22 Midterm Exam

The World of Authoritarianism

Apr 1 + Apr 3 Authoritarian regimes

Essentials: "Chapter 6: Nondemocratic regimes"

Talk about presentations

Fascism: Jason Stanley – 10 facts:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpCKkWMbmXU&ab_channel=BigThink

A day in the life of a Dictator:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLtaStiAJyc&ab_channel=BestDocumentary

Read book: Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century
Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman

The Dictator's playbook: Mussolini - <https://www.pbs.org/video/benito-mussolini-pluih0/>
Also:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07N7XDCB4/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=p05a2-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=B07N7XDCB4&linkId=ff3e46d6782aabd8331ad09f4ca31c58

or

Absolute Power (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtAG-eTri8E&t=451s>)

And: Fascism: Jason Stanley – 10 facts:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpCKkWMbmXU&ab_channel=BigThink

How does one become a successful dictator? If you had to become a dictator in America today, what were going to be your first 3 moves in consolidating power? Justify your strategy.

Recommended:

Rick Steves: Story of Fascism in Europe:

<https://www.kpbs.org/news/2018/oct/11/rick-steves-special-story-fascism-europe/>

Apr 5+8+10 Communism and post-communism

Essentials: "Chapter 9"

Nov 5 Exercise: Good Bye Lenin or a documentary (TBD)

Darton, R. 1991. "The Stasi Files." In *Berlin Journal*. New York: Norton, 129-137.

What made people dislike living in these societies? Did communism (the way it was implemented) have any redeeming qualities? Is there any reform or policy that you saw here appropriate to implement in our society today? What is good about it?

Apr 12 Presentations on countries and their institutions

Apr 15 Presentations on countries and their institutions

Movie Entries Due.

Apr 17 + 19 TBA

Apr 22 Presentations on countries and their institutions

Apr 24 Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries.
Essentials: "Chapter 10"

Apr 26 Midterm 2

The Developing World

Apr 29 Less-Developed and Newly Industrializing Countries.
Essentials: "Chapter 10" cont'd

Recommended: How the Europeans divided Africa:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ1uo5jvpe8&t=2653s>

The Experiment in Supranationalism

EU Origins

Phinnemore, D. 2010. "The European Union: Establishment and Development." In *European Union Politics*, 3rd ed., eds. M. Cini & N. Perez-Solorzano Borrigan. New York: Oxford UP, 32-47.

Online lecture by Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuOPEKm8MXk&ab_channel=UNCEurope

May 1 Review Session. **Paper 2 due.**

A few final points:

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Absences

Regular class attendance is your obligation, and you are responsible for all the work of all class meetings. While I will not take attendance for every class, I suggest you attend all classes because I introduce new material in them that is not covered in the readings.

Lateness Policy

Late assignments are not acceptable and they will be graded down 10% for each day they are late. You should back-up all your work on your hard drive and on a free cloud service such as Dropbox that allows you to retrieve documents and changes made more easily than Word.

Anti-racism Pledge

We, the faculty of the University of Colorado Boulder political science department, assert that Black lives matter, and we stand against ongoing acts of oppression and violence toward all Black, Indigenous, and other Peoples of Color. We reaffirm our commitment to nondiscrimination under [Article 8 of the Regent Laws](#) for the University of Colorado. We also reaffirm our commitment to creating an environment where all individuals treat each other with respect and dignity. Racism cannot be tolerated and it has no place in our communities, classrooms, or campus. We commit to fostering antiracism in our

department, and we support the efforts of other organizations at CU who share the same vision.

The department of political science, by existing within the racist power structure in this country, participates in systemic racism. We acknowledge the discrimination and racial tension within our department and the campus of CU Boulder. Acts of racism in the department have gone unreported, as affected individuals have been marginalized from speaking out about their experiences. Systemic racism has also allowed the department to overlook racist incidents and behavior.

Going forward, we commit to a continuous process of self-reflection to identify our biases, both individual and systemic. We also commit to a process of open communication and dialogue to identify how we have harmed BIPOC individuals. We commit ourselves to bringing awareness of the history and challenges of racism to our hiring, teaching, and research practices. Finally, we commit to taking steps in our teaching, our research, and in our roles as members of the university community to address racial injustice.

As political scientists, we have the opportunity to reveal and communicate the systemic and structural injustices that occur in the United States. Black men are [2.5 times more likely](#) to be killed by police officers than White men in the United States. Black people face disadvantages in [schooling opportunities](#), in [health outcomes](#), and in [employment](#). We urge university administrators, local and state governments, and the federal government to enact [evidence-based](#) improvements to policing in America, including measures that would reverse the militarization of police forces and hold police offenders more accountable.

[Classroom Behavior](#)

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

[Requirements for Infectious Diseases](#)

Members of the CU Boulder community and visitors to campus must follow university, department, and building health and safety requirements and all public health orders to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask optional. However, if masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class. Students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution. Students who require accommodation because a disability prevents them from fulfilling safety measures related to infectious disease will be asked to follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

For those who feel ill and think you might have COVID-19 or if you have tested positive for COVID-19, please stay home and follow the [further guidance of the Public Health Office](#). For those who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms and have not tested positive for COVID-19, you do not need to stay home.

[Accommodation for Disabilities, Temporary Medical Conditions, and Medical Isolation](#)

[Disability Services](#) determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so your needs can be addressed. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance.

If you have a temporary medical condition or required medical isolation for which you require accommodation, email me and we will make arrangements. Also see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

[Preferred Student Names and Pronouns](#)

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

[Honor Code](#)

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: honor@colorado.edu, 303-492-5550. Students found responsible for violating

the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

[Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation](#)

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these policies regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive an outreach from OIEC about their options for addressing a concern and the support resources available. To learn more about reporting and support resources for a variety of issues, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

[Religious Holidays](#)

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

[Mental Health and Wellness](#)

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The Academic Live Care site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.

