

POLS 1155 — Comparative Politics— Spring 2020¹

Mon/Weds/Thurs 9:15am – 10:20am, West Village H108

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Overview

This course presents a comparative study of political organization and behavior in a range of countries beyond the United States. It presents an introduction to the range of questions asked by comparative politics and to the types of government practiced today, as well as preliminary tools to understand how political science develops and tests its theories and hypotheses. Students will explore the ways in which political science makes comparisons across systems, and will learn contemporary explanations for a number of political phenomenon. Some of the themes will include theories of the state, democratic and non-democratic government, democratization, economic development, and revolution. Students will also explore a small number of cases in depth, first as a class and then on their own, to understand how broader theory can inform our understanding of specific political events. The course will also explore how political scientists present evidence and make claims about how political structures work and why things happen the way they do.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Recognize and define a large number of key terms in political science.
- Describe many of the criteria used to classify and compare types of government.
- Identify how events in history or the news exemplify concepts in comparative politics, and assess how and why theories might help explain these events.
- Distinguish between competing theories to explain an event, and justify whether one theory is a better explanation for the political phenomenon observed.
- Write about comparative politics in a fact-based, neutral tone that is clear and concise.
- Search for and find relevant academic texts in political science, and assess the value of original and secondary sources of argumentation and evidence.
- Summarize academic writing in political science, and explain the arguments within to others.

¹ Syllabus was later modified due to COVID-19 outbreak and online transition

² (there are other people with my name at Northeastern---double-check who you're sending it to!)

Philosophy

The field of comparative politics covers an *extremely* broad range of phenomenon, and it is impossible to cover all the interesting topics that fall within it in a single course (or lifetime). In this course, students should get a brief survey of some of the major questions studied in comparative politics, which may help them to think about future topics worth studying in-depth. They will also get an introduction to how political scientists think, argue, and make claims. The aim is to give students some of the skills to pursue higher-level thinking in future courses, research, and their careers.

This course will require you to learn from and teach material to your fellow students. Doing so allows us to cover more material than we might otherwise, but more importantly, it will help you develop the skills to approach a new subject or scenario in politics, teach yourself more about it, and communicate the important issues to others. The course will also involve several interactive exercises. In-class debates will introduce you to some of the ways that political science handles competing claims, and to practice evaluating evidence. Simulations will help you understand how some of the theories explored in class actually describe the situations faced by individuals and groups as they deal with real-world politics.

Assignments: (All take-home quizzes and papers due at 11:59pm on the assigned date)

- **Participation – 10%:** Students are expected to attend most, preferably all, class sessions, and to contribute to the class by an active combination of asking questions in lecture, participating in class-wide discussions, contributing to their reading group, and playing an active role in simulations and debates. See worksheet below for details
- **Short Quizzes – 20% total:** Students will take four short quizzes covering readings (including readings covered in the study groups) as well as lecture materials.
 - Jan. 15 (Take-Home); Jan. 23 and Feb. 6 (In-Class): 4% each, any passing score (70% or higher) will receive full credit
 - March 26 (Take-Home); 8%, graded
- **Short Papers – 20% total:** Students will submit three short (500-1000 word or 2-4 page) papers which will each focus on a particular question from the course and will also develop a specific writing or research skill (case selection, revision, and metacognition/reflection). Due Feb. 13, March 30, & April 13
- **Midterm Exam – 15%:** Students will complete a ~60-minute exam covering the first, more thematically-oriented section of the course. The exam will be open-book and open-note but students may not work together on the day of the exam. Take-home, complete at any time on Feb. 27
- **Book Talk – 15%:** Students will work with their assigned study group and will develop materials to explain and teach an important book in comparative politics, either a “classic” or a recent publication. Each group will have ~30 minutes to present and to lead the class in a discussion. Week of Apr. 6th
- **Final Exam – 20%** Date TBD

Final course grades will be calculated from total percentages, without rounding — A: 94% or above%, A-: 90% to 93.99%, B+: 87% to 89.99%, B: 83% to 86.99%, B-: 80% to 82.99%, C+: 77% to 79.99%, C: 73% to 76.99%, C-: 70% to 72.99%, D+: 67% to 69.99%, F: 66.99% or below.

Assignment Calendar (Is something due today?) – (All take-home quizzes and papers due at 11:59pm on the assigned date)

- Wednesday, Jan. 15: Short Quiz #1 (*Take-Home*)
- Thursday, Jan. 23 Short Quiz #2 (*In-Class*)
- Thursday, Feb. 6: Short Quiz #3 (*In-Class*)
- Thursday, Feb. 13: Short Paper #1: Case Selection
- Thursday, Feb. 27: Midterm Exam (*Take-Home*)
- Thursday, March 26: Short Quiz #4 (*Take-Home*)
- Monday, March 30: Short Paper #2: Revision
- Week of April 6: Group Book Talk
- Monday, April 13: Short Paper #3: Reflection
- TBD: Final Exam (*In-Class*)

Course Schedule

Readings should generally be completed by Wednesday of the week assigned. Readings marked (*in-class discussion*) will be discussed in-depth (seminar-style) on either the Wednesday or Thursday of the indicated week, so it is especially important that you read them ahead of time.

In the middle part of the semester, you will share responsibility for reading the “Group Readings” with your study groups and for summarizing and teaching the material to each other. You are, of course, encouraged to read any and all of the following, but the expectation is that you are working together to process these materials, and you will usually only need to read one of these in-depth each week (and possibly skim the others before/after discussing them as a group). *You are expected to learn the key points of all these readings, but by no means all the details.*

Highly Recommended Text:

- Patrick H. O’Neil, Essentials of Comparative Politics (5th or 6th edition is best, 4th edition would also work)
 - This book will mostly fill in and further explain concepts from lecture and is very helpful but not *absolutely* necessary; a copy is available at Snell Library for short-term checkout.

All other resources available on Blackboard via NU Libraries (Course Material → “Library Readings” and “Supplemental Readings”)

Jan. 6 & 8: Introduction

Guiding Questions:

1. What is political science?
2. How do we make evidence-based comparisons?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 1
- Paul M. Kellstedt & Guy Whitten, The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, Chapter 1: "The Scientific Study of Politics"

Jan. 9 & 13: States and Institutions

Guiding Questions:

1. What is a state? What are institutions?
2. How do we know when a state is strong or weak? What makes them that way?
3. Where do states get legitimacy?
4. What is the difference between formal and informal institutions? What makes weak or strong institutions?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 2
- Jeffrey Herbst, "War and the State in Africa", *International Security*, 1990 (*in-class discussion*)
- (podcast) Planet Money, Ep. 868: "Moneyland"

Jan. 15, 16, & 22: Nations, Societies, and Ethnicities

Guiding Questions:

1. How are nationality, citizenship, and ethnicity related and how are they different?
2. Where did nationalism come from, and how does it affect politics today?
3. Why is ethnicity so important in some countries' politics—but then why are only some ethnic divisions important?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 3
- Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, 1990, pp. 1-13
 - *Recommended:* Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, 1983, pp. 9-36
- Daniel Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference," *American Political Science Review*, 2004 (*in-class discussion*)

Jan. 27, 29 & 30: Democracy – Week 1

Guiding Questions:

1. What is democracy and how do we measure it?
2. How, when and why do states democratize?
3. How do democracies differ from each other?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapters 5 & 8
- Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy*, 1971, pp. 1-16
 - *Recommended*: Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1947, pp. 241-251
- W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 1960, pp. 1-12

Group Readings

- Adam Przeworski & Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics*, 1997
- Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies," *Journal of Democracy*, 1991
- Francis Fukuyama, "States and Democracy", *Democratization*, 2014
- Georgina Waylen, "Engendering 'The Crisis of Democracy,'" *Government and Opposition*, 2015

Feb. 3, 5 & 6: Democracy – Week 2

Guiding Questions:

1. What kinds of specific institutions do political scientists study?
2. How do specific democratic institutions matter for political outcomes?
3. Is democracy changing (or even declining?)

Readings

- Roberto Foa & Yascha Mounk, "The Democratic Disconnect" (*in-class discussion*)
- Washington Post: (*in-class discussion*)
 - Kamil Marcinkiewicz and Mary Stegmaier. "Poland appears to be dismantling its own hard-won democracy." July 21, 2017 | Mary Stegmaier and Kamil Marcinkiewicz. "So Poland's president surprised everyone, vetoing two bills that threatened the courts' independence." July 25, 2017 | Hubert Tworzecki and Radoslaw Markowski. "Why is Poland's Law and Justice Party trying to rein in the judiciary?" July 26, 2017 | Michal Bilewicz. "Poland's ruling party tried a judicial power grab — and then saw it backfire. Here's why." July 31, 2017 | Anna Grzymala-Busse and Monika Nalepa. "Why are there protests in Poland? Here are the five things you need to know." December 19, 2017.

Group Readings

- Torben Iversen & David Soskice, "Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions," *American Political Science Review*, 2006
- Ronald Inglehart & Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," *HKS Working Papers*, 2016
- Torben Iversen and Frances Rosenbluth, "Work and Power: The Connection Between Female Labor Force Participation and Female Political Representation," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2008

Feb. 10, 12 & 13: Non-Democracy

Guiding Questions:

1. How do non-democratic governments work?
2. What are the differences in kinds of non-democratic government?
3. When do non-democratic governments become democratic, and why?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 6
- Steven Levitsky & Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, 2002 (*in-class discussion*)

Group Readings

- Barbara Geddes, Erica Frantz, and Joseph G. Wright, "Military Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2014
- Ivan Krastev, "Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, 2011
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review*, 2013
- Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," *World Politics*, 2011

Feb. 19 & 20: Political Economy

Please Note: Class will not meet in-person on Feb. 19; the lecture will be recorded and posted online

Guiding Questions:

1. When do economic factors affect the way politics works?
2. When does economic policy become important for politics?
3. Do different economic systems make certain kinds of politics more likely?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 4
- Kathleen Thelen, "The American Precariat: US Capitalism in Comparative Perspective," Presidential Address to the 2018 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (*in-class discussion*) (video or article version)
- Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom" (in cartoons), 1945

Group Readings

- Stephen Metcalf, "Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed The World", *The Guardian*, Aug. 18, 2017
- Erika Weinthal and Pauline Jones Luong, "Combating the Resource Curse," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2006
- Kris-Stella Trump, "Income Inequality Influences Perceptions of Legitimate Income Differences," *British Journal of Political Science*, 2018

Feb. 24 & 26: Developing Countries

Please Note: The Take-Home Exam is assigned for Feb. 27; there is no formal class meeting that day but the instructor will be present in the regular classroom at the regular time, for those who wish to take the exam in a quiet environment.

Guiding Questions:

1. Why have some countries developed less than others?
2. Why do some countries develop? What does politics have to do with economic growth?
3. How does being poor or wealthy affect the kind of politics a country has?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 10
 - *Recommended:* J. Samuel Valenzuela & Arturo Valenzuela, "Modernization and Dependency," *Comparative Politics*, 1978
- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2011, *Poor Economics*, Chapters 1 & 10
- "Opinion: To Understand France's Crisis, You Must First Understand Its Cheese," Karl Sharro, BuzzFeed News, December 20, 2018.

Group Readings

- (podcast) *New Books Network*, Yuen Yuen Ang on How China Escaped the Poverty Trap, 2016
- Robert H. Wade, Silla Sigurgeirsdottir, "Iceland's Rise, Fall, Stabilization and Beyond," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 2012
- Alisha C. Holland, "Forebearance," *American Political Science Review*, 2016

March 9, 11 & 12: Political Violence

Guiding Questions:

1. When do governments or populations engage in violent politics?
2. What are the effects of political violence in the short and long term?
3. Are there ways of reducing political violence?
4. How do political scientists design research studies?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 7
- Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, 1981
 - *Recommended:* James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War", *American Political Science Review*, 2003
- Excerpt from Ph.D. Dissertation in Progress, TBD (*in-class discussion*)

Group Readings

- Max Abrahms, "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism, Revisited," *Comparative Political Studies*, 2012
- Elizabeth Levy Paluck, "Reducing Intergroup Prejudice and Conflict Using the Media: A Field Experiment in Rwanda," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2009
- Jakana L. Thomas and Kanisha D. Bond, "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations," *American Political Science Review*, 2015

March 16, 18 & 19: Case 1 | Germany 2017 & The Grand Coalition

Guiding Questions:

1. What makes German politics unique, and what are the important political issues right now?
2. How do multiparty democracies work in practice?
3. How do the debates in German politics reflect politics elsewhere?
4. What are the practical implications of our theories of democracy?

Readings

- Eric Langenbacher & David P. Conradt, The German Polity (10th ed), pp. 47-60, 137-140, 170-175, 187-206, 237-243
 - *Recommended:* Sarah Elise Wiliarty, Ed Turner, Charles Lees, Jonathan Olsen, David F. Patton, and Jasmin Siri, "Symposium: The State of The Parties"

March 23, 25 & 26: Case 2 | The Iranian Revolution

Questions for the Week:

- What are revolutions, and what causes them?
- Why did Iran have a revolution when it did, and why did it result in the kind of government it did?
- What are politics like after a revolution?

Readings

- Theda Skocpol, "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution", *Theory and Society*, 1982
- Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective"
 - *Recommended:* Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran*, pp. 43-66
- Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution"

March 30, April 1 & 2: Globalization

Guiding Questions:

1. What is globalization?
2. How does it affect the internal politics of countries?
3. How much can we separate what happens within countries from what happens between them?

Readings

- O'Neil, Chapter 11
- Dani Rodrik, The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy, 2011, pp. 207-32
- Fared Zakaria, "Populism on the March," *Foreign Affairs*, 2016

April 6, 8 & 9: Book Talks

No additional readings for this week; student groups will present their books and lead in-class discussion.

April 13: Conclusion

Readings

- Sheri Berman, "The Pipe Dream of Undemocratic Liberalism," *Journal of Democracy*, 2017
 - *Recommended*: Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 1918 (esp. pages 20-27, from "Well, first of all the career of politics..." to the end)

Policies

Late Assignment Policy

In-class quizzes, the midterm exam, and the final exam are scheduled and cannot be missed. Postponements or makeup exams will not be scheduled except in situations as outlined in the [Northeastern University Attendance Requirements](#) and only with prior approval of the instructor. Group projects will be scheduled for in-class presentation, and so also cannot be late.

However, it is understood that students have a high workload and many different priorities during the semester. Therefore, any one of the short papers or take-home short quizzes may be turned in late, *with no explanation needed*. If you need to take this extension, simply e-mail the instructor before the due date indicating that your paper will be late. If the assignment is turned in less than 24 hours late, no grade penalty will be imposed. Otherwise, it can be turned in up to one week late at a 10% grade penalty (you may also get less feedback on your work). You may only take this extension once in the semester.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Political Science takes very seriously the issue of academic honesty, and as set forth in Northeastern University's principles on Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy (the complete text can be found at [Northeastern University's Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#)). Any student who appears to violate these principles will fail the course and will be put on academic probation. Individual faculty, with the support of the Department, can impose harsher penalties and as they deem necessary. *Cheating* is one example of academic dishonesty, and which is defined as using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. When completing any academic assignment, a student shall rely on his or her own mastery of the subject. Cheating includes *plagiarism*, which is defined as using as one's own the words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution. Plagiarism can apply to any assignment, either final or drafted copies, and it can occur either accidentally or deliberately. Claiming that one has "forgotten" to document ideas or material taken from another source does not exempt one from plagiarizing. Your instructor will clarify specific guidelines on fair use of material for this class.

Correct citation practices and academic honesty are an expectation of this course, but are also a skill students need to learn (and often need guidance on). If you are uncertain what to do in a situation, do not hesitate to ask the instructor beforehand to avoid creating a larger issue later.

In-Class Technology

There is increasing (though not conclusive) evidence that the use of laptops, smartphones, and other electronic devices in class is detrimental to the learning of both the student using the technology and to others around them. Therefore, they are not permitted in POLS 1155 during lectures or in-class activities, except in specific circumstances where the instructor indicates otherwise.

There will be opportunities (most Thursdays) to work with your reading groups in class to present your materials, study for exams, and prepare your group presentations. Electronic devices will be permitted at these specific times, as indicated by the instructor.

Resources

Campus Resources & Services

Students may face many barriers to learning in the course of their education, such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, strained familial or romantic relationships, and others. Northeastern University provides you with a number of resources that may help you in whatever challenges you face, and help you find the space to succeed in your studies. [University Health and Counseling Services](#) (617-373-2772) has a wide variety of resources open to you, as do the centers and offices below:

- [Center for Spirituality, Dialogue & Service](#)
- [Dolce Center for the Advancement of Veterans and Servicemembers \(CAVS\)](#)
- Global Student Success, including the [International Tutoring Center](#) for help with English-language learning and academic success, [Language & Culture Workshops](#), and [Reading Workshops](#)
- [Northeastern University Police Department](#)
- [Northeastern Writing Center](#) for help with written work at any stage or type of assignment
- [Peer and Alumni Mentoring](#)

Accommodations

Northeastern is fully committed to creating a community characterized by inclusion and diversity. As part of this commitment, it upholds the American with Disabilities Act as Amended of 2008 and the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act, referred to collectively as the ADA. The ADA requires Northeastern to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities unless doing so would create an undue hardship, compromise the health and safety of members of the university community, or fundamentally alter the nature of the university's employment mission. Students seeking information regarding ADA accommodations should review the University's ADA Information and Resources Procedure available at <http://www.northeastern.edu/drc>.

All disability accommodation requests must be processed through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and cannot be arranged by the instructor. However, if you need help contacting the DRC or are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please feel free to ask the instructor for assistance.

While there is no formal university-wide student-parent policy, it is the instructor's intent that this course be a welcoming space for diversity in parenting or caregiver status. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor about arranging accommodations (e.g., if there are disruptions in normal childcare) that will facilitate your full participation in the course.

Title IX

Northeastern is committed to providing equal opportunity to its students and employees, and to eliminating discrimination when it occurs. In furtherance of this commitment, the University strictly prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, genetic information, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran, or disability status. The Northeastern University [Title IX policy](#) articulates how the University will respond to reported allegations of sexual harassment involving students, including sexual assault, and provides a consolidated statement of the rights and responsibilities under University policies and Title IX, as amended by the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.

Northeastern understands that some survivors of harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct or other violations of this policy may not be ready or willing to report through a channel (such as to the Title IX Office or your instructor) that could result in university action. For such individuals, the following confidential resources are available:

- [ViSION Resource Center \(VRC\)](#): (617) 373-4459
- University Health and Counseling Services (UHCS)
- Clergy in the Center for Spirituality, Dialogue and Service

Participation Grade Worksheet

100 Points Total, 120 Points Maximum (limited extra credit possible!)

Please submit any write-ups (#4 & 5) via Blackboard

1. <u>Attendance on days with Group Activities (10 points each)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jan. 8, 9, 23, & 29; Mar. 18 & 26, April 1 	__/70
2. <u>Random Attendance Checks (5 points each)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance will randomly be taken on three lecture/group work days for a small point bonus 	__/15
3. <u>Come to Office Hours (5 points each, max. 2 times)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Come to Formal or Informal Office Hours, or set up an appointment meet. You can get credit only for your first two visits (but hopefully you feel welcome to come more often). 	__/10
4. <u>Recommended Reading Write-Up (10 points each, max. 2 times)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Read one of the recommended readings on the syllabus and write ~100 words on how this piece adds to your understanding of at least one other readings or lecture topic 	__/20
5. <u>Outside Seminar or Lecture Write-Up (15 points each, max. 2 times)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boston has a rich academic community, with a number of opportunities to learn about global politics from policymakers and leading experts. A few will be highlighted on Blackboard, and you can earn some credit for writing ~100 words describing what you learned and how it helped your understanding of comparative politics. If you hear of an event related to any course theme, please feel free to request credit. 	__/30
6. <u>Oxford Debate (20 points)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serve as one of the debaters for either of the two in-class Oxford-style debates. Six students are needed each time and will be randomly drawn from the pool of volunteers. ○ Jan. 23 and Apr. 1 	__/20
7. <u>Lead In-Class Discussion (15 points)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help lead in-class discussion for any of the following readings; instructor will provide guidelines. ○ Jan. 22, Hobsbawm; Feb. 5, Foa & Mounk; Feb. 26, Banerjee & Duflo; Apr. 1, Rodrik 	__/15

Instructor's Discretion (5 points)

- The instructor may award up to 5 participation points for excellent contributions to the class community.