GVPT280: The Study of Comparative Politics  
University of Maryland  
Fall 2023  
Lecture: T/Th 11:00-11:50am in ESJ 2204  
Discussion Sections: F 9:00-9:50am/10:00-10:50am/1:00-1:50pm  

Instructor: Professor Allison Berland  
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Teaching Assistants  
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Course Description  
This course provides an introduction to the major themes and issues in Comparative Politics. Comparative Politics is one of the major subfields of political science. While International Relations traditionally focuses on the relations among and between actors in an international system, Comparative Politics looks inside to understand what makes these political actors tick. Comparative Politics is distinguished by its subject matter, domestic political institutions, processes and behaviors, and its comparative analytical approach. Although a distinct subfield, Comparative Politics and International Relations have many points of intersection in theory and in practice.

This course is designed to teach you concepts and approaches in comparative politics. Additionally, it should provide a good foundation in the methods of reasoning and analysis that are applicable for upper division political science courses. Since this is an introductory course, students are not expected to have a background in political science. A curiosity about the world around you, how things work, and a willingness to take the time to read, learn, write, analyze, and discuss the world of domestic politics will help to make this class a positive experience.

The course is taught through two lectures each week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00-11:50am in ESJ 2204 and a Friday discussion section. Attendance at lectures and discussion sessions is mandatory. All six discussion sections are held on Fridays in Tydings Hall.

Course Learning Objectives  
- Gain a broad knowledge of the major components of domestic political systems  
- Identify and describe the major topics in the comparative politics subfield  
- Identify and discuss different concepts and theories used in examining these topics
• Apply the comparative approach to a research project

Summary of Assignments
- Class Participation (10%)
- Two Reflection Papers (approx. 650-700 words or 3 pages double spaced in length) (15% each for a total of 30%)
- One mid-semester Quiz (online during the semester) (10%)
- Final Quiz (online during finals week, (approx. 60-75 minutes) (20%)
- Final Research paper due Sunday, December 10 (approx. 1750-2000 words or 7-8 pages double spaced in length) (30%)

Class Participation
Participation includes coming to each lecture and discussion section prepared to discuss readings, pose questions, and make evaluative comments. Please let me or your TA know if you are going to miss class by sending an email to us beforehand. Missing three or more classes will impact your participation grade.

Short Reflection Papers and Final Paper
For the two short reflection papers and the final paper, you may use your notes, the book, course slides or outside materials for these essays. Please use citations and references for all the materials you use, including assigned texts or slides for the class. All papers can be submitted to the course page on the ELMS website: https://myelms.umd.edu

Quiz
There will include one online quiz mid-semester and one online quiz during finals week. The quizzes will include a short multiple-choice section and a short answer question.

Grading
Grades will be calculated according to a standard scale, in which 98 and above is an A+, 93-97 is an A, 90-92 is an A-, 87-89 is a B+, 83-86 is a B, 80-82 is a B-, 77-79 is a C+, 73-76 is a C, 70-72 is a C-, 67-69 is a D+, 63-66 is a D, 60-62 is a D-, and below 60 is a F. Grades are not curved.

Academic Integrity
Academic Integrity is a cornerstone of the values and practices in higher education and the conduct of research. As an academic community, responsibility for maintaining this atmosphere at the University of Maryland lies with the students, faculty, and administration. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating; plagiarism; providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the professor; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; attempting to influence one academic evaluation by means other than academic merit; submitting the same paper in two different courses; and assisting other students in misconduct.

Plagiarism involves failing to document one’s sources. This can happen due to a motive of cheating, but it can also happen by accident. It does not have to be committed with a dishonest intention. Plagiarism can include quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or utilizing the published or unpublished work of others without proper acknowledgment. If there is any doubt about a
particular case, always cite, and if you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid it, please ask me. Please review the University of Maryland’s Code of Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge available here: https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academic-requirements-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct-codes/

**Policies and Resources for Undergraduate Courses**

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland’s policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit [www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html) for the Office of Undergraduate Studies’ full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

**Required Reading**


All other readings will be available on ELMS.

**Course Lecture Schedule: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:00-11:50am in ESJ 2204**

**Week 1: August 28-September 1**

Topic: Overview of Syllabus and Introduction to Comparative Politics

Reading: Comparative Politics, Chapter 1, pp. 2-25

**Week 2: September 4-8**

Topic: Theories, Hypothesis, and Evidence

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 2, pp. 26-52

Jared Diamond, “Intra-Island and Inter-Island Comparisons,” in Jared Diamond and James Robinson (eds.), *Natural Experiments of History* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 120-141
Week 3: September 11-15
Topic: The State

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 3, pp. 54-72, skim 73-79


Week 4: September 18-22
Topic: Democracy and Democratization

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 6, pp. 135-164


Week 5: September 25-29
Topic: Democratic Backsliding and Populism


Mounk, Yascha, "Pitchfork politics: The populist threat to liberal democracy." Foreign Affairs, September/October 2014, pp. 27-36


Week 6: October 2-6
Topic: Authoritarian Regimes

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 7, pp. 166-189


Esen, Berk, and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey." Third
World Quarterly 37, no. 9 (2016): 1581-1606

→ First Reflection Paper due Sunday, October 8

**Week 7: October 9-13**
Topic: Constitutions

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 8, pp. 196-222


**Week 8: October 16-20**
Topic: Legislatures and Executives

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 9, pp. 224-248

Comparative Politics, Chapter 10, pp. 255-275

→ First Exam due Friday, October 20th (Exam will be available to take on ELMS)

**Week 9: October 23-27**
Topic: Culture and Social Capital

Readings: Lichbach and Zuckerman (eds.), Ch. 6: Marc Howard Ross, “Culture in Comparative Political Analysis,” pp. 134-161.


**Week 10: October 30-November 3**
Topic: Political Parties, Party Systems, and Interest Groups

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 11, pp. 283-307
Herbert Kitschelt, Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 33(6/7), August/September 2000, pp. 845-879


**Week 11: November 6-10**
Topic: Revolutions and Contention

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 12, pp. 310-338-303


**Week 12: November 13-17**
Topic: Nationalism, Identity, and Ideology

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 13, pp. 341-362


Comparative Politics, Chapter 15, pp. 395-414

⇒ **Second Reflection Paper due Sunday, November 19**

**Week 13: November 20-24** (No class Thursday, Thanksgiving Holiday)
Topic: Comparative Politics and Political Economy

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 4, pp. 80-103


**Week 14: November 27-December 1**
Topic: Comparative Politics and Development

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 5, pp. 109-128


Week 15: December 4-8
Topic: Comparative Politics & International Relations, and Comparative Responses to Globalization

Readings: Comparative Politics, Chapter 16, pp. 417-446


*Final Research paper due Sunday December 10*