DRAFT SYLLABUS
GOVT 133 – 002: Introduction to Comparative Politics
Fall 2019
Mondays, 7:20 pm – 10 pm
Location: Nguyen Engineering Building 1107

Professor: Philip A. Martin (pmarti5@gmu.edu)
Office hours: TBD
Office: Research Hall, 339

Course Description
This course introduces students to the subfield of comparative politics in political science. We will examine core concepts such as states, nationalism, ethnicity, political economy, democracy, authoritarianism, political violence, and populism. The course will also familiarize students with the basic tools of analysis employed by comparative politics scholars, including case studies, survey research, and the use of cross-national datasets. Students will have the opportunity to study and apply these concepts and tools in diverse political contexts in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Learning Objectives
Students who actively engage with course readings, lectures, and assignments will:

1. Become familiar with major concepts and debates in the field of comparative politics.
2. Improve their understanding of how and why political systems vary across countries, as well as the consequences of those differences.
3. Improve their understanding of processes of political and economic change.
4. Be prepared to analyze policy problems related to democracy, economic development, and violent conflict in a rigorous and informed manner.
5. Be able to ask original and meaningful research questions that might advance the frontiers of knowledge in comparative politics and political science.

Required Readings
Textbook (available through university bookstore):


Additional required readings will be made available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements and Grading
The course will consist of one midterm exam (30%), one writing assignment (30%), and one final exam (30%). Students will also receive a grade for classroom participation (10%).
Success in these assignments will require students to actively engage with material from lectures and assigned readings.

The final grade will be assigned on the following scale:

- 97-100% A+
- 93-96 A
- 90-21 A–
- 87-89 B+
- 83-86 B
- 80-82 B–
- 77-79 C+
- 73-76 C
- 70-72 C–
- 67-69 D+
- 63-66 D
- 60-62 D–
- < 60 F

Assignments

1. The midterm exam (30%) will be on **October 15, 2019**. The exam will cover material from weeks 1 to 6 of the syllabus.
2. The writing assignment (30%) will be due in class on **November 18, 2019**. Papers will be in the form of an argumentative essay and should be 750-1000 words, typed with double-spacing in 12-point font. Detailed instructions will be given in class and posted to Blackboard.
3. The final exam (30%) will be scheduled during the exam period (**Dec 11 – 18**). The exam will be comprehensive and cover material from the entire course.

Academic Integrity

Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism) and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code. Please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code here: [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/).

*If you have any doubts about the rules concerning plagiarism, please ask for clarification. No grade or assignment is worth academic misconduct.*

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Laptop / Cellphone Policy

To facilitate an engaged and respectful learning environment, students are encouraged to take notes in lecture using a paper and pen/pencil (research has demonstrated that taking notes by
hand is associated with better learning and performance outcomes). If you must use a laptop to take notes during class, please disable the internet connection. The use of other technology (i.e. mobile phones) is not permitted; please silence your phones during class.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

**Week 1 (Aug 26) – Introduction to Comparative Politics**

- *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 1 (“Introduction”)

Further readings (optional):


**Sept 2 – Labor Day (no classes)**

**Week 2 (Sept 9) – Political Order and State Formation**

- *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 2 (“States”)

Further readings (optional):


**Week 3 (Sept 16) – Nationalism and Ethnicity**

Further readings (optional):


**Week 4 (Sept 23) – Political Economy**

- *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 4 (“Political Economy”)

Further readings (optional):


**PART II: INSTITUTIONS**

**Week 5 (Sept 30) – Democracy I: Conceptualization and Measurement**


Further readings (optional):


**Week 6 (Oct 7) – Democracy II: Parties and Elections**


Further readings (optional):

**Week 7 (Oct 15 *Tuesday*) – MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8 (Oct 21) – Democratization and Political Transitions**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 6 (“Democratic Regimes”), pp. 148-152.

Further readings (optional):


**Week 9 (Oct 28) – Autocracy I: Totalitarianism and Dictatorship**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 8 (“Nondemocratic Regimes”), pp. 355-370.

Further readings (optional):

• Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, chapters 11 and 12

**Week 10 (Nov 4) – Autocracy II: Military Rule and Illiberal Regimes**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 8 (“Nondemocratic Regimes”), pp. 370-381.
• *Cases and Concepts*, pp. 601-609 on military rule in Brazil.

Further readings (optional):


**Week 11 (Nov 11) – Communism and Postcommunism**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 9 (“Communism and Postcommunism”)
• *Cases and Concepts*, pp. 417-443 (“Russia”) OR pp. 445-478 (“China”)

Further readings (optional):


**PART III: ADDITIONAL TOPICS: VIOLENCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND RELIGION**

**Week 12 (Nov 18) – Political Violence**

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 5 (“Political Violence”)

Further readings (optional):


**Week 13 (Nov 25) – Developing Countries**

• *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 10 (“Developing Countries”)

Further readings (optional):

Week 14 (Dec 2) – Globalization, Populism, and the Future of Democracy

- *Cases and Concepts*, chapter 11 (“Globalization”)

Further readings (optional):


**Final Exam: Date TBD (Dec 11-18)**