GOVT 530 Comparative Politics and Institutions
George Mason University
Fall 2017 — Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 pm.

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Office: Research Hall 342
Office hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 p.m. or by appointment

Course Description:
This course will provide students with an overview of the fundamental issues and debates in the field of comparative politics. We will explore leading methodological and theoretical approaches to comparative politics and will discuss the development and evolution of the field.

The course will help students to think and write theoretically and critically about the study of comparative politics. Student analysis of the field through written reaction papers, weekly seminar discussions and leading class seminars will give students an opportunity to engage in the theoretical discussions in the field of comparative politics while also helping them prepare for the comprehensive exam. The Schar School Comparative Politics Reading List list can be found here: https://goo.gl/cLAeXn.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, students will:
- Have a firm grasp of the development and evolution of the field of comparative politics
- Identify, summarize, and evaluate the fundamental questions and debates in the field
- Concisely summarize, connect, and evaluate the research by writing short reaction papers
- Analyze and critique applications of the comparative method
- Employ the comparative method in independent writing

Course Readings:
1. Books—The following books are required readings for this course:
2. Articles—All articles are available through the GMU library’s electronic journals unless indicated otherwise.

3. Current Events—Understanding current events is central to our study of comparative politics. You are strongly encouraged to read at least one major news source (for example, the *New York Times* or the *Global Post*) as part of your daily routine.

**Course Requirements:**

1. This is a participant-driven, discussion-based seminar. Given this structure, students are required to attend and actively contribute to all classes. Absence from more than one class—unless a student has a documented emergency—will result in a one letter grade reduction for each missed session. Employer extra-hour demands, vacation and work-related travel do not constitute documented emergencies.

2. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings prior to class and to be prepared for seminar discussion. Students should arrive to the seminar with extensive notes and prepared questions for the week’s readings. Class discussion constitutes 10% of the seminar final grade.

3. Students will complete one midterm exam—20% of the final grade.

4. Students will complete one final exam—20% of the final grade.

5. All students are required to write 4 reaction papers of a minimum of 1500 words each (maximum 2000 words)—10% each for a total of 40% of the final grade. Reaction papers should critically analyze and synthesize the week’s readings, and should contextualize the week’s readings within the broader comparative politics literature. Papers should pay particular attention to:
   a) The authors’ central arguments—what are the questions, outcomes or puzzles the authors are directly or indirectly addressing?
   b) What variables do the authors cite as the cause behind the outcome(s) under investigation?
   c) What empirical evidence do the authors provide to support their arguments?
   d) How do the articles/books relate to the literature more broadly?
   e) What are some of the potential shortcomings of the authors’ arguments?

Reaction papers are to be submitted through the Blackboard SafeAssign link (rather than by email) by 9 am on the day the seminar meets. Blackboard timestamps submissions and will mark papers received after Tuesday 9 am as late. Late papers will be penalized. If you are new to Blackboard, a tutorial is available here: [https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student).

Students are required to submit one reaction paper from each of the following sections:

1. Section I (September 5)**
2. Section II (September 12, 19, 16, October 3)
3. Section III (October 10, 24, 31, November 7)
4. Section IV (November 14, 21, 28, December 5)
**For section I memos, students should write their memos on (a) Lijphart and Bates; (b) Weber and Evans et.al. or (c) Geertz and Schatz.

6. Each student will co-lead two seminars. Co-leaders will work together to give a brief presentation of the key arguments for the week’s readings. Co-leaders will in addition post 8 discussion questions (as a pdf attachment through the Blackboard discussion link) 24 hours prior to the seminar they are assigned to lead (4:30 p.m Monday prior to class). These questions should complement, not replicate the reaction paper questions outlined above. The co-leading of two seminars constitutes 10% of the course final grade.

*Make-up exams and paper extensions will be given only if students have proper documentation.
*This syllabus is subject to change.

**Classroom Expectations:**
- Debate and discussion imply tolerance and respect for opinions other than one’s own. All students must demonstrate courtesy toward professor and fellow students at all times.
- All assignments must be handed in on time. No late papers will be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies. There will be no incompletes, make-up exams or extensions except in cases of documented emergencies.
- Cellular phones, pagers, and other such electronic devices that could disrupt class must be turned off during class time. If you do not honor this you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Computer use in the classroom must be strictly limited to the course discussion and assignments. The professor reserves the right to ban computers from the classroom if this proves to be a disruptive element.

**Honor Code:**
The written work for this class will be submitted electronically through Blackboard. Essays may be processed through on-line databases so as to access the originality of work. The George Mason University Honor Code states: “Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code in the 2008-9 University Catalog (http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/pdfs/catalog_0809.pdf) and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be pursued according to the guidelines detailed in the University Catalog. Please see me if you have any questions regarding the honor code.

**Special Needs:**
Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should contact the Disability Resource Center (703) 993-2474.

**Mason Email Accounts**
Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

**Other Useful Campus Resources:**
**Writing Center:** A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; http://writingcenter.gmu.edu
**University Libraries “Ask a Librarian”** http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html
**Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380; http://caps.gmu.edu

**University Policies**
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other
policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

**Enrollment:**
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes (see below). After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

**Important Dates and Information**
*Registration and Tuition:* Last day to add and drop classes with no tuition penalty: September 5
Last day to drop with no academic liability (with 33% tuition penalty): September 19
Final drop deadline (with 67% tuition penalty): September 29
*Grades and Exams*
Final exam: Tuesday December 19, 2014, 4:30-7:15 PM
Students may view grades via Patriot Web https://patriotweb.gmu.edu

**Grading**

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<tr>
<td>Seminar Lead</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Discussion</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction Papers</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500 points</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>490-500</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>460-489</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>450-459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>440-449</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>400-409</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>390-399</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>360-389</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>350-359</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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Course schedule & reading assignments

I. WHAT IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS?

1. August 29 – First day of class, review of course syllabus and requirements

2. September 5 WHAT IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS?
   - Max Weber, “Politics As Vocation.”
   - Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge UP, 1985), preface and ch. 1.

   Recommended reading:
   - Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire.”

II. DEMOCRACY & DICTATORSHIP

3. September 12 SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY & DICTATORSHIP

4. September 19 AUTHORITARIANISM

   Recommended reading:
5. September 26 AUTHORITARIANISM: APPLICATIONS


Recommended reading:


6. October 3 DEMOCRACY AND THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

- Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions and Uncertain Democracies
- Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, pages 3-65; 87-115 (Spain); 190-204 (Argentina)

Recommended reading:


October 10 – NO CLASS –

7. October 17 MIDTERM

III. STATE, POWER AND CITIZENSHIP
8. October 24 STRONG SOCIETIES, WEAK STATES


Recommended reading:


9. October 31 FAILING STATES? THE CASE OF AFRICA


10. November 7 STATES & SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS: ASIA AND CENTRAL AMERICA


IV. NATION, CULTURE, COLLECTIVE ACTION

11. November 14 NATION & STATE


12. November 21 RESISTANCE TO STATE POWER


13. November 28 COLLECTIVE ACTION: EXIT, VOICE, RESISTANCE

- Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001), chs. 1,3,9,10

Recommended Reading:

14. December 5 GENDER, POWER & POLITICS

- Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link*  

**FINAL EXAM:** December 19, 4:30-7:10 p.m.