GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
FALL 2017
GOVT 490—ADVANCED APPLIED COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Professor: Dr. Mariely López-Santana (mlopezs1@gmu.edu)
Office:
Office Hours: Tuesday: 3:00-4:00; Thursday: 5:30-6:30 (and by appointment)

A) **Objectives:** This course highlights useful lessons from the scientific study of comparative politics. By working with key concepts, theories, and methodological approaches, the course seeks to provide students with relevant lessons, strategies, and skills to tackle a variety of ‘real world’ tasks with empirical data. The course focuses on four substantive topics: institutions and statecraft, political regimes, and political culture (the fourth topic will be chosen by the students).

By the close of this course, students should be able to:
- Apply a variety of concepts, theories, and methodological approaches to ‘real world’ situations
- Become familiar with variable operationalization
- Be familiar with a variety of techniques to gather empirical data (both quantitative and qualitative) in a systematic manner
- Identify, evaluate, and interpret key sources of data
- Develop their writing and presentation skills by designing a research project and doing a poster presentation

B) **Classroom Policies:**

1) **Attendance and Participation:** This course requires students to complete a variety of tasks and exercises in class. Therefore, students are required to attend all classes, and work with the members of their group (when applicable). Absence from more than two classes—unless a student has a documented emergency—will result in the reduction of half a grade from the “class attendance and participation” total grade for each missed session. Employer extra-hour demands, vacation, and travel do not constitute documented emergencies. Students must be present the day of the poster session. In addition, students are expected to have completed the assigned readings and assignments prior to class.

2) **Communicating with the professor:** Should you anticipate any conflicts, issues (personal, academic, etc.), please talk to me in person (not by e-mail). DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE SEMESTER TO ADDRESS ANY PERSONAL OR ACADEMIC ISSUES. When you email me, please include your full name and specify your question(s) succinctly. And please keep your style courteous and professional (for guidance, refer to footnote 2).

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1 The University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu), is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

2 [https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae04087#.rdaz86fdm](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae04087#.rdaz86fdm)

(3) **Assignments and Papers:** Extensions will be given only if students have proper documentation. Assignments received after the deadline will half a grade per day (thus, an A+ becomes an A). When referring to the first assignment, a student will not receive credit for questions posted after the deadline (i.e., after 12 pm on Sept. 12). Finally, you cannot drop off the assignments in my mailbox (unless we have already arranged for you to do so).

(4) **Grading:** If you disagree with your grade you have the right to discuss it with me. With your original paper, you must submit a written statement (typed). Here you should make an ‘informed case’ for why I should reconsider your grade.

(5) **Technology:** The use of laptop computers, tablets (such as iPads), and cell phones is prohibited in class, **except when instructed to use them in class.** Please keep them stowed and out of sight. If these restrictions pose a challenge for you, please discuss it with me.

When students are authorized to use these technologies, the inappropriate use of these devices (e.g., websites that are not related to class) will lead to the multitasking student’s dismissal from class and a reduction of ten points from the “class and participation” grade.

(6) **Academic Integrity:** The GMU 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 members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee. Any student who has knowledge of, but does not report, a violation may be accused of lying under the Honor Code.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code ([http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1039&returnto=search#Honor](http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1039&returnto=search#Honor)) 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 do see me if you have any questions regarding the Honor Code.

(7) **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. After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

(8) **GMU Email Account:** Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. In addition, students should keep track of their e-mail quota.

(9) **Religious Holidays:** If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to religious holidays, please inform us within the first two weeks of class.³

³ The official policy: “It is Mason’s policy to encourage its faculty to make a reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays or to participate in university-sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, forensics team, dance company, etc.) without academic penalty. Absence from classes or exams for these reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence. Students who miss classes, exams, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance or for participation in a university activity will be provided a reasonable alternative opportunity, consistent with class attendance policies stated in the syllabus, to make up the missed work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty, within the first two weeks of the semester, with the dates of major religious holidays on which they will be absent, and the dates for which they are requesting an excused absence for participation in any university-sponsored activity scheduled prior to the start of the semester, and as soon as possible otherwise. Students requesting an excused absence for participation in a university-sponsored activity must provide their instructor with a letter from a university official stating the dates and times that participation in the activity would result in the student missing class.” For more information about university policies, see: [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/).
(10) **Special Needs**: If you are a student with special needs and you need academic accommodations please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services. Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 222; 993-2474; [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://ods.gmu.edu/)) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk with me to discuss reasonable accommodations.

(11) **Food**: If you are hungry, you can eat a snack. But, you cannot eat a whole meal in class.

(12) **Disruptive behavior**: Avoid disruptive activities in the classroom. The professor reserves the right to take appropriate action to cease disruptive behavior in order to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning for the rest of the class.

**C) Texts and Other Resources:**

(1) **Textbook**: I will not assign a textbook on comparative politics. Yet, I will encourage you to have a reference textbook. Here are some suggestions:


Orvis, Stephen, and Drogus, Carol Ann. *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context* (Sage).

(2) **Blackboard**: Additional readings and resources will be posted on Blackboard.

(3) **Journal articles**: Students can download journal articles from the GMU library website.

**D) Website and Announcements**: Check our Blackboard space every day as all announcements (e.g., changes, updates, and assignments) will be posted on this website. If you miss class, you should access Blackboard and refer to the announcement section.

**E) Course Requirements**:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Attendance and Participation</th>
<th>30 points= 20 points for overall performance throughout the semester + 10 meeting with the professor (see week 14)</th>
<th>For details, see point B.1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments and Presentations</td>
<td>Points Vary</td>
<td>Instructions and deadlines are posted on BB (folder→ assignments and presentations). Also, refer to course outline.</td>
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Abstract
Due date: October 31
(submit a hard copy in class and an electronic version via BB)
15 points abstract + 15 points annotated bibliography
Instructions will be posted on BB

Poster Session
Due date: December 5
75 points= poster: 25 points + oral: 25 points + content: 25 points
Instructions will be posted on BB

Proposal
Due date: December 19
(submit a hard copy and an electronic version via BB)
100 points
Instructions will be posted on BB

YOUR FINAL SCORE/TOTAL SCORE = PERCENTAGE (that is your final grade). To calculate your letter grade, I will use the standard grading scale:

100-97: A+
96-93: A
92-90: A-
86-83: B
79-77: C+
72-70: C
69-60: D
59-0: F

F) Course Outline: (subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>READINGS AND TASKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Aug. 29</td>
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Task 1 (week 3-5): Your boss asks you to advice the drafters of a new Iraqi Constitution. She asks you to focus on these questions:

1) What should be the division of power between the legislative and the executive branch?
2) Should there be one or two chambers of the legislative? If there are two, what should be the architecture of the lower and upper chambers?
3) What should be the division of power between the national and sub-national levels?
4) What type of electoral system should Iraq implement?

Week 2
Sept. 5
Studying Institutions: knots and bolts
Submit assignment 1 (for instructions, refer to BB: folder ➔ assignments and presentations)
https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-drafting-constitution

Week 3
Sept. 12
Studying Institutions: What scholars have said
Complete assignment 2: (for instructions, refer to the for instructions, refer to BB: folder ➔ assignments and presentations)
| Week 4  | Devising a plan | TASK: Research the Iraqi case and start thinking about which type of institutions might be best for this case  
Read the Iraqi Constitution (https://www.constituteproject.org) |
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Statecraft: Debate</td>
<td>Complete assignment 3: memo (for instructions, refer to BB: folder→assignments and presentations)</td>
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| Task 2 (week 7-9): Your boss asks you gather data on a variety of ‘unstable’ regimes to make recommendations about political reforms. To do this, she asks you to:  
1) Become familiar with different sources of data.  
2) Travel to these countries to get gather data on the quality of the regimes. |
| Week 7  | No Class (Monday classes meet on Tuesday) | |
| Week 9  | From Concepts to Data: Political Regimes and Quantitative Data | TASK: Group presentations on indexes (15 points per group + 10 per student) |
| Week 10 | Workshop 1 | Submit assignment 4  
Submit your abstract (see section E) |
| Week 11 | Workshop 2 | |
| Task 3: Your boss has heard that ‘culture’ is an important factor to understand cross-national similarities and differences. She is not sure whether this is true and she asked you to brief her on the following questions:  
1) When it comes to culture, how can we capture cross-national similarities and differences?  
2) How can we operationalize this concept?  
3) Does it matter? |
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<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th><strong>Studying Political Culture</strong></th>
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<th>Week 13</th>
<th><strong>Cont.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
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| Week 14  |  
You must meet with the professor to discuss your final project. Please make an appointment.  |

| Week 15  |  
Poster Session (ALL students must be present)  |
| Dec. 5   |  
Final Proposal: due on December 19 at 4:30 (for more details, see BB)  |