GOVT 133 - 003: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall 2018

T, R 1:30-2:45, Enterprise Hall 80

Professor: Eric McGlinchey
Teaching Assistant: TBA

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tba@gmu.edu

Office Hours: T, R 11:00am – 1:00pm Office Hours: TBA Office: 341 Research Hall Office: TBA

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the central concepts of comparative politics—state formation, political economy, democratization, authoritarianism, social mobilization, political culture, and decision making in autocracies and democracies. Particular attention is paid to the comparative method, logic, and game theory, analytical tools used not only in comparative politics, but also in the social sciences broadly. Our conceptual travels will take us to concrete places, to states in the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the close of this course, students will be able to
1. Identify patterns and processes related to political change
2. Devise analytical, practical, or creative responses to global problems or issues
3. Assess research design strengths and weaknesses of existing social science scholarship
4. Apply the scientific method to questions of comparative politics using survey data
5. Explore how game theory can help address central questions of comparative politics

Course Readings:

- Course Reader (Blackboard):
  - Carpenter, Charli. “Game of Thrones as Theory.” *Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2012. (Blackboard)

Course Requirements:

The following requirements are designed to promote an optimal learning environment for motivated students. This syllabus is a contract; your continued enrollment in this class constitutes your acceptance of these requirements.

1. Students are expected to have completed assigned readings prior to class.
2. Students will complete four exams and one comprehensive final exam.
3. Students will submit written answers to problem sets on a weekly basis. Problem sets will be submitted during class. Knowledge of elementary algebra is required for successful completion of problem sets.
4. Make-up exams and problem set extensions will be given only if students have proper documentation that can be verified. In place of an email, please see me during office hours to discuss missed / late work. If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to medical / health care, religious holidays or travel, please inform me within the first two weeks of class. I adhere to the University’s Attendance and Absence policies.
5. Students are expected to stay for the duration of the class period. Late arrivals and early departures are distracting to classmates. If you are unable to stay for the full duration of a class period, work with a classmate to secure the lecture notes. Please do not interrupt the class with a late arrival or early departure.
6. Students are encouraged to take notes using pen and paper. Electronic devices, including computers and phones, are to be stowed for the duration of the class.

Mason EMAIL

• Mason requires that university email be used for all courses. I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
• You may forward your Mason email to other accounts but always use your Mason email when communicating with me to allow verification of your identity.
• You are required to check your Mason email account regularly and to keep your mailbox maintained so that messages are not rejected for being over quota.
• When you email me, be sure to include GOVT 133 at the beginning of the subject heading to alert me that I have received a message from one of my Introduction to Comparative Politics students.

Course Logistics

This course will meet twice weekly as well as use Blackboard to facilitate learning outside of class sessions. In a typical week:
• you will read about 50-100 pages
• work on assignments and problem sets to be submitted in class

To Access Blackboard
2. Login using your NETID and password.
3. Click on the ‘Courses” tab.
4. Double-click on GOVT-133 (Fall 2018) under the course listings

Technical Help

- If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu.
- If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu. **Late Assignments Policy**

One-third of a grade will be deducted for every day an assignment is late. Incompletes and makeup exams will be extended only in cases of documented emergencies.

**Student Responsibilities**

**Academic Integrity:** Students are responsible for their own work.

**Honor Code:** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. 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 members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code: [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/) 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.

**Time Conflict:** George Mason University is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful and inclusive educational environment that values diversity. Students should review the syllabus at the beginning of the term to determine if there are any conflicts between class time and religious observance. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of these conflicts within the first week of the semester. [http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/](http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/)

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See: [https://ds.gmu.edu/](https://ds.gmu.edu/) ].

**Student Services**

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and
counselors who offer a wide range of services (individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu].

**Enrollment:**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Registrar calendar: https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/

**Grading:**

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<tr>
<td>In Class Exams (4 exams, 75 points each)</td>
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<td>Class Assignments</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>490-500</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>460-489</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>450-459</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>440-449</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>410-439</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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**This syllabus may change as the semester progresses.**

**Course Assignments**

**Week 1 (August 28 & 30): What Is Comparative Politics?**

- August 28 ○ Course Overview
- August 30 ○ CGG Ch. 1

**Week 2 (September 4 & 6): What Is Science?**

- September 4 ○ CGG Ch. 2, “What Is Science?” (pages 19-30) ○ Ch. 2 Problems 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 (pages 45-47)
- September 6 ○ CGG Ch. 2, “What Is Science?” (pages 30-49) ○ Ch. 2 Problems 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 (pages 44-46)

**Week 3 (September 11 & 13): What Is Politics?**
• September 11  o CGG Ch. 3, “What Is Politics”  o Note: This is a pivotal chapter. Success in the rest of the class is dependent on mastery of the concepts in this chapter.
• September 13  o Ch. 3 Problems 1-5 (pages 79-86)

Week 4 (September 18 & 20): Gaming Trump & Exam 1

• September 18  
  Brams, Steven J. “Here’s How Game Theory Helps Explain Donald Trump’s Strategies.”  
  Washington Post, June 17, 2016. (Blackboard)  
  The New Yorker, May 15, 2018. (Blackboard)  
  Carpenter, Charli. “Game of Thrones as Theory.”  
  Foreign Affairs, March 29, 2012. (Blackboard)
• September 20  
  o Exam 1

Week 5 (September 25 & 27): The State

• September 25  o CGG Ch. 4, “The Origins of the Modern State”  o Note: This too is a pivotal chapter. Success in the rest of the class is dependent on mastery of the concepts in this chapter.
• September 27  o Ch. 4 Problems 1-8 (pages 125-134)

Week 6 (October 2 & 4): Democracy and Dictatorship

• October 2  o CGG Ch. 5 “Democracy and Dictatorship”
• October 4  o Ch. 5 Problems 1-10 (pages 168-170)

Week 7 (October 9 & 11) Exam 2

• October 9  
  Review—Note: Tuesday classes
do not meet but
I will
hold regular
office hours

• October 11  ○

Exam 2

Week 8 (October 16 & 18) Economics and Regime Type

• October 16  ○ CGG Ch. 6, “The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship” (pages 170-200)
• October 18  ○ CGG Ch. 6, “The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship” (pages 200-209)  ○ Ch. 6 Problems 1-5 (pages 209-212)

Week 9 (October 23 & 25) Culture and Regime Type

• October 23  ○ CGG Ch. 7, “Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship”
• October 25  ○ Ch. 7 Problems, 1, 2, 4, 5 (pages 260-263)

Week 10 (October 30 & November 1): Exam 3 & Introduction to Democratic Transitions

• October 30  ○

Exam 3
• November 1  ○
Keith Darden
and Anna
GryzmalaBusse,
“The Great
Divide:
Literacy,
Nationalism,
and the
Communist
Collapse,“
World Politics
59 (October
2006): 83-115
(Blackboard)
Week 11 (November 6 & 8): Democratic Transitions

- November 6  o CGG Ch. 8, “Democratic Transitions”
- November 8  
  o Ch. 8 Problems 1-3 (pages 308-318)  o  
  Read Box 8.7, “Transition Game with Incomplete Information” (pages 320-323)

Week 12 (November 13 & 15): Political Economy

- November 13  o CGG Ch. 9, “Democracy and Dictatorship: Does it Make a Difference?”
- November 15  o Ch. 9 Problems 1-4 (pages 346-347)  o  

Week 13 (November 20): Exam 4 and Thanksgiving recess

- November 20  o  
  Exam 4  
- November 22  o  
  Thanksgiving recess

Week 14 (November 27 & 29): Varieties of Dictatorship

- November 27  o CGG Ch. 10, “Varieties of Dictatorship”  
- November 29  o Ch. 10 Problems

Week 15 (December 4 & 6): Varieties of Democracy

- December 4  o CGG Ch. 12, “Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential”
Democracies”
• December 6 o Ch. 12 Problems

Final Exam: Tuesday, 12/18, 1:30 – 2:45

• The final exam is cumulative