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. Newly acquired concepts, theories, and research methods are applied 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 and experiments can help address central questions of comparative politics

Course Readings

- William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, Sona Nadenicke Golder, Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Edition (CQ Press, 2018). The textbook can be rented or purchased in digital or paper format through the university bookstore. Two copies of the text are also available through Fenwick Library’s 2-hour reserve.
- Course Reader (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 required to read the syllabus. The syllabus is a contract between instructor and student.
2. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class.
3. Students will complete four exams and one comprehensive final exam.
4. Students will submit written answers to problem sets on a weekly basis. Knowledge of elementary algebra is required for successful completion of problem sets and exam questions.
5. Students will complete periodic quizzes. Quizzes will be based on course readings as well as the Monday and Wednesday “World” section of The New York Times.
6. Accommodation for missed exams, problem sets, or quizzes may be granted only following a discussion with the instructor during office hours. An accommodation may be extended only if students have proper documentation that can be verified. 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.
7. 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.
8. Cellphones are to be silenced and out of view during class. Emergency calls may be taken outside the classroom. Students are to refrain from texting or using laptops / tablets for purposes other than classwork.

Mason EMAIL

- Mason requires that university email be used for all course communication. I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- Please include GOVT 133 in your email subject heading to alert course instructors that your message relates to our class and please sign your email with your full name.

Course Logistics

This course will meet twice weekly and 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
- complete in class quizzes and exams

To Access Blackboard

2. Login using your NETID and password.
3. Click on the ‘Courses” tab.
4. Double-click on GOVT-133 (Spring 2019) 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. Accommodation for missed exams, problem sets, or quizzes may be granted only following a discussion with the instructor during office hours.

**Student Responsibilities**

**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](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/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/)

**Grading**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Class Exams (4 exams, 70 points each)</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus Quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Sets</td>
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<td>Class Quizzes</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Class Total Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>490-500</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>440-449</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>390-399</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>340-349</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>299 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>A: 460-489</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B: 410-439</td>
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<tr>
<td>C: 360-389</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D: 310-339</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>B-: 400-409</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-: 350-359</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-: 300-309</td>
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Class total scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. A score of 449.49 rounds to 449, a B+. A score of 449.50 rounds to 450, an A-.

**This syllabus may change as the semester progresses.**

Course Assignments

Week 1 (January 22): What Is Comparative Politics?

- Course Overview
- CGG Ch. 1
- Create New York Times account. Instructions for setting up your account are available at: [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/politics/news](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/politics/news)

Week 2 (January 27 & 29): What Is Science?

- January 27
  - CGG Ch. 2, “What Is Science?” (pages 15-26)
  - Ch. 2 Problems 9-11, 13-14
- January 29
  - CGG Ch. 2, “What Is Science?” (pages 26-40)
  - Ch. 2 Problems 1-8, 12
  - Syllabus Quiz Due on Blackboard by 11:59pm

Week 3 (February 3 & 5): What Is Politics?

- February 3
  - CGG Ch. 3, “What Is Politics”
  - Note: This is a pivotal chapter. Success in the rest of the class is dependent on mastery of the concepts in this chapter.
- February 5
  - Ch. 3 Problems 1-6

Week 4 (February 10 & 12): Game Theory Applied & Exam 1

- February 10
- February 12
  - Exam 1
Week 5 (February 17 & 19): The State

- February 17
  - CGG Ch. 4, “The Origins of the Modern State”
  - Note: This too is a pivotal chapter. Success in the rest of the class is dependent on mastery of the concepts in this chapter.
- February 19
  - Ch. 4 Problems 4-11

Week 6 (February 24 & 26): Democracy and Dictatorship

- February 24
  - CGG Ch. 5 “Democracy and Dictatorship”
- February 26
  - Ch. 5 Problems 6-9, 13, 15-16

Week 7 (March 2 & 4) Exam 2

- March 2
  - Review
- March 4
  - Exam 2

Spring Break (March 9 – 15)

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

- March 16
  - CGG Ch. 6, “The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship” (pages 175-206)
- March 18
  - CGG Ch. 6, “The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship” (pages 206-219)
  - Ch. 6 Problems 1-5

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

- March 23
  - CGG Ch. 7, “Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship”
- March 25
  - Ch. 7 Problems, 1, 2, 3, 6a, 7 (take screen shots), 11a and 11b, and be prepared to discuss 11c-f

Week 10 (March 30 & April 1): Culture Applied and Exam 3

- March 30
- April 1
Week 11 (April 6 & 8): Democratic Transitions

- April 6
  - CGG Ch. 8, “Democratic Transitions”
    - External Imposition of Democracy and Bottom-up Transition
- April 8
  - CGG Ch. 8, “Democratic Transitions”
    - Top-down Transition
    - Read Box 8.6, “Transition Game with Incomplete Information”

Week 12 (April 13 & 15): Democratic Transitions and the Effects of Regime Type

- April 13
  - Ch. 8 Problems 1, 4, 5, 6, 7
- April 15
  - CGG Ch. 9, “Democracy or Dictatorship: Does It Make a Difference?”

Week 13 (April 20 & 22): Varieties of Dictatorship

- April 20
  - CGG Ch. 10, “Varieties of Dictatorship”
- April 22
  - Ch. 10 Problems 1-2, 5-6

Week 14 (April 27 & April 29): Exam 4 and Varieties of Democracy

- April 27
  - Exam 4 CGG Ch. 12, “Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies”
- April 29
  - CGG Ch. 12, “Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies”

Week 15 (May 4): Varieties of Democracy

- May 4
  - Ch. 12 Problems 1-5, 7-8, 16-18

Final Exam

- May 11, 1:30 pm – 4:15 pm
  - Note: the final exam is cumulative