

PO 151/IR 251: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Boston University, Spring 2023

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 3:30–5, and by appointment

Lecture location: PHO 206 (Photonics Building, 8 St. Mary's St.)

Lecture time: Tuesday/Thursday 2–3:15

Course website: <http://learn.bu.edu/>, for assignments and lecture slides

Teaching Fellows:

Zara Albright, zca@bu.edu. Sections B1, D1, F1. Office hours: Tuesday 10–noon, room 311D.

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1 Overview

1.1 Course Description

In a world where the major security and economic challenges depend heavily on policies and political processes outside our borders, understanding the domestic politics of foreign countries is crucial. Introduction to Comparative Politics teaches you how to better understand the world—as well as the United States—by studying how politics and political systems are similar or different across countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The first goal of the course is to increase your substantive knowledge about the countries that we will be covering—Brazil, China, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, and the United Kingdom—as well as how they compare to the United States. The second goal is to learn how political scientists compare specific cases in order to answer general questions such as “Why are some countries democratic and others authoritarian?” or “Why does the state play a large role in some national economies and a small role in others?”

Introduction to Comparative Politics should provide a good foundation for more advanced courses in political science as well as other departments such as history, sociology, and economics. Since this is an introductory course, I do not assume any background in political science. However, I do assume that you have an interest in the world around you and are excited to learn about it.

1.2 Course Objectives

This course teaches students to apply the comparative method to the study of global politics. In doing so, it fulfills requirements for three BU Hub areas. The general description of each area and course-specific learning objectives are specified below.

1. **Social Inquiry I.** Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behavior including, for example, the workings of social groups, institutions, networks, and the role of the individual in them.

In this course, students will:

- demonstrate knowledge of the predominant approaches for explaining political behavior (e.g., rational choice, cultural, structural, and institutional) and will show that they can apply them in practice.
- demonstrate an understanding of major concepts used in the study of comparative politics (e.g., states, regimes, nations, governments, markets, legitimacy, and identity), including their historical origins and how they relate to one another.

2. **Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy.** Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems or societies.

In this course, students will:

- learn about the political systems of Brazil, China, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, and the United Kingdom.
- demonstrate knowledge of how these countries differ in terms of political institutions (systems of government, electoral systems, party systems) and political regime (authoritarian versus democratic). They will explain how these components of the political system affect one another and why they sometimes change over time.
- explain how and why these countries differ in terms of public policies in areas such as the economy, social welfare, religion, and sexuality.

3. **Critical Thinking.** Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, such as habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative

judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning processes.

Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.

In this course, students will:

- assess different forms of empirical evidence used in political science, including qualitative case studies and the analysis of quantitative data, and the degree to which they help us understand political phenomena.
- identify the characteristics of an argument that is well-supported by empirical evidence and apply this framework to defend the validity of their own written work.

2 Instructional Format and Approach to Learning

This course is a lecture course with a once-a-week discussion section. For each topic, the first lecture, corresponding to the textbook reading, will provide a broad conceptual overview, while the second lecture, corresponding to an additional reading or readings, will present one or more country cases in greater detail. Lectures provide a guide as to the important topics in the readings—some topics are covered in the textbook but do not come up in lecture, and these will not be covered on the exam. For topics that are covered in lecture, any additional material in the readings is relevant.

Students should complete the readings, attend lecture and take notes, and participate in the weekly discussion section. Some prefer to do the readings before lecture; others prefer to attend lecture and take notes first, using the lecture as a guide for what to focus on in the readings. Either approach is fine, but if you opt for the latter, make sure you have completed the week's readings prior to the Friday section when they will be discussed.

I use lecture slides which present a rough outline of major points; these are posted on Blackboard after the lecture. Slides are not a substitute for taking notes, as there are many important points that do not make it onto the slides. Slides also present maps, charts, tables, and other graphical illustrations. These are important; both the midterm and final exam will ask you to interpret a map, chart, or table similar to one that was presented in lecture.

The Friday discussion sections, led by the TF, are a chance to review, ask questions, go over assignments, and discuss the course material in smaller groups. These allow for a more interactive format than is possible in a large lecture hall.

3 Course Materials

There are approximately 80 pages of reading per week; please plan your time accordingly.

The following textbook is required for the course and is available at the Boston University Barnes & Noble. If you are buying it from somewhere else, note that this version is different from “Introducing Comparative Politics: The Essentials” by the same authors.

Stephen Orvis and Carol Ann Drogus, *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*. 5th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2020.

Either the paper or [electronic edition](#) of the textbook is fine. **If you get the electronic edition, I strongly recommend that you buy or rent the textbook via VitalSource, the publisher’s online platform, since it preserves the original page numbering (used in the reading assignments) and formatting; other platforms like Kindle do not.** In addition to the textbook, there is a separate, free [Student Resources website](#) that contains flashcards and practice quizzes.

Additional readings (articles and book chapters that explore the course topics via case studies of particular countries) are available electronically via Blackboard. The additional readings are generally more challenging than the textbook, so you will probably want to spend extra time on them.

4 Assignments and Grading Criteria

4.1 Grade Breakdown

Section grade: 15%

Survey participation: 5%

Midterm exam: 25%

Response paper: 25%

Final exam: 30%

Final numerical grades will be calculated according to the weights listed above, and they will be translated into letter grades using the following scale:

A: 93.333 and above

A-: 90–93.332

B+: 86.667–89.999

B: 83.333–86.666

B-: 80–83.332

C+: 76.667–79.999

C: 73.333–76.666

C-: 70–73.332

D: 60–69.999
F: 0–59.999

4.2 Section Grade

Section grades are based on a combination of attendance and participation in weekly discussion sections. They will be assigned by TFs according to criteria laid out in the section syllabus.

4.3 Survey Participation

Many lectures will include a break for students to take short online surveys. A URL and QR code will be posted on the lecture slide; students should use their personal devices to connect and take the survey. Survey questions are intended to check understanding of the material presented in lectures and readings and help students engage with the material. Students who miss class should review the slides posted on Blackboard and take the survey at that time. Surveys will remain open for three days after lecture to facilitate this.

The course surveys are like quizzes, but they will not be graded for right/wrong answers. Rather, the survey participation grade is based solely on what percentage of surveys you complete. Surveys will ask you to enter your BU email for identification purposes, but your answers will not be shared beyond the instructor and TFs. I will summarize the class's answers to the surveys during lecture, but I will never identify anyone.

4.4 Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will cover material from Part I of the course, corresponding to the first four chapters of the textbook and the additional readings associated with those topics. The exam will be closed-book and administered in class on **Thursday, February 23**.

4.5 Response Paper

Students are required to write a 5–7 page paper (double-spaced) that responds to themes raised in lecture and course readings during Part II of the course. A paper prompt with several options will be distributed in late March or early April. The paper must be turned in via Blackboard (PDF or Microsoft Word format) by the start of lecture on **Tuesday, April 18**.

4.6 Final Exam

The final exam will be similar in format to the midterm (albeit longer overall) and will cover the post-midterm material (Parts II and III of the course). It will be closed-book and administered in class during the scheduled exam period: **Monday, May 8, 3–5 p.m.**

5 Class and University Policies

It is our shared responsibility—professor, TFs, and students alike—to ensure a positive learning environment. Please be respectful of each other and treat your colleagues and instructors as you would like to be treated if the shoe were on the other foot.

5.1 Excused Absences

Absence from class or discussion section can be excused, and exam or paper due dates rescheduled, only for religious observances (following BU's [Policy on Religious Observance](#)), unexpected or major life events (e.g., a wedding or funeral of a close relative, a medical emergency or appointment), and BU extracurricular activities such as sporting competitions and arts performances. Please inform the professor or your TF by email as soon as you are aware of a conflict. No absence can be excused after the fact, except for unforeseen medical emergencies.

5.2 Assignment Completion and Late Work

Late response papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., B+ to a B) per 24-hour period, starting with the due date; this includes weekends and holidays.

If the midterm exam is missed without an excused absence, students should contact the professor to arrange for an alternate make-up exam, which will be penalized 2 letter grades (e.g., A to C). Given the short time period between the final and when grades are due, final exams cannot be made up.

5.3 Academic Integrity

Students are expected to do their own work and to accurately and honestly give credit for information, ideas, and words obtained elsewhere. You may discuss course assignments with other students but may not share any written work, including outlines, before it is turned in. Plagiarism will be dealt with strictly according to the [Academic Conduct Code](#). **Submitting as your own work something that is written by another person or an AI (e.g., ChatGPT) counts as plagiarism.** Please review the website for examples of what counts as plagiarism so you know how to avoid it. If you have questions or concerns about how to properly cite outside sources, please let the instructor or TF know; we will be happy to assist.

5.4 Resources and Support

If you have questions about course materials or assignments or are in need of extra help, you are encouraged to visit your TF or the professor during office hours, as listed at the top of the syllabus. In particular, we are usually able to offer feedback on outlines, drafts, or thesis statements of response papers prior to the due date, as long as you do not wait until the last minute.

Students with disabilities (physical or learning) who need special accommodation in the course should arrange for a documentation of disabilities from [BU Disability & Access Services](#) and present a letter from that office to the professor. We will be happy to work with you to implement whatever accommodations they recommend. Please approach them early; there are often delays. If an exam is approaching and you have applied for but not yet received an accommodation letter, please come talk to us.

6 Schedule and Required Readings

6.1 Thursday, Jan. 19: Introduction and Overview

No readings.

6.2 Tuesday, Jan. 24: Comparative Politics Framework and Theories

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 1 (entire).

6.3 Thursday, Jan. 26: States

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 2 (28–52, 65–67, 77–79); Ch. 5 (218–224).

6.4 Tuesday, Jan. 31: State-building in Germany and Brazil

Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169–187.

Steven Topik, “The Hollow State: The Effect of the World Market on State-Building in Brazil in the Nineteenth Century,” in James Dunkerly, ed., *Studies in the Formation of the Nation-State in Latin America*. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, pp. 112–132.

6.5 Thursday, Feb. 2: Regimes

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 3 (entire).

6.6 Tuesday, Feb. 7: Regimes and Legitimacy in Germany and Brazil

Sherri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* vol. 49, no. 3 (April 1997), pp. 408–426 ONLY.

John Markoff and Silvio R. Duncan Baretta, “Economic Crisis and Regime Change in Brazil: The 1960s and the 1980s,” *Comparative Politics* vol. 22, no. 4 (July 1990), pp. 421–444.

6.7 Thursday, Feb. 9: Identity

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 4 (122–153).

6.8 Tuesday, Feb. 14: National Identity in Germany and France; Racial Identity in Brazil and the U.S.

Rogers Brubaker, “Migrants into Citizens? Traditions of Nationhood and Politics of Citizenship in France and Germany,” in William Julius Wilson, ed., *Sociology and the Public Agenda* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 73–96.

Edward E. Telles, “Ethnic Boundaries and Political Mobilization among African Brazilians: Comparisons with the U.S. Case,” in Michael Hanchard, ed., *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 82–97.

6.9 Thursday, Feb. 16: Systems of Government

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 5 (184–218, 226–237).

6.10 Thursday, Feb. 23: Midterm Exam

Covers material up through Feb. 14 only.

6.11 Tuesday, Feb. 28: Devolution in the U.K. and Federalism in India

Charlie Jeffery, “Devolution in the United Kingdom: Problems of a Piecemeal Approach to Constitutional Change.” *Publius* vol. 39, no. 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 289–313.

Atul Kohli, “India: Federalism and the Accommodation of Ethnic Nationalism,” in Ugo M. Amoretti and Nancy Gina Bermeo, *Federalism and Territorial Cleavages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), pp. 281–299.

6.12 Thursday, March 2: Participation and Representation

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 6 (244–281, 285–294, 299–301).

6.13 Tuesday, March 14: Party System Change in Japan and India

Steven R. Reed, “Japan: Haltingly Towards a Two-Party System,” in Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell, eds., *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 277–294.

Pradeep K. Chhibber, *Democracy Without Associations: Transformation of the Party System and Social Cleavages in India* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001). Ch. 1, “State Structures, Associational Life, and the Social Basis of Party Systems,” pp. 1–23.

6.14 Thursday, March 16: Authoritarian Institutions

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 8 (350–375, 388–389).

6.15 Tuesday, March 21: Authoritarian Succession in Mexico and China

Joy Langston, “The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico,” in Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, eds., *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 143–159, 303–304.

Jing Huang, “Institutionalization of Political Succession in China: Progress and Implications,” in Cheng Li, ed., *China’s Changing Political Landscape* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), pp. 80–97.

6.16 Thursday, March 23: Regime Change: Coups and Revolutions

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 7 (336–343), Ch. 9 (418–427, 430–434).

6.17 Tuesday, March 28: Coups in Nigeria and Revolution in Iran

Emmanuel O. Ojo, “Guarding the ‘Guardians’: A Prognosis of Panacea for Evolving Stable Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria,” *Armed Forces & Society* vol. 35, no. 4 (July 2009), pp. 688–708.

Theda Skocpol, “Rentier State and Shi’a Islam in the Iranian Revolution,” *Theory and Society* vol. 11, no. 3 (May 1982), pp. 265–283.

6.18 Thursday, March 30: Regime Change: Democratization

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 9 (394–418, 427–430, 435–439).

6.19 Tuesday, April 4: Regime Transitions in Nigeria and Russia

J. Shola Omotola, “Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria Under the Fourth Republic,” *African Affairs* vol. 109, no. 437 (2010), pp. 535–553.

Vladimir Gel’man. “The rise and decline of electoral authoritarianism in Russia.” *Demokratizatsiya* vol. 22, no. 4 (2014): 503–522.

6.20 Thursday, April 6: Contentious Politics and New Media in Iran

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 7 (306–336).

Saeid Golkar, “Liberation or Suppression Technologies? The Internet, the Green Movement and the Regime in Iran,” *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society* vol. 9, no. 1 (2011): 50–70.

6.21 Tuesday, April 11: Democratic Decline: A Warning for the U.S.?

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018.) Introduction and Chapters 1 and 3–5; the rest of the book is optional.

Yuval Levin, “How Democracies Panic,” *The Weekly Standard*, January 19, 2018.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “America’s Coming Age of Instability,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 20, 2022.

6.22 Thursday, April 13: Political Economy of Wealth

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 10 (446–482, 486–493).

6.23 Tuesday, April 18: States, Markets, and Globalization in Japan and the U.K.; Response Paper Due

Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982). Ch. 1, “The Japanese ‘Miracle’,” pp. 3–34.

Jonathan Hopkin, “When Polanyi met Farage: Market fundamentalism, economic nationalism, and Britain’s exit from the European Union,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* vol. 19, no. 3 (2017): 465–478.

6.24 Thursday, April 20: Political Economy of Development

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 11 (496–517, 522–526, 537).

6.25 Tuesday, April 25: Statism and Market Reform in China and Russia

Yingyi Qian, “The Process of China’s Market Transition, 1978–1998: The Evolutionary, Historical, and Comparative Perspectives,” in Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu, eds., *China’s Deep Reform* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 229–250.

Daniel Treisman, *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev* (New York: Free Press, 2011). Ch. 6, "The Transformation," pp. 197–239.

6.26 Thursday, April 27: Social Policy

Orvis and Drogus, Ch. 11 (519–522), Ch. 12 (542–579, 593–595).

6.27 Tuesday, May 2: Reforming Welfare in Mexico and Health Care in the U.K.

Michelle Dion, "Globalization, Democracy, and Mexican Welfare, 1988–2006," *Comparative Politics* vol. 42, no. 1 (October 2009), pp. 63–82.

Rudolf Klein, "The Public-Private Mix in the U.K.," in Alan Maynard, ed., *The Public-Private Mix for Health* (Oxon, U.K. Radcliffe Publishing, 2005), pp. 43–62.

6.28 Monday, May 8, 3–5 p.m.: Final exam