

# POLS 0200: Introduction to Comparative Politics

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[Canvas site](#)

Class Hours: MWF 11:00am -11:50am EST

Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00 & W 9:00-11:00

[Zoom Link](#)

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## Course Description

POLS 0200 is an asynchronous introductory course to Comparative Politics, which is a subfield within the broader discipline of Political Science. After discussing Comparative Politics' origins and evolution, we'll review a number of constitutive topics of the subdiscipline, including state origins and capacities, socioeconomic development, political regimes and systems of governance, political parties and electoral systems, welfare states and income redistribution, ethnic identity, political violence, and more. Why are some states more powerful than others? How does colonialism affect countries' current levels of wealth? Why are some political regimes democratic but others authoritarian? Are parliamentary democracies more stable than presidential ones and, if so, why? Through which mechanisms do authoritarian leaders survive in present times? What are the pros and cons of proportional vs. majoritarian electoral systems, and how do they affect political parties' formation? Why do some countries redistribute more income than others? How do we make sense of the current democratic erosion the world is experiencing?

These are some of the questions we'll explore in the course. As a complement, we'll address the methods employed by various authors while discussing the substance of the assigned readings. Readings and lectures draw on materials from Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, and cover contemporary as well as recent historical events.

## Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to provide students with an overview of the Comparative Politics subfield. By the end of the semester, students should have an understanding of the major themes with references to specific cases across the world. Readings will provide the basis of the material, which we will review and develop in lectures and through class discussions. Asynchronous discussion posts, a paper assignment, and exams will support students' engagement with the material by requiring them to apply the themes and arguments covered throughout the course across cases.

## Course Policies

### Zoom Etiquette

There are many disadvantages that accompany an online learning format. These include isolation, a loss of community, and hampered communication. We have designed the course to overcome these challenges as best as we can through promoting participation both synchronously and asynchronously, using breakout rooms to facilitate discussions, and having students work together in group projects. In addition, students should use zoom courteously - remain muted while not speaking, use the raise hand feature, and reserve chat use for asking questions, sharing relevant information, and responding to classmates' comments. All of which should accompany respectful and considerate communication between peers.

### Accommodations

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform us early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any course procedures. You may speak with us after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the Deans in the Office of the Dean of the College.

### Late Submissions and Absences

Late submissions of any assignment will not be accepted for full marks, except under documented emergency circumstances. You must contact us in advance if you have any issues that impede your ability to complete the assignments on time. Otherwise, a late penalty will be applied to your grade. Finally, while attendance of synchronous lectures is expected and will positively impact your class participation grade, absences can be made up for by watching the recorded lectures.

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable. Any student who plagiarizes will fail the course and will receive any other sanction imposed by the University. Handing in someone else's work or ideas as your own (even if you worked on it together as a group) constitutes plagiarism, as does using someone's ideas without appropriate citations. You must give a citation when you use an author's ideas in your writing, even if you do not quote the text word-for-word. For more information on the University's academic integrity policy click [here](#). If you have any questions, please ask us. Be informed and be careful.

## Course Requirements

### Participation

Participation is an expected and important part of this course. Students should attend synchronous lectures and actively participate in class discussions, which includes weekly asyn-

chronous discussion posts. In order to receive full marks on participation, students are expected to attend all (or almost all) synchronous lectures, contribute to the class discussion, and post to all asynchronous discussion boards.

## **Readings**

All readings are required unless otherwise specified. Completion of readings will be necessary prior to asynchronous discussion board posting. We will provide access to all readings via Canvas or through the library's website. As this is an introduction course, readings are a mix of classics in the academic Comparative Politics literature, more approachable interpretations of themes and cases, and burgeoning areas of research. Academic literature can be very complex - especially if students do not have much experience with these types of readings - we will overview how to read social science articles and books and review the lingo used throughout. If students are particularly interested in a certain topic, we can provide them with additional relevant readings.

## **Exams**

There will be two major assessments in this course: a midterm exam and a final exam. The midterm will be a timed 50 minute, open note, short-answer canvas quiz to be completed Friday June 18th during Week 6. Students will be asked to put concepts in their own words and identify concepts in action in various cases. Each question requires a 3-4 sentence response and there will be 10 questions total, which amounts to approximately 3 pages of double spaced writing total. The final exam - also open note and take home - will ask students to respond to one of two prompts on the topics covered throughout the course. Prompts will ask students to engage with one or more themes, construct an argument, provide evidence for their position, identify counterarguments, and counter those counterarguments. The final exam should be 6 pages in length, 12 Times New Roman font, and double spaced.

## **Major Assignment**

The major assignment of the course encompasses three parts: a written paper, a peer review of another student's paper, and a group presentation. Students will be divided by region and asked to write individual papers, due during Week 9, that connect a theme(s) to that region. Students will evaluate the applicability of relevant theories in describing their region - whether it be a specific city, subnational region, country, or whole international region. The paper should be 6 pages in length, 12 Times New Roman font, and double spaced. For the peer review, students will be randomly assigned another student's paper and have one week to summarize it, identify its strong and weak points, and suggest improvements for future papers. This will provide students with additional feedback to their own work and develop their writing skills through both writing and receiving suggestions. Finally, students will be grouped in teams based on international regions and present their combined findings to the class during reading week.

## **Time Allocation**

Over 12 weeks, students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class (30 hours total) and 6 hours per week doing course reading (72 hours total). The asynchronous discussion posts will require

half an hour per week (6 hours total). Studying for the midterm will require between 7-9 hours. Students are expected to spend at least 15 hours researching and writing their papers. The peer review exercise will take approximately 1 hour of work between reading and commenting. Students are expected to spend at least 6 hours on their group presentations. The final exam requires a minimum of 12 hours of work. In total, the course requires approximately 144 hours of work.

## Grading

- 20% Participation (10% class participation and 10% asynchronous discussion posts)
- 35% Main Assignment (20% for the paper, 5% for a peer review, and 10% for group presentations based on papers)
- 20% Midterm
- 25% Final

## Schedule

### Week 01, 05/10 - 05/14: Introduction

- O'Neil, Patrick. 2015. "Introduction: What is Comparative Politics?" in *Cases in Comparative Politics*, 5th edition, pp. 2-33.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review*, 65:(3), pp. 682-692.

### Week 02, 05/17 - 05/21: State Building and Capacities

- Spruyt, Hendrik. 2007. "War, Trade, and State Formation." *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, pp. 211-235.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1993. "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems (A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries)." *World Development*, 21:(8), pp. 1355-70.
  - **New Deal website showing brown areas**
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna and Pauline J. Luong. 2002. "Reconceptualizing the State: Lessons from Post-Communism." *Politics and Society*, 30:(4), pp. 529-554.

### Week 03, 05/24 - 05/28: Development

- Evans, Peter. 1992. "The State as Problem and Solution: Predation, Embedded Autonomy, and Structural Change." In R. R. Kaufman and S. Haggard (Eds.), *The Politics of Economic Adjustment*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 139-181.

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review*, 91:(5), pp. 1369-1401.
- Sen, Amartya. 1999. "Development as Freedom" in *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-34.

#### **Week 04, 05/31 - 06/04: Political Regimes Part I**

##### **Democratic Transitions and Consolidation**

##### **MEMORIAL DAY NO CLASS MONDAY MAY 31ST**

- Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What democracy is... and is not." *Journal of Democracy* 2:(3), pp. 75-88.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1999. "What do we know about democratization after twenty years?." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:(1), pp. 115-144.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2006. "How did Europe democratize?" *World Politics* 58:(2), pp. 311-338.
- Film: TBD

#### **Week 05, 06/07 - 06/11: Political Regimes Part II**

##### **Non Democratic Regimes**

- O'Neil, Patrick. 2015. "Nondemocratic Regimes." in *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 5th Edition pp. 173-205.
- Linz, Juan J. 1964. "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in Erik Allardt and YrjöLittunen, eds., *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems: Contributions to Comparative Political Sociology*, Helsinki: Westermarck Society, pp. 291-341.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. 2020. "The New Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of democracy* 31:(1), pp. 51-65.

##### **Recommended**

- Pepinsky, Thomas. 2014. "The Institutional Turn in Comparative Authoritarianism," *British Journal of Political Science* 44:(3), pp. 631-653.

#### **Week 06, 06/14 - 06/18: Institutions Part I**

##### **Party Systems and Electoral Systems**

##### **MIDTERM ON FRIDAY JUNE 18th**

- Amorim Neto, Octavio and Gary W. Cox. 1997. "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 41:(1), pp. 149-174.
- Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. Ch. 2 and 3, pp. 9-47.

##### **Recommended**

- Lipset, S. M., and Rokkan, S. 1967. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction." In P. Mair (Ed.), *The West European Party System*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-64.

**Week 07, 06/21 - 06/25: Institutions Part II**  
**Systems of Governance and Federalism**

- Mainwaring, Scott, and Matthew S. Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics*, pp. 449-471.
- Baramendi, Pablo. 2007. "Federalism" in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 752-782.
- Brancati, Dawn. 2004. "Can Federalism Stabilize Iraq?" *Washington Quarterly*, 27:(3) Spring, pp. 7-21.

**Week 08, 06/28 - 07/02: Representation and Welfare**

- Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1990. "The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism." Princeton University Press, Ch. 1, pp. 9-34.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2000. "Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Society." *Comparative Political Studies* 33:(6/7), pp. 845-879.
- Matthew E. Carnes and Isabela Mares. 2007. "The Welfare State in Global Perspective" in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 868-885.

**Recommended**

- Holland, Alisha C. 2015. "The Distributive Politics of Enforcement." *American Journal of Political Science*, 59:(2), pp. 357-371.

**Week 09, 07/05 - 07/09: Ethnic Identity, Nationalism, and Mobilization**  
**FOURTH OF JULY NO CLASS MONDAY JULY 5TH**  
**PAPERS DUE FRIDAY JULY 9th**

- O'Neil, Patrick. 2015. "Nations and Society" in *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 5th Edition. Chapter 3, pp. 62-95.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 2007. "Collective Action Theory" in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 186-209.
- Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. "Ethnic conflict and civil society: India and beyond." *World Politics*, pp. 362-398.

**Week 10, 07/12 - 07/16: Non-State Armed Actors**  
**PEER REVIEWS DUE FRIDAY JULY 16th**

- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2007. "Civil Wars." In *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 416-34.
- Albarracín, Juan, and Nicholas Barnes. 2020. "Criminal Violence in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review*, 55(2), pp. 397-406.

- Matanock, Aila. 2021. "Paramilitary Groups Helped Storm the Capitol. Here's What We Know about Armed Groups and Politics." *The Washington Post*.
- Film: *La Sierra*. 2005. Scott Dalton and Margarita Martinez. Available on [youtube](#).

**Week 11, 07/19 - 07/23: Race, Discrimination, and State Repression**

- Weaver, Vesla M. and Gwen Prowse. 2020. "Racial Authoritarianism in US Democracy." *Science* 369.6508, pp. 1176-1178.
- Johnson, Marcus. 2020. "Electoral Discrimination: The Relationship between Skin Color and Vote Buying in Latin America." *World Politics* 72:(1), pp. 80-120.
- Video of Lecture: Davenport, Christian. October 2020. "Stopping State Repression: An Inquiry into Spells." Presented at the Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation.
- Kirby, Jen. June 12, 2020. "'Black Lives Matter' has become a global rallying cry against racism and police brutality." *Vox*.

Recommended

- Go, Julian. 2020. "Race, Empire, and Epistemic Exclusion: Or the Structures of Sociological Thought." *Sociological Theory* 38:(2), pp. 79-100.

**Week 12, 07/26 - 07/30: Challenges to Democracy**

- Bermeo, Nancy. 2016. "On democratic backsliding." *Journal of Democracy*, 27:(1), pp. 5-19.
- Levitsky, Steven and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. Broadway Books, Ch. 1, pp. 11-32.
- Meyerrose, Anna M. 2020. "The Unintended Consequences of Democracy Promotion: International Organizations and Democratic Backsliding." *Comparative Political Studies* 53:(10-11), pp. 1547-1581.

**Week 13, 08/02 - 08/06: Reading Week  
GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 14, 08/09 - 08/13: FINAL EXAM**