

**Political Studies 105
Bard College
Fall 2018**

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Mondays and Weds 11:50PM-1:10

Professor: Sweet

Classroom: HEF 201

Office hours: Monday 10:30-11:30; Wednesday 10:30-11:30

Email: csweet@bard.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to comparative politics. This course sets out to inform and engage students in the intellectual tradition of comparing nation states as a tool for understand the political, economic and social dynamics at play in a global context. Over the coming semester, we will explore key theories and analytical approaches in this field. Our studies will traverse such wide-ranging concepts as variations in democracy, systems of political economy, the role of gender, interest groups, civil society and the dynamics facing nation states in an interlinking global system.

The class is divided into three core sections. The first examines the main theoretical concepts and analytical approaches that “comparativists” employ to understand political phenomena around the world. The second section examines the nature of political regimes: democratic, nondemocratic and hybrids and their consequences for political and economic development. The third and last section examines a small selection of case studies (the United States, Germany, Brazil, Russia, and China) as an entry point to explore a variety of political processes of concern to comparative politics, from revolution and political violence, to democratic breakdown and modernization, to role of civil society and civic engagement in facilitating democratic regimes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation in this course will draw on three inputs: class participation, an in-class midterm and a take-home examination. It is expected that students are diligent with their readings and ready to engage in conversations about politics in a respectful and well-referenced manner. The in-class examination will test your knowledge of basic concepts in the study of comparative politics. The take-home examination will be comprised of two short essays (5-6 pages each). Each requirement counts for approximately one-third of the final grade.

POLICIES

Please be on time for class. Only one unexcused absence is allowed, additional ones will incur a penalty. Please refrain from bringing food or drinks to the classroom. Laptop computers are allowed only with a written permission from the Dean of Students Office. No incompletes will be issued unless authorized by the instruction in advance. And please remember to turn off your cell phone as you enter the classroom. Any detected instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of the College.

READINGS

The course will draw on various sources. We will rely on Patrick O’Neil’s Essentials of Comparative Politics and its companion collection, O’Neil and Rogowski’s Essential Readings in Comparative Politics as well as O’Neil Cases in Comparative Politics (New York: Norton, 2015). They are referenced as ECP, ER and Cases respectively in the syllabus. The textbooks are available for purchase in the bookstore. The Cases book is not recommended to purchase as I will be facilitating access to the electronic files. They are also on-hold in the 3rd floor reference section of the library and therefore, can be read for free. All other readings can be found in the folder marked “Readings” in the course’s google drive folder. Please let me know if you have not received an invitation to join this folder. Please be aware the readings listed below may shift and be updated as the course takes its shape, as the student’s interests become apparent and as political situations evolve. Finally, readings found in the google drive folder are marked with an asterisk in the syllabus.

PART. 1. KEY CONCEPTS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Sept. 5. States: Meaning and Comparisons

ECP: chapters 1-2.

ER: King, Keohane and Verba, “The Science in Social Science”

Sept. 10. Political Culture
No class

Sept. 12. Political Economy
ECP: chapter 3.
ER: Hobsbawm, Essential Readings, "Nationalism"

Sept. 17. The State
ECP: chapter 4.
ER: Rotberg, "the New Nature of Nation-State Failure"
**Peter Nolan, Adam Smith and the Contradictions of the Free Market, Challenge, Vol. 46, No. 3 (MAY-JUNE 2003), pp. 112-123

Sept. 19. Democratic Regimes
ER: Weber, "Politics as a Vocation"
ER: Krasner, "Sovereignty"
ECP: chapter 5

Sept. 24. Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Hybrids
ECP: chapter 6
ER: Karl and Schmitter, "What is Democracy and is Not"
**Yascha Mounk and Roberto Stefan Foa, The End of the Democratic Century: Autocracy's Global Ascendance
Foreign Affairs. 209.15, May-June 2018

PART 2. CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Sept. 26. Developed democracies?
ECP: chapter 8
**Charles A. Kupchan, The Clash of Exceptionalisms: A New Fight Over an Old Idea, Foreign Affairs. 97.2, March-April 2018

Oct. 1. Gender and Political Power
**Mona Lena Krook, "Violence Against Women in Politics," Journal of Democracy, Volume 28, Number 1, January 2017, pp. 74-88

Oct. 3. Globalized, synchronized?
ECP, Chapter 11
**Anya Schiffrin, Disinformation and democracy: the internet transformed protest but did not improve democracy, Journal of International Affairs. 71.1, Fall-Winter 2017

Fall break October 8-9

Oct. 15. Developing countries
ER: William Easterly, "To Help the Poor" p. 509
ER: Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson, "Disease and Development: The Effect of Life Expectancy on Economic Growth" p.543

Oct. 17. Democratic Promotion after 9/11
ER: Rodrik, "Is Global Governance Feasible?" p. 550
ER: Bourguignon, "Inequality and Globalization" p.564

Oct. 22. Mid-Term Review

Oct. 24. Mid-Term Examination

PART 3. CASE STUDIES

Oct. 29. The United States
O'Neil, Fields, and Share, "The United States"

Oct. 31. Class Discussion:

** Robert D. Putnam, Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America Author(s):
Source: PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec., 1995), pp. 664-683 Published by: American Political
Science Association

**Ta-nahesi Coates, "Eight Years in Power"

Nov. 5. Germany

O'Neil, Fields, and Share, "Germany"

Nov. 7. Class Discussion

Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic"

Nov. 12. Brazil

O'Neil, Fields and Share, "Brazil"

Nov. 14. Class Discussion

**Brian Winter, Brazil's never-ending corruption crisis: Why radical transparency is the only fix Foreign Affairs. 96.3,
May-June 2017

**Cassandra Sweet, "Brazil" *Revista de Ciencia Politica*

Nov. 19. Russia

O'Neil, Fields and Share, "Russia"

Nov. 21. Class Discussion

**Stephen Kotkin, The Players Change, but the Game Remains, Foreign Affairs. 97.4, July-August 2018

**Michael McFaul, Russia as It Is: A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin, Foreign Affairs. 97.4, July-August 2018

Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 26. China

O'Neil, Fields, and Share, "China"

Nov. 28 Class Discussion on China

**Hsu, J.Y.J. 2018. "The Developmental State of the 21st Century: Accounting for State and Society." *Third World
Quarterly* 39(6): 1098-1114.

**Andrew J. Nathan, "China Since Tiananmen: Authoritarian Impermanence," *Journal of Democracy*, July 2009

Dec. 3. TBA (Students to vote on topic)

Dec. 5. Advising Day

Dec. 10. TBA (Students to vote on topic)

Dec. 12. Final Review

Dec. 16. As per student preference, take-home final will be sent via email on the morning of Sunday, December 16th. It should be emailed in PDF format to the professor (csweet@bard.edu) by Monday, December 17th at noon. Late exams will not be accepted except with a letter from the Student Affairs office certifying a veritable emergency.