POSC 1040 | Introduction to Comparative Politics
Sections 1-3
Tue/Thu 11:00-12:15 pm, Brackett Hall 100

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1:15-2:15 pm | Tue/Thu 1:00-1:50 pm | Or by appointment

Course Description (Clemson Catalog)

This course is an introduction to the study of comparative politics in the post-Cold War era, with emphasis on theories and applications. Topics include democratic and non-democratic systems; ideology; political culture; party systems; and legislative, executive, and judicial structures.

Course Overview

After an introduction to the comparative method and the comparative field of study in political science, the course will consist of three main sections: **1)** regime types and **political institutions**; **2) political behavior** and political parties; and **3)** comparative **political economy**. In **section 1**, we will explore questions such as: Is democracy eroding around the world? What is the difference between liberal backsliding and democratic backsliding? What is the difference between illiberal democracies and autocracies? Do countries have different political cultures? Are parliamentary systems more stable than presidential systems?

In **section 2**, we will answer questions like: What type of societal divisions give rise to political parties? Why do some countries have two-party systems while others have multiparty systems? How is ideology related to individuals' personality? Is liberalism a left-wing or right-wing ideology? Is conservatism a branch of liberalism? Who is more likely to participate in politics? Do social identities influence people's politics, or do people's politics influence their social identities? Finally, in **section 3**, we will explore questions like: Do countries have different varieties of capitalism? What is the difference between capitalism and socialism? What has been the effect of globalization on global poverty and inequality? What explains the the rise of populist, anti-globalization politics?

While the main purpose of the course is to introduce students to the **theoretical foundations** of comparative politics, the course will also provide **practical lessons** and assignments to strengthen students' **quantitative skills**. Students will be introduced to the R statistical software–widely used in both academic and non-academic settings–and perform basic data analysis and visualization using popular political science datasets. Finally, students will also have an overview of the **scientific study of politics**, with lessons on how to read political science articles, how to read regression tables, and a basic understanding of the use of experimental methodology in social science.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the difference between comparative politics as a field and the comparative method of study.

- Compare and contrast regime types and other institutional aspects of political systems around the world.

- Explain how citizens' political attitudes are formed and how elites are affected by– and affect–them.

- Critically evaluate the interactions between different institutions, the role of political actors, and the processes shaping citizens' attitudes towards government and society.

- Summarize and assess the basic findings in a scientific article.

- Make use of basic data analysis and visualization functions in the R statistical software.

Global Challenge Learning Outcomes (GCLOs):

- Critically analyze contemporary global challenges in comparative politics such as liberal democratic backsliding, autocratization, polarization, and populism.

- Critically evaluate how and why different political actors influence policies that affect these global challenges.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

This course fulfills the University's Crossings competency for Global Challenges. Students will be presented with a variety of global challenges through the lens of comparative politics, including political institutions, political behavior, and political economy.

Students will complete their own analyses of these global issues through the Data Analysis assignment.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

This course does not require any previous knowledge on the subject.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- We will use the following textbook:

    - McCormick, John, Hague, Rod, Harrop, Martin. (2022). *Comparative Government and Politics.* 12th Edition. Bloomsbury. [Denoted as Textbook].

- All other readings and materials will be posted by the instructor on **Canvas**, as specified in the class schedule below. Assigned readings should be done **before** the respective week.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

- Students will need to bring their laptops to class to use when we perform practical lessons in class.

- Students will need to download "**R**" and "**R Studio**" in their laptops. This software is freely available online. We will go over how to do this in class.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades will be determined in the following way:

A = 90-100	B = 80-89.99	C = 70-79.99	D = 60-69.99	F = <60

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Your grade will consist of the following components:

1. Participation **10%**
2. Quizzes **15%**

3. Data Assignment **5%**

4. Data Analysis Paper **30%**

5. Midterm Exam **20%**

6. Final Exam **20%**

1. **Participation.** Your participation grade will contribute 10% towards your final grade and will be based on:

   - **Engagement:** You are expected to read the assigned materials before each week so you can actively participate in class, asking and answering questions during lectures.
   - **Attendance:** A necessary but not sufficient condition for participation. I will randomly take attendance during the semester. Excused absences should be notified to me before class.
   - **Other activities:** From time to time, I will assign some short assignments or surveys.

2. **Quizzes.** There will be 6 quizzes during the semester over the assigned articles (denoted as "mandatory readings"). Quizzes will be delivered on Canvas (worth 15% of your final grade or 3% each quiz, with the lowest grade being dropped). See schedule below for due dates.

3. **Data Assignment.** In this short assignment you will use the R statistical software and the code examples provided by the instructor and explained during lectures to generate a preliminary data analysis and visualization, which will provide some practice for the Data Analysis Paper. You will turn in an R script file with a code that should run and generate the requested visualizations in the assignment. A more detailed description of this assignment will be provided on Canvas. For this assignment and the Data Analysis Paper, you will work in groups of 3 or 4 students. This assignment will contribute 5% towards your final grade. See due date in the schedule below.

4. **Data Analysis Paper.** You will use one or more of the datasets used in the practical lessons in class and compare two countries. Specifically, you will generate 3 graphs or figures comparing 3 aspects between the two countries (e.g., level of democracy, electoral system, parties' ideological positions, etc.). One of these aspects should be related with a contemporary global challenge (e.g., liberal democratic back-sliding, autocratization, populism, protectionism, etc.). You will use what we have learned in class with the R software. Datasets and sample R code will be provided to you. You will need to turn in a short paper (3-4 pages) including the 3 figures and a description of what they show (along with a paragraph introduction and a paragraph conclusion) and the R script that you used to generate the figures. I

should be able to replicate the graphs you made with the R script you turn in. A more detailed description of this assignment will be provided on Canvas. For this paper, you will work in groups of 3 or 4 students (same group as the Data Assignment above). This assignment will contribute 30% towards your final grade. See due date in the schedule below.

5. **Midterm Exam.** There will be a midterm exam covering the content from the first half of the semester. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-response, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. The midterm exam will contribute 20% towards your final grade. See the exam date below in the course schedule.

6. **Final Exam.** There will be a final exam covering the content from the second half of the semester. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-response, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. The final exam will contribute 20% towards your final grade. The date and time of the final exam will be announced during the semester.

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM

Canvas uses software to identify plagiarism or the use of AI for writing. Please be aware that plagiarizing your assignments or using AI to write them will result in a 0 grade.

GRADING POLICIES

I do not round up grades. Regrade requests must be made within three days after your graded assignment has been returned and must be submitted with a written statement of at least 150 words via email. This statement should explain why you think the grade should be changed. Remember that, after re-evaluating your work, your grade may remain unchanged or be adjusted in either direction. There will be no grade changes after the final exam.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments will be penalized with a 5 point (5/100) reduction in the grade per day unless you provide a documented medical excuse.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend class and complete all assignments.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Students are expected to attend class on time and to actively engage in class discussions and activities. Additionally, students are expected not to engage on any behavior that

may disrupt the learning process. Students are encouraged to actively participate in class discussions in an environment of free and open intellectual exchange and mutual respect. Any kind of disrespect towards another individual will not be tolerated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form. All infractions of academic dishonesty by undergraduates must be reported to Undergraduate Learning for resolution through that office. In cases of plagiarism instructors may use the Plagiarism Resolution Form. Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one's own efforts. Graded works generated by artificial intelligence or ghostwritten (either paid or free) are expressly forbidden. See the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy website for additional information and the current catalog ("Academic Regulations" section) for the policy. Send questions to UGSintegrity@clemson.edu.

ACCESSIBILITY

Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the instructor know and are encouraged to request accommodations through SAS (Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible. To request accommodations through SAS, please see this link. You can also reach out to SAS with questions by calling 864-656-6848, email CUSAS@clemson.edu or visiting SAS at the ASC Suite 239. Contact the office for the most updated drop-in schedule if you would prefer not to schedule an appointment.

THE CLEMSON UNIVERSITY TITLE IX STATEMENT REGARDING NON-DISCRIMINATION

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy or related conditions (including pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation, recovery from the foregoing, or medical conditions related to the foregoing), national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sex discrimination (including sex-based

harassment and sexual violence) as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This Title IX policy is located on the Access Compliance and Education website. Ms. Alesia Smith is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator, and the Assistant Vice President of Equity Compliance. Her office is located at 223 Brackett Hall, 864-656-3181 and her email address is `alesias@clemson.edu`. Remember, email is not a fully secured method of communication and should not be used to discuss Title IX issues.

Clemson University aspires to create a diverse community that welcomes people of different races, cultures, ages, genders, sexual orientation, religions, socioeconomic levels, political perspectives, abilities, opinions, values and experiences.

Emergency Preparation

Emergency procedures have been posted in all buildings and on all elevators. Students should be reminded to review these procedures for their own safety. All students and employees should be familiar with guidelines from `Clemson University Public Safety`.

Clemson University is committed to providing a safe campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. As members of the community, we encourage you to take the following actions to be better prepared in case of an emergency:

1. Familiarize yourself with all possible exits, safer locations, and other key information on the emergency evacuation maps in this building, and those that you visit regularly.

2. Make a plan for how you would Run, Hide, and Fight in case of an active threat in this building, and those that you visit regularly. For example:

    (a) Run – what are all the possible exits in this building, and the routes to them?

    (b) Hide – what are the potential hiding locations in this room and building that are out of sight of doors and windows, how do you lock the door(s), how would you barricade the door(s) and windows, where do you turn off the lights?

    (c) Fight – What tools are available in this room and building, should you have to fight?

3. Ensure you are signed up for emergency alerts. Alerts are only sent when there is a potential threat to safety, a major disruption to campus services, and once-monthly tests.

4. Download the `Rave Guardian` app to your phone.

5. Learn what you can do to prepare yourself for the hazards that affect our locations (`http://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/EmergencyManagement/`).

Course Schedule

Week 1 | Jan 9

- **Topic:** Class introduction. Comparative politics and the comparative method.
  What is comparative politics? What is the difference between comparative politics and the comparative method?

- **Mandatory reading:** Course syllabus.

- **Textbook:** Chapters 1, 2

Week 2 | Jan 14-16

- **Topics:** Liberal democracy, illiberal democracy, and democratic backsliding.
  What are the main characteristics of liberalism and democracy? What is the difference between liberal and illiberal democracy? Are liberalism and democracy eroding across the world? How do liberal democracies backslide and break down?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Zakaria, Fareed. (1997). "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs*, 76:6, 22-43.
  2. Bermeo, Nancy. (2016). "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy*, 27:1, 5-19.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 5

Week 3 | Jan 21-23

- **Topics:** Autocracies, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes. Populism.
  What is autocratization? What differentiates an authoritarian from a totalitarian regime? What is an electoral autocracy? Is populism compatible with liberal democracy?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Mudde, C. & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017). "Populism: A Very Short Introduction." (Chapter 1).
  2. *The Economist*. (2019). "How Viktor Orban hollowed out Hungary's democracy."
  3. *The Economist*. (2024). "Can Nicolás Maduro be stopped from stealing Venezuela's election?"

- **Textbook:** Chapters 6, 7
- **Quiz 1 due Jan 23 (covers Weeks 2-3)**

Week 4 | Jan 28-30

- **Topics:** States and nations; political culture; modernization and post-materialism.
  What are the main features of a state? What is the difference between a state and a nation? What are materialist and post-materialist values? Does economic development cause democracy?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Treisman, D. (2020). "Economic Development and Democracy: Predispositions and Triggers." *Annual Review of Political Science.*

- **Textbook:** Chapters 3, 4

Week 5 | Feb 4-6

- **Topics:** Presidential, parliamentary, and semi-presidential systems.
  What are the pros and cons of presidential and parliamentary systems? Which system is more conducive to stability and consensus?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Linz, Juan. (1990). "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy.* 1:1, 51-69.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 8
- **Quiz 2 due Feb 6 (covers Weeks 4-5)**

Week 6 | Feb 11-13

- **Topics:** Bicameral vs. unicameral legislatures.
  What is the purpose of upper chambers? Are upper chambers democratic?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Russell, Meg. (2001). "What are Second Chambers for?" *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54, 442-458.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 9

- **Data Assignment due Feb 13**

Week 7 | Feb 18-20

- **Topics:** Comparative judicial systems.
  Why do countries vary in their levels of judicial independence? What is judicial review? How is judicial independence related to individual rights? What is the difference between common law and civil law?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Berggren, N. & Gutmann, J. (2020). "Securing Personal Freedom through Institutions: The Role of Electoral Democracy and Judicial Independence." *European Journal of Law and Economics.*

- **Textbook:** Chapter 7

- **Quiz 3 due Feb 20 (covers Weeks 6-7)**

Week 8 | Feb 25-27

- **Topics:** Ideology and public opinion.
  How is public opinion measured? Is the left-right dimension the best way to measure ideology across the world? Are economic and cultural ideology separate dimensions?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Malka, A. et al. (2019). "Are Cultural and Economic Conservatism Positively Correlated? A Large-Scale Cross-National Test." *British Journal of Political Science.*

- **Midterm Exam on Tuesday, Feb 25 (covers Weeks 1-7)**

Week 9 | Mar 4-6

- **Topics:** Political parties, party families, and party systems.
  Why do people develop a partisan identity? What leads to two-party versus multiparty systems? What are party families?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Marks, G. et al. (2006). "Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West." *Comparative Political Studies*, 39:2, 155-175.

2. Honeker, A. (2024). "Do Parties Matter? Party Positions and European Voters' Attitudes toward Economic and Political Globalization." *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 20:2.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 15

- **Quiz 4 due Mar 6 (covers Weeks 8-9)**

Week 10 | Mar 11-13

- **Topics:** Electoral systems and electoral participation.
  What are the consequences of different electoral systems? Which systems better reflect voters' choice? What makes people more likely to vote?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. *The Economist*. (2015). "With different rules, some big elections in 2015 would have had very different outcomes."

- **Textbook:** Chapter 14

- **Data Analysis Paper due Mar 13**

Spring Break | Mar 17-21

Week 11 | Mar 25-27

- **Topics:** Non-electoral participation.
  Who is more likely to protest? Are victims of crime more likely to participate in politics? Which institutions lead to more political participation?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

  1. Bateson, Regina. (2012). "Crime Victimization and Political Participation." *American Political Science Review*.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 13

- **Quiz 5 due Mar 27 (covers Weeks 10-11)**

Week 12 | Apr 1-3

- **Topics:** Social and group identities.
  Which social identities are important in politics? Can party identities change the way people identify when it comes to religion and ethnicity?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

    1. West, Emily A. (2017). "Descriptive Representation and Political Efficacy: Evidence from Obama and Clinton." *Journal of Politics*.
    2. *Foreign Policy*. (2020). "Immigrants Are Big Fans of Germany's Anti-Immigrant Party."

Week 13 | Apr 8-10

- **Topics:** Comparative political economy.
  Why do some countries have a larger welfare state than others? What is the difference between liberal capitalism and state capitalism? What is the relationship between capitalism and democracy?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

    1. Hall, P. and Soskice, D. (2001). "An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism", pp. 1-27.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 18

Week 14 | Apr 15-17

- **Topics:** Globalization.
  What has been the effect of globalization and free trade on economic growth, global poverty, and income inequality? Who are the winners and losers of globalization? What explains the rise of populist, anti-globalization politics? What are the consequences of protectionism on prosperity?

- **Mandatory Readings:**

    1. Wu, Nicole. (2022). "Misattributed blame? Attitudes toward globalization in the age of automation." *Political Science Research and Methods*, 10, 470-487.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 18

- **Quiz 6 due Apr 17 (covers Weeks 12-14)**

Week 15 | Apr 22-24

- **Topics:** Course recap.

Week 16 | Apr 28-May 2

- **Final Exam (covers Weeks 8-14). Date TBC.**