

# Comparative Politics (PSCI 103-1)

Fall 2018

T-TH 12:15pm-1:30pm | Rathaus 210

Professor Jorge Antonio Alves  
[jorge.alves@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:jorge.alves@qc.cuny.edu)  
(718) 997-5414

Office Hours:  
T-TH 1:30 – 2:30 PM, or by appointment.  
Powdermaker Hall 200Y

## Course Description

This course introduces students to the discipline of comparative politics, or the analysis of politics within countries. We survey concepts, theories and methods that guide the comparative analysis of political systems, institutions, and political behavior. This course is organized around several major themes which are studied empirically in diverse countries and regions of the world including the state, democratic and other forms of government, different forms of organizing power through institutions, political economy, and political mobilization, identity and conflict.

## Course Objectives

- 1) Students will be exposed to the main themes, concepts, theoretical and methodological approaches in the discipline of comparative politics.
- 2) Students will explore the rich variation in political institutions and outcomes across the world.
- 3) Students will learn to read academic publications, such as books and peer-reviewed articles. Students will also learn to assess arguments and evaluate use of evidence.
- 4) Students will learn to think critically about political issues, make their own connections and apply this knowledge to the world in which they live in.
- 5) Students will learn to communicate their thoughts clearly and coherently in writing.

*This course fulfills the Pathways Flexible Core – World Cultures and Global Issues requirements.*

## Course Requirements

Exams (Midterm + Final)	50%
Papers (2)	30%
Quizzes (5)	10%
Attendance and Participation	10%

- Students will submit two written assignment (~5 and 3 pages) over the course of the semester. Papers must be uploaded to Blackboard by the assigned time or be considered late.
- Exams will be conducted in class, consisting of short-answer and essay questions.
- In addition, we will have occasional quizzes (in-class and online) that tests basic recall of major points covered in class.
- Participation is vital to the success of this course, and a key component of your performance. Proper participation does not mean you speak all the time. Rather, it means that you make thoughtful contributions that advance the discussion and show your preparation, without hogging the spotlight or disrespecting others.

## Readings

There are no books to purchase for this class. Course readings are available in the course's Blackboard website. All students are required to obtain access to Blackboard and check it regularly for announcements. You can login to Blackboard through the CUNY main page: <http://www.cuny.edu>.

Students are expected to complete readings before the scheduled class and to come prepared to participate actively in class discussion. Be prepared to summarize the main points in the readings to your peers. Of course, it is ok if you do not understand something; in those cases, bring good questions.

## Missed Exams and Late Assignments

Tests may only be made up in the case of proven medical emergencies or religious observance. Since our papers are linked to in-class group activities, they must be turned in prior to class or receive a 1-grade penalty. You must notify me if you require accommodation for religious observance by the first week of class. All work must be made-up within two weeks of the due date to be considered.

## Grading and Appeals

There is no grading curve in this class. Consequently, it is possible that every single student could earn an A+. I value transparency in grading, and am cognizant of the possibility of mistakes. I will gladly discuss grading with students, but will do so only in person, during office hours or by appointment.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should register with and provide documentation to the Office of Special Services, located in 111 Frese Hall by the first week of class. OSS will provide you with a letter for you to bring to me indicating the necessary accommodations.

## Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, purchasing papers, and/or cheating in exams and quizzes, will be sanctioned according to the [CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy](#). If you use any major idea or more than three words, you must cite the source. If you need writing help, visit <http://writingatqueens.org/>.

## Electronic Devices

Recent studies find that the use of laptops and tablets in classroom settings reduces the ability of the users and fellow classmates to effectively learn, as evidenced by lower examination grades.<sup>1</sup> That said, you have the right to use these devices to take notes and/or access readings. Students found to be using their laptop or tablet for any other reason will be deducted 10% of their participation grade for the semester. Furthermore, if you are using a laptop or tablet, I will call on you first during class discussions. Cell phone (either voice or text) during class is prohibited. Headphones are just plain rude.

## One Last Caveat

I consider this syllabus to be a contract between you and me that lays out expectations for both of us. I will do my best to keep changes to a minimum. I do, however, withhold the right to make changes throughout the course of the semester to adapt it to our needs. Whenever possible, I will include the class in the decision. In doubt, I will always err on the side of *lightening* the load to students. Finally, if you have read your syllabus carefully, send me an e-mail titled "My favorite superhero" with a picture of your favorite superhero by next class and I will give you a free point on your lowest-scoring quiz.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Sana et al. "[Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers.](#)" *Computers and Education* Vol. 62 (2013): 24-31.

## General Advice

Succeeding in this course is a direct product of your own effort. Here are some general tips:

- *Do the reading.* Lectures are not a substitute for the readings. Readings provide depth and nuance to the topics we study and are chance for you to actively participate in your own learning.
- *Read critically:* Focus on the big picture to glean the main arguments in the texts. Think about the logic of the arguments and draw linkages and contrasts among the texts. This is a course about *comparative* politics, so think comparatively.
- *Come to class.* Lectures will break down and highlight the main take-home points in the readings. At the same time, lectures go beyond the readings and help you make broader connections.
- *Participate.* Don't be passive receivers of information. Be active in your own education. Feel free to interrupt me with questions or comments. Don't let me move on to another topic if you are not ready.
- *Be respectful.* Especially to each other, but also to me. This includes keeping a civil tone during class discussions and listening attentively when your peers speak.
- *Enjoy yourself.* College is fun. Remember to stop and smell the roses.

## Course Schedule:

Aug 28 (Tue) Course Introduction

### The State

Aug 30 (Thu) What is the state?

Strochlic, Nina. 2014. "[Welcome to Sealand: a Sovereign Nation.](#)" *TheDailyBeast*, Feb 20.  
Samuels. pp. 29-39.

Sep 4 (Tue) "Early" States in Europe

Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making and State making as Organized Crime." in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 169-186.

Hubbard, Ben. 2015. "[ISIS Promise of Statehood Falling Far Short, Ex-Residents Say.](#)" *The New York Times*, December 1.

Sep 6 (Thu) "Late" States in the Developing World

Evans, Peter. 1989. "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State," *Sociological Forum* 4(4): 561-587. **\*\*Read only: pp.561-3, 569-581.\*\***

Lebas, Adrienne. 2016. "[This Research from Nigeria Shows Us How a Government Can Build a Tax Base.](#)" *The Washington Post – Monkey Cage*. April 15.

Sep 11 (Tue) --No Class--

Sep 13 (Thu) Failing States

The Economist. 2011. "[Failed States: Where Life is Cheap and Talk is Loose.](#)"

Harper, Mary. 2017. "[How Do You Solve a Problem Like Somalia?](#)" *BBC.com*, May 11.

Gettleman, Jeffrey. 2017. "[War Consumes South Sudan, a Young Nation Cracking Apart.](#)" *New York Times*, March 4.

**\*\* QUIZ 1 DUE FRIDAY, SEP 14, END OF DAY (BLACKBOARD) \*\***

Sep 18 (Tue) --No Class--

**Political Regimes & Transitions**

Sep 20 (Thu) Introduction to Regimes & Democracy

Samuels. pp. 59-65.

Schmitter, Philippe, and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy*, 2(3): 75-88.

Sep 25 (Tue) Non-Democracies

**\*\*ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE (Upload Before Class)\*\***

Delisle, Guy. 2005. *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly.

Delisle, Guy. 2008. *Burma Chronicles*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly. [Excerpts]

Sep 27 (Thu) Non-Democracies (continued)

Samuels. Chapter 4. (pp. 91-114)

*The Economist*. 2017. "[What North Koreans Learn From Their Smartphones.](#)" August 10.

Chin, Josh and Clément Bürge. 2017. "[Twelve Days in Xinjiang: How China's Surveillance State Overwhelms Daily Life.](#)" *The Wall Street Journal*, December 19.

Oct 2 (Tue) Regime Transitions

Samuels. Chapter 5. "Regime Change." (pp.120-144).

*The Economist*. 2015. "[From Dictatorship to Democracy: The Road Less Travelled.](#)" November 28.

Oct 4 (Thu) Hybrid Regimes & Democratic Retrenchment

Diamond, Larry. 2002. "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes." *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2): 21-35.

*The Economist*. 2018. "[After Decades of Triumph, Democracy Is Losing Ground.](#)" Jun 14.

Oct 9 (Tue) Catch-up Day & Student-Led Review

**\*\* QUIZ #2 (In Class)\*\***

Oct 11 (Thu) **\*\* MIDTERM EXAM \*\*** (in class)

**Political Institutions**

Oct 16 (Tue) Introduction to Institutions

Gould-Davies, Nigel. 2016. "[Why Thailand just voted on another constitution — and why this matters to democracies elsewhere.](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, August 8.

Berinzon, Maya and Ryan Briggs. 2017. "[60 Years Later, Are Colonial-Era Laws Holding Africa Back?](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, January 20.

Oct 18 (Thu) Executive – Legislative Systems

Samuels. pp. 66, 69-79.

Carey, John. 2016. "[Strong Presidents May Threaten Democracy. Luckily, We Don't Have One.](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, January 14.

Castle, Stephen. 2017. "[Theresa May Battles to Hold On as U.K. Prime Minister.](#)" *The New York Times*, June 12.

- Oct 23 (Tue) Electoral and Party Systems  
Samuels. pp.79-87 & 246-253.
- Oct 25 (Thu) Electoral & Party Systems (continued)  
Lloyd, Ryan and Carlos Oliveira. 2016. "[How Brazil's Electoral System Led the Country Into Political Crisis.](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, May 25.  
Grofman, Bernard and German Feierherd. 2017. "[The US Could Be Free of Gerrymandering. Here's How Other Countries Do Redistricting.](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, August 7.
- Oct 30 (Tue) Federalism  
Samuels. pp. 67-69.  
Stepan, Alfred C. 1999. "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model," *Journal of Democracy*, 10(4): 19-34.  
Healy, Jack. 2014. "[Up Early and in Line for a Marijuana Milestone in Colorado,](#)" *The New York Times*, January 1.
- Nov 1 (Thu) Participatory Governance  
Fung, Archon. 2015. "Putting the Public Back into Governance: The Challenges of Citizen Participation and Its Future." *Public Administration Review*, 1-10.  
Sangha, Soni. 2012. "[Putting In Their Two Cents.](#)" *The New York Times*, March 30.

**\*\* QUIZ 3 DUE FRIDAY, NOV 2, END OF DAY (BLACKBOARD) \*\***

### **Political Economy**

- Nov 6 (Tue) Intro to Political Economy & Development  
United Nations Development Programme. 2010. *Human Development Report 2010*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 1-9.
- Nov 8 (Thu) Welfare  
Goodin, Robert E., Bruce Headey, Ruud Muffels, and Henk-Jan Dirven. 2000. "The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism." In Christopher Pierson and Francis G. Castles, Eds., *The Welfare State: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 170-189.  
Daley, Suzanne. 2013. "[Danes Rethink a Welfare State Ample to a Fault.](#)" *The New York Times*, April 20.  
Sanger-Katz, Margot. 2018. "[Can Requiring People to Work Make them Healthier?](#)" *The New York Times – The Upshot*, January 11.
- Nov 13 (Tue) Welfare (continued)  
No additional assigned readings.
- Nov 15 (Thu) Corruption  
Morris, Stephen D., and Charles H. Blake, Eds. 2012. *Corruption and Politics in Latin America: National and Regional Dynamics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Ch. 1, pp. 1-27.  
*The Economist*. 2015. "[Health Corruption: Patients Bearing Gifts.](#)" March 24.  
*The Economist*. 2016. "[The Panama Papers: A Torrential Leak](#)" April 9.

- Nov 20 (Tue) Clientelism  
 Auyero, Javier. 2000. "The Logic of Clientelism in Argentina: an Ethnographic Account." *Latin American Research Review* (35(3): 55-81.  
 Wilkinson, Tracy. 2013. "[Mexico vote-buying scandal threatens president's agenda of reforms.](#)" *L.A. Times*.
- \*\* QUIZ 4 DUE TUESDAY, NOV 20, END OF DAY (BLACKBOARD) \*\***
- Nov 22 (Thu) --No Class-- Happy Thanksgiving!
- Political Mobilization, Conflict and Identity**
- Nov 27 (Tue) Social Movements and Protest  
 Luckerson, Victor. 2016. "[The Mainstreaming of #BlackLivesMatter.](#)" *The Ringer*, Aug 16.  
 Berman, Chantal. 2018. "[Why Do Tunisians Keep Protesting?](#)" *The Washington Post – Monkey Cage*. January 19.  
 Chira, Susan. 2018. "[The Women’s March Became a Movement: What’s Next?](#)" *The New York Times*, January 20.
- Nov 29 (Thu) Protests (continued) **\*\*ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE (Upload Before Class)\*\***  
 Samuels. pp. 235-240.
- Dec 4 (Tue) Identity: Indigenous Movements in Latin America  
 Yashar, Deborah. 1999. "Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and the Postliberal Challenge in Latin America." *World Politics*, 52(1): 76-104.
- Dec 6 (Thu) Ethnicity and Conflict  
 Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics*, 53(3): 362-398.  
 Birnir, Jóhanna Kristín, Christian Davenport, and Erika Forsberg. 2016. "[Is diversity inherently dangerous?](#)" *The Washington Post – Monkey Cage*. December 16.  
 Murshid, Navine. 2017. "[Why Is Burma Driving Out the Rohingya – and Not Its Other Despised Minorities?](#)" *The Washington Post – Monkey Cage*. November 9.
- Dec 11(Tue) Catch-up Day & Student-led Review **\*\*QUIZ #5 (In class)\*\***
- Dec 20 (Thu) FINAL EXAM 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM**