

Introduction to Comparative Politics	University of Houston
POLS 3311	Fall 2019
Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:20 p.m.	Francisco Cantú
PGH 200	fcantu10@uh.edu

Comparative politics is a field that analyzes differences among the political institutions, political behavior, and public policies of the countries. This is an upper-level course that introduces students to the principal concepts and theories in the field and provides the basic tools for political inquiry. The course is organized thematically and covers the most relevant questions of comparative politics. Students completing this course will be able to discriminate among different political institutions and apply new analytical tools to any other upper-division political science course.

Format

We will meet twice a week for the duration of the semester. There are assigned readings for each lecture, and students are expected to come to each class having read all the required material. The material reviewed in class will complement the reading material, so lectures are not a substitute for the readings or vice versa. You are responsible for any work that you miss, and missing class is no excuse for not turning in an assignment.

Expectations

Similar to speaking a foreign language, riding a bike for first time, or learning to play a musical instrument, exposure to new vocabulary and concepts used in comparative politics may prove a challenging task. Therefore, the following are the minimum expectations that both instructor and students need to have in this course.

On the one hand, I will be available for assistance throughout the semester and promptly answer your e-mails. Lectures will begin and end on time. The examinations will be a fair evaluation of the material covered in lectures and assigned readings. Grading standards will be fair and open. Quizzes and exams will be turned back no later than a week after submitted.

On the other hand, after making an informed choice to join this class, you are ready to learn and not just enrolled to earn a certain grade or requirement. You are responsible for your own learning, and need to come to class prepared having read the assigned material. You will attend classes regularly and on time. Finally, you have to be aware of the deadlines of the class and be responsible of submitting assignments on time.

Office Hours

Wednesday 1:30-3:30 p.m. at 429 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall. If you cannot make it at that time, please send me an e-mail to schedule a meeting outside those hours.

Teaching Assistant

Paul Johnson (pjohnson7@uh.edu). Office hours: Wednesday 12:00-2:00 p.m. at 426 Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall.

Readings and material for the class

The course requires the following textbook:

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press.

The textbook should be available at the bookstore. If you cannot afford to buy or rent the required textbook, I have placed two copies on reserve at the library.

Book chapters, academic and news articles are available on Blackboard. Also, we will use a classroom response system that requires you to bring any device with wi-fi and web browser (e.g., laptop, smartphone, or tablet). Please, let me know ASAP if you are not able to bring any of the electronic devices mentioned above, so I can get one for you to use in class.

There is an average of 30 pages of text to read before every lecture. Depending on your reading skills, you should complete the assigned readings in no more than three hours. Reading the assigned material before coming to class is a very important part of the work you will be doing. At the beginning of every class, I expect that you understand the basic argument of the readings, gain some familiarity with new concepts, and be aware of the parts of the topic in which you need more attention or assistance.

A quick note on electronic devices: Besides the few occasions we will use the classroom response system, I discourage you from using electronic devices in class. If you want to use your laptop or table for note taking, at least be aware of its detrimental effects on students' performance.¹ Using electronic devices for activities other than class related is a very distracting behavior to others students around and myself. If you do use electronic devices to engage in distracting behavior during class time, I reserve the right to deduct all your participation points without notice.

Course Requirements

Exams: There are two partial evaluations. Each of them consists of a take-home essay question and in-class identification questions. You will have from Wednesday to Monday to write an based on a question that I will deliver in class. The identification questions will be based on major terms taken from lectures and readings. The standards for grading both the essay and the identification questions will be provided the first day of class.

The grade for each partial evaluation is a weighted average of the essay and the identification questions. If you do better on the identification questions, each part will be weighted 50% apiece. If you do better on the essay question, this will be weighted 60% and the identification questions will be weighted 40%. Each partial evaluation will count 30% of your final grade.

In-class quizzes: There will be several in-class quizzes, which dates will not be announced in advance. The purpose of the quizzes is to encourage you to come prepared to lectures. Each quiz consists of a short question about the argument or facts of the readings assigned to that day. There will not be trick questions and the answers will be obvious for those who read the material. Quizzes missed due to absences or late arrivals cannot be made up. When estimating your final grade, I will drop out your three lowest quizzes. The average grade of your quizzes will count 30% of your final grade.

Participation: Class participation means that you are fully present during lectures and other class activities. I grade students' participation across the whole semester. The grade represents my overall assessment of your participation in the class. A perfect score will be assigned to students positively contributing to class every day. Positive contributions are those that advance the discussion by presenting relevant and informed insights. I also consider those who are clearly following the conversation and being thoughtful about it. Those who never participate in class but have a regular attendance to class will end up with a score around 50-60%. Lower scores are for students deriding others' contributions in a discourteous way or engaging in distracting behaviors, which include excessive talking, arriving late to class, sleeping, or using electronic devices for purposes other than class-related activities.

Grading

¹See, for example, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/05/16/why-smart-kids-shouldnt-use-laptops-in-class/> and <http://thechronicleofeducation.com/2017/04/06/using-laptops-class-harms-academic-performance-study-warns/>

Partial Evaluations	2×30%=60%
In-class quizzes	30%
Participation	10%
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100%

Final letter grades will be calculated in an absolute scale as follows: A (94-100%), A- (90-93.9%), B+ (87-89.9%), B (84-86.9%), B- (80-83.9%), C+ (77-79.9%), C (74-76.9%), C- (70-73.9%), D+ (67-69.9%), D (64-66.9%), D- (60-63.9%), F (0-59.9%).

Deadlines and extensions

There are no make-up quizzes or exams. The late submission period for the election reports will be 48 hours after the deadline. Assignments submitted up to 24 hours late will receive a 15% point penalty. Assignments submitted up to 48 hours late will receive a 30% point penalty. After 48 hours, no assignments will be accepted.

Exams submitted close to the deadline risk being marked as late, so please submit your work early. Corrupted files will not be graded, and you are responsible for checking your file thoroughly before uploading. Screenshots will not be accepted as proof.

Disabilities

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments and auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, the University of Houston strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them.

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both me after you contacted the Center for Students with DisAbilities (CSD).²

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus.³

Academic Integrity

Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the honor pledge that will be provided the first day of class. There will be a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism in any of the required activities for this course, and any violation will be penalized in the terms cited by the UH’s Academic Dishonesty Policy.⁴ Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Feel free to consult with me before submitting your essay if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others.

I. Introduction / Political Development

Week 1. Introduction

- What is the “comparative” in comparative politics?

²<http://www.uh.edu/csd/>

³http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html

⁴http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/_documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf

August 19

No assigned reading

August 21

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 13-31.

Week 2. The State

- What is politics?
- What is the state?
- What makes a state successful?

August 26

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 33-52.

August 28

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 53-69.

“Conquering chaos; Why states fail and how to rebuild them.” (2017, Jan 07). *The Economist*, 45-48.

Week 3. Political Regimes

- What is democracy?
- How to conceptualize and measure democracy?

September 4

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 71-75.

Dahl, R. (1971). *Polyarchy*. Yale University Press: 1-16.

Przeworski, A. (2018). *Why Bother with Elections?* Polity: 13-27.

Last day to drop a course without a grade

Week 4. Dictatorships

- What are the main features of autocratic regimes?
- What are the challenges of authoritarian rulers?
- What is the Selectorate Theory?

September 9

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 155-179.

September 11

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 179-194.

“Monarchy; sovereign immunity.” (2019, Apr 27). *The Economist*, 52-54.

Week 5. Economic and Cultural Determinants of Democracy

- Why do some states become democracies but not others?
- Is economic change fundamental to modern democracy?
- Does democracy require a “democratic culture”?

September 16

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 71-95.

Boix, C. (2006). The roots of democracy. *Policy Review*, (135):1–19

September 18

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 97-122.

Week 6. Democratic Transitions and Backsliding

- When do dictatorships transition to democracy?
- Why do democracies break down?

September 23

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 123-154.

“Coup data; where’s next?” (2019, Apr 20). *The Economist*, 56.

September 25

Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die*. Crown Publishing: 1-32.

Essay question for exam delivered

Week 7.

September 30

First Partial Exam

October 2

Film: The Square (Jehane Noujaim, 2013)

Week 8. Political Delegation and Social Choice

- What is political delegation?
- How do democracies make decisions?
- What are the main problems with group decision making?
- How to combine individual preferences into a single choice?

October 7

Taylor, S. L., Shugart, M. S., Lijphart, A., and Grofman, B. (2014). *A Different Democracy. American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. Yale University Press, New Haven: 1-24.

October 9

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 195-215.

Week 9. Electoral Systems

- What is an electoral system?
- How do electoral systems work in practice?
- What are the consequences of different electoral systems?

October 14

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 253-281.

October 16

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 281-287.

Carey, J. M. (2018). Electoral design in new democracies. In Herron, E. S., Pekkanen, R., and Shugart, M. S., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, pages 85–111. Oxford University Press

Week 10. Parties and Party Systems

- What is a political party?
- What are party systems and how can we classify them?
- How can we explain differences among party systems?

October 21

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 289-308.

October 23

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 308-319.

“Anti-EU parties cluster at ideological extremes, whereas pro-EU ones are centrists” (2019, Jun 1). *The Economist*, 81.

Weeks 11 and 12. Systems of Government

- How to distinguish presidential, parliamentary, and mixed democracies?
- How do governments form and survive in each type of democracy?
- Do differences between systems of government matter?

October 28

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 217-227.

“Israeli politics; back to the ballot box” (2019, Jun 1). *The Economist*, 37-38.

“Spain; stumbling towards a government” (2019, Jul 20). *The Economist*, 43-44.

October 30

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 227-252.

Last day to drop a course or withdraw with a “W”

November 4

Film Clip: *Borgen* (2010), “Count to 90”

November 6

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 379-392.

“Cleaning up Latin American democracy” (2015, Mar 18). *The Economist*.

Week 13. Veto Players and Institutional Design

- What is the tradeoff between checks and balances and policy stability?
- How do different families of political institutions influence representation?

November 11

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 321-350.

November 13

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 351-364.

Week 14. Ethnic Identity

- What are the main forms of political identity?
- When does identity become politicized?

November 18

Dickovick, J. T. and Eastwood, J. (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2nd edition: 326-347.

November 20

Clark, W. R., Golder, M., and Golder, S. N. (2018). *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press: 370-379.

Htun, M. (2004). Is gender like ethnicity? The political representation of identity groups. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3):439-458

Week 15.

November 25

Second Partial Exam