

PSCI 0103-B: Introduction to Comparative Politics

T/Th 9:55-10:45, Twilight Hall AUD & Friday sections

Instructor: Katharine Aha

Office hours: Tuesday 11:00am-1:00pm, Wednesday 2:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment

Office: Munroe 118

Email: kaha@middlebury.edu

Course Description

This course is an introduction to comparative politics, a subfield of political science which attempts to answer questions like: Why do some countries become democratic, while others do not? Why do some countries develop economically, while others' economies stagnate? Why do political institutions matter, and can they be tailored to best fit particular societies? In the first portion of class, we will discuss foundational topics like ideology, nationalism, and modern statehood. From there, we will cover democracy, authoritarianism, and the design of political institutions. In the last segment of the course, we will cover specific topics of importance for countries around the world, including political violence and economic development.

Aims and Outcomes

By the end of this course, your understanding of politics and the world we live in will have increased in three ways. First, you will learn the vocabulary that political scientists use to describe, classify, and explain political outcomes (How does a parliamentary system differ from a presidential system? What exactly is socialism?). Second, you will gain a deeper substantive knowledge of several important countries other than the United States, and one country of your own choosing. Finally, you will be able to use your knowledge to create and evaluate causal arguments about politics.

Course Hub

This syllabus is posted on Course Hub. Use Course Hub to access to the class's Canvas site. I will use Canvas to post readings, lecture slides, and other course information in an easily accessible location, and you will be expected to post assignments on Canvas throughout the semester.

Course Grade Components

10%: Participation grade

20%: Blog posts and comments

10%: Final blog post

15%: Exam 1

15%: Exam 2

20%: Final exam

10%: Group presentation

Participation

This course combines both lecture and discussion. Attending class regularly will help you considerably on the exams, and allow you to participate in discussions. I expect you to come to class prepared by having read and thought about the readings and any homework. Lectures are designed with the expectation that you have read the assigned material before class begins. You will not do

well in this course unless you do the readings.

Sections on Friday are designed for active participation. Do not expect an A in participation just for showing up – regular attendance denotes average performance, which equates to a grade of 75%. Raising this grade depends on demonstrating that you have both read and thought about the reading. The only way for you to do this is to actively participate. An easy way to do this is to come to class prepared with comments and/or questions relating to the week’s readings, lectures, or how current events reflect what we are studying in class. I will give you ample opportunities to participate in class – please take advantage of this time!

If I feel that students are not reading the course material, pop quizzes will be given.

One of the goals of this class is to give you a safe environment in which to speak so that you can practice analyzing political events and applying the theories we learn in class to real-world events. To this end, we will frequently engage in discussion. Guidelines we will follow to help foster meaningful discussion:

- Be respectful. Different opinions are healthy and welcome in the classroom. However, it is essential that we treat one another with respect. You do not have to agree with someone’s view, but you do have to be respectful. Disrespectful students may be asked to leave the classroom. Please take a look at Middlebury’s harassment policy if you have questions (<http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/policies-for-all/non-discrim-policies/anti-harassment-discrimin>)
- Speaking in front of groups can be intimidating to some students; it is my goal to ensure that this class is a comfortable space where everyone can participate. Our discussions will be most successful when all voices are heard. If speaking in front of the class makes you nervous, come talk to me so that we can figure out some strategies to help you earn points towards your participation grade.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions! Everyone has different areas of expertise, and some concepts may be more confusing to you than others. I will be of limited help to you if you don’t speak up when you need clarification, and the discussion portions of the class will not work unless you participate.

Blog posts

Throughout the course, you will write a series of six blog posts. Your blog will focus on a country considered “partly free” by Freedom House (2017), and for each post (~250-350 words) you will analyze a component of the political rights and civil liberties in your selected country used by Freedom House to calculate their ratings. More specific instructions for each assignment will be posted prior to their due dates. You will also periodically be asked to comment on fellow classmates’ blog posts. If you have any concerns about sharing your work with classmates, please let me know and we can discuss an alternate arrangement. A blog post schedule can be found below.

Final blog post

For your final blog post (~1000-1250 words), you will use what you have learned both about your selected country and about comparative politics during the course of the semester to examine ways that your country can become more democratic in the future. How would you suggest that the country move toward improving democracy given its own unique history?

blog post schedule – all are due by 11:59 on the due date

9/28: country introduction

10/5: freedom of expression and belief

10/19: functioning of government

10/26: electoral process

11/2: political pluralism and participation

11/9: rule of law

11/20: final blog post

Exams

During this course, we will have three exams, which are meant to test comprehension of the readings and lecture material. The first two exams are during class time on October 11 and November 13. The final exam is on December 14 from 9am-12pm.

Group presentation

The group presentations are based on the country blogs. Having researched this country during the course of the semester, you are likely to be the class's expert on that case. You will be put into groups with other 'experts.' Each group will be asked to come to a consensus about democracy across their cases, and will present their findings to the class. This includes relevant comparisons and contrasts across their cases. There will be a Q&A after each presentation in which everyone is expected to participate. The group presentations will be held during sections at the end of the semester.

Course policies

Honor Code

It is expected that all work you do in this course will be original work not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course, unless this is done with the prior permission of all instructors involved. All work for this course falls under the college's Honor Code; the student's signature on her/ his work confirms that the Code rules were respected. All work must be your own – plagiarism, cheating, and related violations will not be tolerated. For more information on academic honesty and the honor code, visit <http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/ug-college-policies/ug-policies/academics/acad-honesty>.

Familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism in order to make sure that you avoid it. Plagiarism is defined as deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise. Please visit this link for resources on how to avoid plagiarism:

<https://middlebury.libguides.com/c.php?g=431952&p=2946059>.

Questions

If you have questions about the course, please come see me after class or during office hours. Please email me if you absolutely cannot come to office hours. Some questions may not be easily resolved by email, but we can set up another time to meet if necessary. Please do communicate with me early if you have any challenges that impact your performance in this course; I will not be able to help you if you do not ask for help.

Rescheduling Exams

If you have to miss class on the day of an exam or wish to reschedule an exam, then you must write and explain beforehand in all but the most unusual circumstances. If you are going to miss an exam for an event you know about well in advance, please come speak to me early in the semester (ie in first week or two of class) so that we can make appropriate arrangements. Please note that I cannot allow you to take the final on a different day or at a different time without the Dean's approval; therefore, contact the Dean if you have a conflict with the time of the final and need to change it.

Student accessibility

Students who have Letters of Accommodation in this class are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through Student Accessibility Services. Please contact Jodi Litchfield or Michelle Audette, the ADA Coordinators, for more information: Michelle Audette can be reached at maudette@middlebury.edu or 802-443-2169 and Jodi Litchfield can be reached at litchfie@middlebury.edu or 802-443-5936. All discussions will remain confidential.

Computers, cell phones, and additional info

I would like you to bring your laptops to class in order to access electronic resources - however, I expect you to use them for activity related to this course. Playing on the Internet during class is highly disrespectful to people who are trying to pay attention. I may not call you out for being on another site during class, but I will notice, and it will affect your final grade. You may not have your laptops open during any sort of student presentation. If, during the course of the semester, I see that the laptops are acting as more of a distraction than a help, I reserve the right to restrict their usage.

Do not use your cell phone during class. I can tell when you're using it, and it will definitely impact your participation grade.

As a general rule, I will not email you your grades, nor will I discuss your grades with you within 24 hours of handing graded assignments back. That being said, if you have questions about my comments on your assignments, I am happy to talk to you. If you want me to regrade something, you will need to write a few (at least three) paragraphs responding specifically to my written comments and explaining why you feel you deserve a higher grade.

Course Schedule

Section 1: Foundational concepts

- September 11 & 13: Introduction to Political Science/Comparative Politics
 - o Readings:
 - 9/13:
 - Dickovick, J. Tyler and Jonathan Eastwood. *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases 2nd Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - o “Chapter 1: The Comparative Approach: An Introduction” (skim)
 - o “Chapter 2: Theories, Hypotheses, and Evidence”
- September 18 & 20: The State
 - o Readings:
 - 9/18:
 - Tilly, Charles. 1990. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
 - o “Chapter 1: Cities and States in World History”
 - Read sections “States in History” (pp 1-5), “Logics of Capital and Coercion” (pp 16-20), “War Drives State Formation and Transformation” (pp 20-28), “Long Trends and Interactions” (pp 28-33); Skim section “Available Answers” (pp 5-16)
 - 9/20:
 - Moore, Barrington. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
 - o “Chapter 7: The Democratic Route to Modern Society”
 - Read sections highlighted on pdf
 - o “Chapter 8: Revolution from Above and Fascism”
 - Read sections highlighted on pdf
 - o “Chapter 9: The Peasants and Revolution”
 - Read sections highlighted on pdf
- September 25 & 27: Nationalism
 - o Readings:
 - 9/25:
 - Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Edited by Clifford Geertz. New York: Basic Books.
 - Nagel, Joane. 1994. “Constructing Ethnicity.” *Social Problems* 41(1): 152-176.
 - 9/27:
 - Fearon, James. 1995. “Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem.” Presented at the 1994 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, New York.
 - o Read sections “Introduction” (pp 1-4), “The (ir)rationality of ethnic violence” (pp 4-6), “The War in Croatia” (pp 15-20),

- “Conclusions” (pp 21-24)
- Skim “The Commitment Problem in Plural Societies” (pp 6-14)

Section 2: Democracy and Authoritarianism

- October 2 & 4 & 9: Democracy and Democratization
 - Readings:
 - 10/2:
 - Volokh, Eugene. May 13, 2015. “Is the United States of America a Republic or a Democracy?” *The Washington Post*.
 - 10/4:
 - Przeworski, Adam and Limongi, Fernando. 1997. “Modernization: Theories and Facts.” *World Politics* 49(2): 155-183.
 - Boix, Carlos and Susan C. Stokes. 2003. “Endogenous Democratization.” *World Politics* 55(4): 517-549.
 - 10/9:
 - O’Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe C. Schmitter. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
 - “Chapter 2: Defining Some Concepts (and Exposing Some Assumptions)”
 - Read pages 6-8
 - “Chapter 3: Opening (and Undermining) Authoritarian Regimes”
 - “Chapter 4: Negotiating (and Renegotiating) Pacts”

October 11: Exam 1

- October 16 & 18: Varieties of Authoritarianism
 - Readings:
 - 10/16:
 - Svobik, Milan W. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - “Chapter 1: Introduction – The Anatomy of Dictatorship”
 - 10/18:
 - Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar. 2009. “Elections Under Authoritarianism.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 403-422.
 - For sections (10/20):
 - Woodward, Colin. June 17, 2015. “Europe’s New Dictator.” *Politico*.
 - Applebaum, Anne. December 22, 2016. “Illiberal Democracy Comes to Poland.” *The Washington Post*.
 - Krugman, Paul. August 27, 2018. “Why It Can Happen Here.” *The New York Times*.

Section 3: Institutions

- October 23 & 25: Federalism, Legislatures and Elections
 - o Readings:
 - 10/23:
 - Beramendi, Pablo. 2009. "Federalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Edited by Carlos Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - 10/25:
 - Sisk, Timothy D. 2017. *Elections, Electoral Systems, and Party Systems: A Resource Guide*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- October 30 & November 1: Political Parties
 - o Readings:
 - 10/30:
 - Katz, Richard S. 2008. "Political Parties." In *Comparative Politics*. Edited by Daniele Caramani. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - Caramani, Daniele. 2008. "Party Systems." In *Comparative Politics*. Edited by Daniele Caramani. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - 11/1:
 - Shuster, Simon. "The Populists." *TIME*.
- November 6 & November 8: Presidential and Parliamentary Systems
 - o Readings:
 - 11/6:
 - Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.
 - 11/8:
 - Hough, Dan. September 25, 2017. "Building a New German Coalition Government Won't Be Easy – Here's Why." *The Washington Post*.

November 13: Exam 2

Section 4: Outcomes

- November 15 & 20: Political violence
 - o Readings:
 - 11/15:
 - Lichbach, Mark Irving. 1995. *The Rebel's Dilemma*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
 - o "Chapter 1: The Problem Defined"
 - Read sections 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5
 - o "Chapter 2: The Approach Adopted"
 - 11/20: none
 - Today we will be discussing the Arab Spring. Please watch the History Channel's short video "Here's How the Arab Spring Started and How It Affected the World" – link on Canvas.

- November 27 & 29: Political Economy and the Welfare State
 - o Readings:
 - 11/27:
 - Hall, Peter A. and David Soskice. 2001. “An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism.” In *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Edited by Peter A. Hall and David Soskice. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - o Read through p 33
 - 11/29:
 - Estevez-Abe, Margarita, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. 2001. “Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State.” In *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Edited by Peter A. Hall and David Soskice. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - o Group presentations in sections on 11/29
- December 4 & 6: Comparative Politics and International Relations
 - o Readings:
 - 12/4:
 - Rodrik, Dani. 2011. *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
 - o “Chapter 10: Is Global Governance Feasible? Is It Desirable?”
 - Ferguson, Niall. 2016. “Populism as a Backlash Against Globalizations: Historical Perspectives.” *Horizons – Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development* 8: 12-21.
 - Charlemagne: Life in the Centrifuge. September 1, 2018. “What Europe Can Learn from the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire a Century Ago.” *The Economist* (27).
 - 12/6:
 - Dryzek, John S. 2012. “Global Civil Society: The Progress of Post-Westphalian Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15: 101-119.
 - o Group presentations in sections on 12/7

Final: December 14, 9am-12pm