

**Northwestern University**  
**School of Professional Studies**

**Political Science 250: Introduction to Comparative Politics**

Winter 2016

Time: Wednesday 6:15-9:15pm, Parkes Hall 212

Instructor: Moses Khisa

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Office Hours: Thursday 4-6pm and anytime by appointment

**Course overview and objective**

The comparative politics subfield is concerned with assessing variations and drawing comparisons in the *internal* processes and institutional outcomes within countries. This contrasts with the subfield of international relations which focuses on the relations between countries and political developments at the global level.

This course will cover a range of key comparative politics questions and concepts that are central to the subfield. Starting with the most important question of the state or nation-state in its modern understanding, we will proceed to address questions like: what are the causes and consequences of democracy and why are some countries democratic while others are undemocratic? Does democracy lead to development or it is development that produces democracy? Why are some countries poor while others are rich? How do we account for global differences in material wellbeing and economic inequality? Why do some societies experience social violence and not others?

The study of comparative politics is associated with at least four main frameworks of analysis: macro-historical, micro-behavioral (rational choice), culturalist, and institutionalist. The subfield is also built around key concepts like the state, nation-state, democracy, authoritarianism, economic development, political institutions, war and conflict, etc. This course will introduce students to these frameworks of analysis and the key conceptual tools that underpin the subfield.

The course will combine lectures with class discussions, so completing the week's assigned readings and being well-prepared to participate in class will be critical. This means that attendance and informed class participation will be a key requirement for the course. Barring unforeseen circumstances like ill health and family emergencies, all students will be expected to attend class consistently. In the event of missing class, I should be informed before class. To compensate for missing class, you will email to me a two-page reading summary by 6pm on the day of class. Students with disabilities and in need of special assistance should inform me as well as the university office of disabilities.

In addition to class attendance and participation, there will be three other requirements: **two** (2) response papers, an in-class midterm, and a final paper. Each of the two response papers will be about **five pages long, Times New Roman, font 12 and double-spaced**, and will analyze readings for the specific week that a student signs up for. I will provide a signup sheet for response papers on the first day of class. The response papers will not summarize the readings; rather they will make an incisive critique, highlighting the most persuasive arguments but also pointing out the shortcomings. The paper will be due to me by email before start of class for the week that one signed-up.

The in-class midterm will be on **February 3** and will take approximately one hour. It will include up to four essay questions from which you will answer only two. We will discuss any other logistics for the midterm when the date draws closer.

The final term paper will be a “mini research paper” that addresses one of the topics covered in the course or a related and interesting research question that is worth analyzing in-depth. It will be a **maximum of 15 pages long, Times New Roman, font 12 and double-spaced**. Students will submit a five-page draft on **Wednesday March 2** and receive feedback before proceeding with completing the final paper which will be due to me by email on **Wednesday March 9** by 6pm.

### **Grading**

Class participation will count towards 15%

The two response papers will take 10% each and a combined 20%

The in-class midterm will be 25%

The final paper will be 40%.

### **Academic Integrity**

Northwestern University has a strict policy against any form of academic dishonest. The School of Professional Studies, reechoing the overall university policy, states as follows: “All material submitted as part of any class exercise must be the actual work of the student whose name appears on the material. Students are cautioned against the possession of unauthorized material during any examination or quiz. A student who is found guilty of dishonesty in academic work may receive a failing grade for the course and may be dismissed from the University.” See

<http://sps.northwestern.edu/resources/student-services/student-services.php>

### **Books and Other Course Materials**

We shall draw on two books and a collection of articles and book chapters. There is one textbook that all students **MUST** purchase: Patrick O’Neil and Ronald Rogowski, *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*, **Fourth Edition**. Another book that you may consider buying is Daren Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. We will read several chapters from this book, so if you can, do buy it. Otherwise, the selected chapters will be scanned and posted on Canvas. All other course readings will be available via Canvas or shall be sent to students via email while others will be accessible directly via the Internet.

## Topics and Readings

### Week One, January 6: Introductions and Overview of the Course

No Assigned readings.

### Week Two: January 13: Introduction to Comparative Politics

What is Comparative Politics, and how is it different from other subfields in political science? How is comparative politics studied and what are the major frameworks of analysis? What are scholars of comparative politics most interested in explaining and why should we care?

#### Required Readings:

- Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, "Research Traditions in Comparative Politics: An Introduction," in O'Neil and Rogowski
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, "The Science in Social Science" in O'Neil and Rogowski
- Ronald Rogowski, "How Inference in the Social (but Not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly," in O'Neil and Rogowski
- Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65 No. 3 (1971)

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1955513.pdf?acceptTC=true>

### Week Three, January 20: States, Power, and Authority

What is the state and how do states come about. What do states do and how different are they from other authorities in society? Why are some states weak while others are strong, or are all states necessarily the same?

#### Required Readings:

- Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in O'Neil and Rogowski
- Jeffrey Herbst, "War and States in Africa," In O'Neil and Rogowski
- Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," on Canvas
- Margaret Levi, "The State of the Study of the State," on Canvas

### Week Four, January 27: Nations, Nationalism, and Ethnic Conflict

What are nations, and how is nation conceptually different from state? What accounts for the birth of modern nationalism and the emergence of nation-states? Are ethnic groups nations in the modern sense? What explains the persistence of ethnic identities and why has the world seen so much ethnically driven conflict? Does ethnic heterogeneity engender social conflict and underdevelopment?

#### Required Readings

- Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, on Canvas
- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”
- Ashtosh Vashny, Civil Society and Ethnic Conflict: India and Beyond” *World Politics*
- James Fearon and David Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*
- William Easterly and Ross Levine, “Africa’s Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*

**\*\*\*Week Five, February 3: In-class midterm\*\*\*\***

**Week Six, February 10: Democratic and Nondemocratic Political Regimes**

What are democratic systems of government and how do they come about? What are the causes and consequences of democracy? Why is democracy considered the best available form of government? How do we account for the recent birth of new democratic states in the 1980s and 90s especially in Africa and Latin America but less so in Asia? What are the different strands of nondemocratic systems and why have they persisted in certain places and not others?

**Required Readings**

- Phillippe Schmitter and Terry Karly, “What Democracy Is and Is Not”  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v002/2.3schmitter.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v002/2.3schmitter.pdf)
- Samuel Huntington, “Explaining the Third Wave” in his *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, on Canvas
- Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Modern Non-Democratic Regimes,” in O’Neil and Rogowski
- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” in O’Neil and Rogowski and via this link:  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v013/13.2levitsky.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.2levitsky.pdf)

**Week Seven, February 17: Political Parties, Electoral Systems, and Representation**

What are political parties and why are they important in modern politics? What are the major political party systems in modern democracies? What is the relationship between party systems and electoral politics? What is the impact of parties and elections on representation?

**Required Readings**

- Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Chapters 1, 5, & 8
- Juan Linz, “The Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy Vol. 1 No. 1* (Winter 1990)

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v001/1.1linz.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v001/1.1linz.pdf)

- Joel Barkan, “Elections in Agrarian Societies,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1995)

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v006/6.4barkan.html?pagewanted=all](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v006/6.4barkan.html?pagewanted=all)

### **Week Eight, February 24: Economic Development and Underdevelopment**

What causes economic development? Why did the West develop before the rest of the world? Why have some parts of the world caught up with the West while others still lag behind. We will consider the classical theories of development and underdevelopment first then turn to other alternative explanations.

#### **Required Readings**

- Samuel Valenzuela and Arturo Valenzuela, “Modernization and Dependency: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Latin American Underdevelopment,” *Comparative Politics*

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/421571.pdf>

- Fareed Zakaria, “Culture is Destiny: Conversations with Lee Kuan Yew”

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20045923.pdf?acceptTC=true>

- Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, “Why Has Africa Grown so Slowly,” in O’Neil and Rogoswki
- William Easterly, “To Help the Poor,” in O’Neil and Rogoswki

### **Week Eight, March 2: Explaining Long Term Economic Development and Inequality**

Is it Institutions, Geography or Culture? Why have some poor countries continued to remain poor while others have recently made a break through? How can poor countries get out of the poverty trap?

#### **Required Readings**

- Daren Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Poverty, and Prosperity*, Chapters 1, 2, 13, & 15, on Canvas

- Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Falling and What Can Be Done About it*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5, on Canvas

- Jeffrey Sachs, “Reply to Acemoglu and Robinson”

[http://jeffsachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Reply-to-Acemoglu-and-Robinson-December-1-2012\\_final.pdf](http://jeffsachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Reply-to-Acemoglu-and-Robinson-December-1-2012_final.pdf)

### **Week Ten, March 9: Collective Action, Social Mobilization, and Revolution**

(\*\*\*\* Since SPS does not have reading week, we can hold this class but it is optional. If the majority view is against the class, that is fine with me).

When is group mobilization and collective action possible? Does it follow that self-interested people who share the same interests can act together? If not, under what conditions can groups of people with similar interests act collectively? How do we account for major social revolutions in world history?

- Mancur Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action*,” Chapters 1 & 2, on Canvas
- Pamela Oliver and Gerald Marwell, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action: A Microsocial Theory*, Chapter 1, on Canvas
- Theda Skocpal, “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” in O’Neil and Rogowski