

UCLA  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 50: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

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Spring 2015  
Tues/Thurs: 12:30-1:45pm  
Dodd 147  
Office Hours: Thurs 2-4pm

Comparative politics is the field within political science that tries to explain why countries vary in their domestic political institutions, the political behavior of their leaders and citizens, their levels and rates of development, and their public policies. In this course, we will focus on three main questions that have long been central to research in comparative politics: How do democratic countries vary in their political institutions and why do these differences matter? Why are some countries democracies and others dictatorships and what are the consequences? And how does “globalization”—the increasing integration of economies and intermingling of cultures—affect politics and people’s wellbeing? The goal is not just to acquaint you with these questions and the debates that surround them but also to help you begin to develop the tools to reach your own reasoned conclusions about them.

To do this, you will need some fundamental vocabulary and some basic social science research tools. The “vocabulary” part includes an understanding of what social science is all about, what political scientists mean precisely by the terms they use (e.g., development, democracy, proportional representation, bureaucracy), and the kinds of institutions that major countries (and some minor ones) in all parts of the world now have or have had recently.

This course approaches Comparative Politics from the perspective of how political scientists actually conduct research in this field. Thus the course is not simply a journalistic commentary on current events or a survey of the politics and institutions of three or four foreign countries. It is a course focused on using theory and evidence to identify and try to account for broad patterns in political behavior and outcomes in the countries of the world.

Finally, this is an *introductory course*. It is designed to teach you concepts, approaches and, more broadly, methods of reasoning and analysis that should be applicable to any upper division Political Science course (as well as any analytically-oriented job) that you take in the future. That said, because there is so much to cover, *it is also a very demanding course*—indeed more demanding than most upper division political science courses. You will not leave the course as an expert in the politics of a particular country or countries, or in the complexities of a particular political institution or substantive topic. But you should leave with a set of analytical tools and theoretical understandings that you can use to further examine the political systems of any country anywhere. The goal is not to give you all the answers, but to expose you to many of the right questions.

REQUIREMENTS:

The course is taught in two lectures each week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 to 1:45 in 147 Dodd Hall. Attendance at lectures is mandatory.

The course requires one short analytic paper, an in-class midterm, and a comprehensive final examination. It also requires attendance at, and active participation in, section discussions. Your section participation grade will be assessed by your teaching assistant on the basis of your active, constructive participation. Mere attendance in section, if passive or unproductive, will yield no points for this portion of your course grade.

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

- in-class midterm exam 25 percent
- short analytic paper 15 percent
- final exam 40 percent
- section participation 20 percent

Note that the final exam for the course is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10 from 11:30am-2:30pm. All students must take the exam at this date/time. If you know that you have a conflict with this date/time, then you should not enroll in the course.

There is a single required text for the course: Clark, Golder and Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (CQ Press 2013)), which is available at the UCLA Bookstore. All additional readings are posted on the course web page (UCLA log in required) and are available for your own use.

UCLA is committed to providing help to students with disabilities. If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform either Professor Posner or your TA and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at A-255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501 (voice); (310) 206-6083 (TTY); [www.osd.ucla.edu](http://www.osd.ucla.edu).

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

**Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics**

March 31: *Introduction to the Course: What Comparative Politics is All About*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch 1 (only pp. 2-8).

Fareed Zakaria, "Asian Values," *Foreign Policy* (November/December 2002), pp. 38-39.

April 2: *If Every Country is Unique, How Do We Compare?*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 2 (entire).

David Plotz, "Greens Peace," *New York Times Magazine*, 4 June 2000.

Thomas Friedman, "Big Mac I," *New York Times*, 8 December 1996.

**Part II: Democratic Political Institutions**

April 7: *Presidents vs. Prime Ministers*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 457-465) and ch 16 (only pp. 805-825).

"Prime Minister's Question Time," in John McCormick, *Comparative Politics in Transition* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), p. 53.

April 9: *Electoral Systems*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 13 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 778-801).

"Unclear Result in Britain Puts Focus on Electoral Rules," *New York Times*, 7 May 2010.

April 14: *Political Parties, Party Systems, and Social Cleavages*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 14 (entire).

April 16: NO CLASS

April 21: *Institutional Veto Points and Federalism*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 15 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 801-805).

April 23: *Public Policies and Policy Implementation*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 16 (only pp. 766-778).

Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Boncheck, "Principal-Agent Relationships," in *Analyzing Politics* (New York: WW Norton, 1997), pp. 360-70.

Jeffrey Goldberg, "Learning How to be King," *New York Times Magazine*, 6 February 2000.

April 28: *Government Formation*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 465-524).

April 30: **In-class Midterm Exam**

**Part III: Democracy and Dictatorship**

May 5: *The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship*

Clark, Golder and Golder, ch 5 (only pp. 145-149) and ch. 6 (entire).

May 7: *The Social Structural and Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship*  
Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 7 (entire).

May 12 and 14: *Democratic Transitions*  
Clark, Golder and Golder, chs. 3 (only pp. 50-75) and ch. 8 (entire).

May 19: *Democracy or Dictatorship: Does it Make a Difference?*  
Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 9 (entire).

#### **Part IV: Globalization**

May 21: NO CLASS

Watch all chapters of “Commanding Heights” Episode 3 online at:  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/story/ch\\_menu\\_03.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/story/ch_menu_03.html)

May 26: *What is Globalization?*

Patrick O’Neil, “Globalization and the Future of Comparative Politics,” in *Essentials of Comparative Politics, 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (New York: WW Norton, 2013), pp. 323-350.  
Neil Irwin, “How A Rising Dollar is Creating Trouble for Emerging Economies,” *New York Times*, 16 March 2015.

May 28: *Globalization, Development and Inequality*

Branko Milanovic, “Global Income Inequality by the Numbers: in History and Now: An Overview,” World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 6259 (November 2012).  
“For Richer, For Poorer,” *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.  
“Crony Tigers, Divided Dragons: Why Asia, Too, is Becoming Increasingly Unequal,” *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.  
“Lessons from Palanpur: More Inequality in an Indian Village is Balanced by Greater Mobility,” *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.  
“Gini Back in the Bottle: An Unequal Continent is Becoming Less So,” *The Economist*, 13 October 2012.  
“Revisiting Ricardo: Why Globalization is Not Reducing Inequality within Developing Nations,” *The Economist*, 23 August 2014.

June 2: *How Does Globalization Affect Domestic Politics?*

Dani Rodrik, “Sense and Nonsense in the Globalization Debate,” *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1997.

June 4: *Wrap Up*