



Intro to Comparative Politics POL103 Winter 2023

Mode: Asynchronous, Online

Instructor: Asha Venugopalan

Contact: asha.venugopalan@stonybrook.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11am – 1pm on Zoom & By Appointment

Course Description

Comparative Politics, a subfield of Political Science, is the study of political phenomena that occurs within and between countries. It is primarily focused on political institutions, conflict, and the comparison of the political systems around the world. This course introduces important themes, theories, and concepts within comparative politics.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- analyse topics of comparative politics through the lens of nations, states and key institutions
- utilize theories on democracy to investigate democratic processes and democratic backsliding
- develop a brief on important contemporary topics in comparative politics through an evaluation of fundamental concepts and academic research

Course Material

Required Reading:

The only required textbook for this course is **O’Neil, P. H. (2018). *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. W.W. Norton. [6th Edition]**. Older (or newer) editions are also acceptable, however the page numbers may be different. All other required readings for the relevant week will be posted on Brightspace.

Recommended Reading:

Additional optional readings may be posted on Brightspace should you want to engage further with the topic. The additional material will not be required for any exams or assignments.

Lectures:

The lectures will be posted on Brightspace for each day of the Winter term.

Grading

The course grade will be based on a series of quizzes and writing assignments with the following weights:

- Quizzes (3) – 40%
- Writing Assignments (3) – 60% (20% each)

Quiz:

- Every Wednesday there will be a quiz on the topics covered in the past week. The quiz will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions to test the students on the concepts discussed during the week before the test.
- This will be an open-book test.
- The quiz will open on Wednesday morning at 9am. Complete the quiz by 11:59pm on the same Wednesday.

Writing Assignment:

- At the start of every week, you will be given a list of countries to choose from.
- Pick one of the given countries and prepare a 1000-word country report based on the instructions given on Brightspace.
- Format: 12-point, double-spaced
- Submit the country report by 11:59pm on the Friday.
- Ensure that you provide the complete bibliography in APA format. You may use course readings and outside sources including (but not limited to) news articles (New York Times, Reuters, Washington Post, Al Jazeera, etc.), magazine articles (The Economist, World Politics Review, etc.), journal articles and/or reports from organisations and think tanks (UN & its agencies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, etc.).

Technical Requirements

Having a reliable computer and Internet connection throughout the term will benefit you. Caution! For many classes, you will be at a disadvantage if you attempt to complete all coursework on a smartphone or tablet. It may not be possible to submit the files required for your homework assignments. If you need to borrow a device, please visit SBU's Laptop Loan Program.

Classroom Conduct

Please note that Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

<http://www.stonybrook.edu/sb/behavior.shtml>

Student Accessibility Support Center

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, Stony Brook Union Suite 107, (631)632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/sasc/facstaff/syllabus.php>

Academic Integrity

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at:

https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, January 3: Political Science and Social Scientific Inquiry

- O'Neil, Chapter 1: 'Introduction'
- Quizzes and Writing Assignments

Wednesday, January 4: State

- O'Neil, Chapter 2: 'States'
- **Quiz #1**

Thursday, January 5: Nation

- O'Neil, Chapter 3: 'Nations and Society'
- *Q and A with Dr Eleanor Knott on Kin Majorities: Identity and Citizenship in Crimea and Moldova*. (2022, December 5). EUROPP.
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/12/04/q-and-a-with-dr-eleanor-knott-on-kin-majorities-identity-and-citizenship-in-crimea-and-moldova/>

Friday, January 6: Writing Assignment #1

- Country Report (1000 words):
 - France
 - Nigeria
 - USA

Week 2

Monday, January 9: Democratization and Democratic Institutions

- O'Neil, Chapter 5: 'Democratic Regimes', pg.134-149
- Schmitter, P.C. (2010). Democracy's Past and Future: Twenty-Five Years, Fifteen Findings. *Journal of Democracy* 21(1), 17-28. [doi:10.1353/jod.0.0144](https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0144).

Tuesday, January 10: Models of Democracy & Political Parties

- O'Neil, Chapter 5: 'Democratic Regimes', pg.150-171
- Watch:
 - Minority Rule: First Past the Post Voting
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7tWHJfhiyo>)
 - Single Transferable Vote
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8XOZJkozfl&t=301s>)
 - Mixed-Member Proportion Representation
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT0I-sdoSXU&t=167s>)

Wednesday, January 11: Authoritarianism and Nondemocracies

- O'Neil, Chapter 6: 'Nondemocratic Regimes'
- Why Belarus is called Europe's last dictatorship; The Economist explains. (2021, May 25). *The Economist*, NA.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A681793065/AONE?u=sunysb&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=2d33add3>
- **Quiz #2**

Thursday, January 12: Democratic Backsliding

- Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5-19. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612/pdf>

Friday January 13: **Writing Assignment #2**

- Country Report (1000 words)
 - South Africa
 - Pakistan
 - Hungary

Week 3

Monday, January 16: **No Class**, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Tuesday, January 17: Political Violence

- O'Neil, Chapter 7: 'Political Violence'
- Staniland, P. (2020, September 3). *Political Violence in South Asia: The Triumph of the State?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/09/03/political-violence-in-south-asia-triumph-of-state-pub-82641>

Wednesday, January 18: Colonialism & Post-Colonialism

- O'Neil, Chapter 10: 'Developing Countries'
- Gebrekidan, S., Apuzzo, M., Porter, C., & Méheut, C. (2022, May 26). *Invade Haiti, Wall Street Urged. The U.S. Obligated.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/haiti-wall-street-us-banks.html>
- **Quiz #3**

Thursday, January 19: Globalization and Collective Action

- O'Neil, Chapter 11: 'Globalization and The Future of Comparative Politics'
- Kamarck, E. (2022, March 9). *The challenging politics of climate change.* Brookings. Retrieved December 2, 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-challenging-politics-of-climate-change/>

Friday January 20: **Writing Assignment #3**

- Country Report (1000 words)
 - India
 - Rwanda
 - Brazil