



Stony Brook University

**Intro to Comparative Politics
POL103
Summer 2023**

Mode: Asynchronous, Online

Instructor: Asha Venugopalan

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10 am – 1 pm on Zoom or In-Person & 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:

- In Week 1, Week 3 and Week 5 there will be a quiz on the topics covered in the past week/s.
- 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. You can use the textbook, the lecture and the slides.
- The quiz will open on **Friday morning at 9 am**. Complete the quiz by **11:59 pm** on the same Friday.

Writing Assignment:

- In Week 1, Week 3 and Week 5, 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.
- Use the concepts and theories taught in class in your discussion.
- **Format: 12-point, double-spaced. Please upload your document as a PDF file.**
- Submit the country report by **11:59 pm on Friday** of Week 2, Week 4 and Week 6. The dates are provided in the schedule.
- 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.).
- Do not plagiarise/copy-paste from other texts. Write in your own words or provide quotes.
- The grading is based on your understanding of the concepts, and how well you have answered the prompts and supported your arguments/opinions/position.

Office Hours:

- I have office hours from 10 am to 1 pm on Tuesdays on Zoom and In-person
- The Zoom link will be posted on Brightspace. My office is located at SBS (S-751).
- If you need to meet outside of office hours, please send me an email to set up an appointment.

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

Monday, July 10: Political Science and Social Scientific Inquiry

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

Wednesday, July 12: State

- O'Neil, Chapter 2: 'States'
- Recommended:
 - OECD. *The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations*. Conflict and Fragility. OECD Publishing, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264083882-en>. (Chapter 3)

Friday, July 14: State Legitimacy and Fragility (No Lecture)

- McCullough, A., & Papoulidis, J. (2020, January 28). *Why we need to rethink our understanding of state legitimacy to address fragility*. Blogs.worldbank.org. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/why-we-need-rethink-our-understanding-state-legitimacy-address-fragility>
- OECD. *The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations*. Conflict and Fragility. OECD Publishing, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264083882-en>. (Chapters 4 & 5)
- **Quiz #1**

Week 2

Monday, July 17: Nation

- O'Neil, Chapter 3: 'Nations and Society'
- Recommended:
 - Per Ståhlberg & Göran Bolin (2016) Having a soul or choosing a face? Nation branding, identity and cosmopolitan imagination, *Social Identities*, 22:3, 274-290, DOI: [10.1080/13504630.2015.1128812](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2015.1128812)

Wednesday, July 19: 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).
- Recommended:
 - *Episode 1.2: Forging democracy out of the trauma of repression, with Elizabeth Nugent.* (2020, October 4). Scope Conditions Podcast. <https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/episodes/episode-04-forging-democracy-out-of-the-trauma-of-repression-with-elizabeth-nugent>

Friday, July 21: Writing Assignment #1 (No Lecture)

- Country Report (1000 words):
 - U.S.A.
 - China
 - France
 - Russia

Week 3

Monday, July 24: Models of Democracy & Political Parties

- O'Neil, Chapter 5: 'Democratic Regimes', pg.150-156
- Recommended:
 - Stokes, S. C. (1999). Political Parties And Democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2(1), 243–267. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243>
 - Chhibber, P., & Nooruddin, I. (2004). Do Party Systems Count? *Comparative Political Studies*, 37(2), 152–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414003260981>

Wednesday, July 26: Electoral Systems

- O'Neil, Chapter 5: 'Democratic Regimes', pg.156-171
- Minority Rule: First Past the Post Voting (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7tWHJfhiyo>)
- Single Transferable Vote (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8XOZJkozfI&t=301s>)
- Mixed-Member Proportion Representation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT0I-sdoSXU&t=167s>)
- Recommended:
 - Boix, C. (2009). The Emergence of Parties and Party Systems. In C. Boix & S. C. Stokes (Eds.), *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566020.003.0021>

Friday, July 28: Do Party Systems Matter? (No Lecture)

- Rickard, S. (2017). Electoral Systems and Policy Outcomes. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.267>
- Drutman, L. (2019, October 19). *U.S. Democracy Needs a Multiparty System to Survive*. Foreign Policy; Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/19/us-democracy-two-party-system-replace-multiparty-republican-democrat/>
- **Quiz #2**

Week 4

Monday, July 31: 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>
- Recommended:
 - *Episode 1.5: Middle-Class Guardians of Autocracy, with Bryn Rosenfeld.* (2020, November 23). Scope Conditions Podcast. <https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/episodes/episode-5-the-autocratic-middle-class-with-bryn-rosenfeld>

Wednesday, August 2: Democratic Backsliding

- Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5-19. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612/pdf>
- Recommended:
 - Cheatham, A., Roy, D., & Labrador, R. C. (2023, March 10). *Venezuela: The Rise and Fall of a Petrostate*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis#chapter-title-0-5>
 - Vachudova, M. A. (2019). From Competition to Polarization in Central Europe: How Populists Change Party Systems and the European Union. *Polity*, 51(4), 689–706. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705704>

Friday, August 4: Writing Assignment #2

- Country Report (1000 words)
 - India
 - Hungary
 - Venezuela
 - Rwanda

Week 5

Monday, August 7: Political Violence

- O’Neil, Chapter 7: ‘Political Violence’
- Recommended:
 - 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, August 9: Colonialism & Post-Colonialism

- O’Neil, Chapter 10: ‘Developing Countries’, pg. 304 – 317
- 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>
- Recommended:
 - Chen, J. (2021, October 21). *Neocolonialism and the IMF.* Harvard Political Review. <https://harvardpolitics.com/neocolonialism-imf/>

Friday, August 11: (No Lecture)

- Robinson, A. L. (2019). Colonial Rule and Its Political Legacies in Africa. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1346>
- **Quiz #3**

Week 6

Monday, August 14: 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/>
- Recommended:
 - Varanasi, A. (2022, September 21). *How Colonialism Spawned and Continues to Exacerbate the Climate Crisis*. State of the Planet.
<https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2022/09/21/how-colonialism-spawned-and-continues-to-exacerbate-the-climate-crisis/>

Wednesday, August 16: (No Lecture)

Friday August 18: **Writing Assignment #3**

- Country Report (1000 words)
 - South Africa
 - Brazil
 - Bangladesh
 - Mexico