



Intro to Comparative Politics POL103 Summer 2024

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 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.

In 2024, around 80 countries and roughly half of the world's population will vote in local, regional or national elections. This summer, students will engage with elections happening across the world and analyse the politics of countries.

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
- analyse tensions and process within countries during election periods
- develop a report on important contemporary topics in comparative politics through an evaluation of fundamental concepts, academic research and election analysis

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 each week of the Summer term.

Grading

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

| Items | Weightage % |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Quizzes (3) | 40 |
| Written Assignment (3) | 40 |
| Presentation | 20 |

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 **Fridays at 9 am**.
- Once you begin the quiz, you must complete it within **1 hour**. After an hour the quiz will auto-submit.
- Complete the quiz by **11:59 pm** on the same Friday.

Written Assignment:

- You will produce a 2500-word country election report comparing two countries that have elections this year.
- This will be done through three written assignments.
- Complete guidelines and the grading rubric can be found [here](#).
- **File Type:**
 - Prepare the assignment on Google Doc.
 - Submit a PDF file on Brightspace.
 - **Important:** Share Google Doc link with editor permission.
- 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.
- **Bibliography:**
 - You must 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.)
 - Research journal articles (African Affairs, Asian Survey, British Journal of Political Science, Comparative Political Studies, Comparative Politics, Electoral Studies, Journal of Democracy, Latin American Politics & Society, World Politics)
 - Reports from organizations and think tanks (UN & its agencies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, etc.).
 - Survey research organizations (World Values Survey, General Social Survey, Afrobarometer, Latin American Public Opinion Project)
- **Dos and Don'ts:**
 - Do not plagiarize/copy-paste from other texts. Write in your own words or provide quotes with citations.

- Do not use ChatGPT or other AI to write the reports. You will be penalized and/or failed for it.
- Do use the concepts and theories taught in class in your discussion. You can extend analysis and use other concepts.
- Do include graphs, numbers and statistics that you find interesting and relevant.
- Do have fun with the assignment. Bonus points if you find an appropriate political cartoon or meme.

Presentation: Elections 2024

In Week 6, you will give a 7-10 minute presentation of your election report (including Chapter 5).

Office Hours:

- 10 am to 1 pm on Tuesdays on Zoom. The Zoom link will be posted on Brightspace.
- If you would like to meet in person, please set up an appointment through the link 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 8: Political Science and Social Scientific Inquiry

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

Wednesday, July 10: 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 12 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 15: 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 17: 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 19: **Assignment #1** (No Lecture)

Week 3

Monday, July 22: 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 24: 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 26: 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 29: 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, July 31: 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 2: Assignment #2

Week 5

Monday, August 5: 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 7: 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 9: (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 (Presentation Week)

Monday, August 12: 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 14: (No Lecture)

Friday, August 16: Assignment #3 / Final Report