

# Political Science 50: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00 -3:05, Bunche 1209B

Galen Murray

[gpmurray@ucla.edu](mailto:gpmurray@ucla.edu)

3298 Bunche

Office Hours: Thursday 11:00 -1:00

## **1 Introduction**

Welcome to “Introduction to Comparative Politics.” I look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts on myriad topics in this survey course. If you have questions please email me at [gpmurray@ucla.edu](mailto:gpmurray@ucla.edu). This is a broad, introductory course and I am certain several topics will pique your interest. At the same time, given the breadth of material, this class will be demanding and fast paced. If you feel overwhelmed, please drop by my office hours, and I will be happy to discuss the material with you.

### **Course description:**

In this course, we focus on the “subfield” of comparative politics, where we will explore 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 several main questions that have long been central to research in comparative politics:

1. How do democratic countries vary in their political institutions and why do these differences matter?

## 2. Why are some countries democracies and others dictatorships and what are the consequences?

The course is designed to introduce students to key concepts in the field of political science and the methodology through which we can compare political systems. Politics can be studied using rigorous evidence, models and testable theories. In this way, we will move beyond journalistic accounts of current events to analyze the effects of underlying institutional structures. You will learn about the differences between parliamentary and presidential systems, proportional representative versus first-past-the-post electoral systems and the effects of these decisions on political and policy outcomes. We will also analyze policy-making from a theoretical viewpoint, considering the actors involved in the construction of policy and how these actors relate to one another. Finally, we will consider the ways in which political systems and actors can influence economic development.

This course is introductory in that it does not assume prior knowledge of comparative politics. You should come to the class with a desire to learn more about the domestic political systems in countries outside of the United States. You should leave with a set of analytic tools and theoretical understandings that you can use to further examine the political systems of any country.

## **2 Readings:**

We will use an e-textbook for this course. Additional readings are posted on the course website (CCLE). The weekly schedule details the readings you are required to have completed *prior* to lecture.

- e-book: David J. Samuels, *Comparative Politics*. New York: Pearson Press.
- Other articles and book chapters as found on CCLE

## **3 Course Requirements and Grading**

Your grades will be calculated as follows:

1. Course Evaluation 1%

2. Weekly Quizzes 4%
3. Attendance and Participation 15%
4. Midterm 35%
5. Final 45%

## **4 Schedule**

### **4.1 Week 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics and Regime Type**

Lecture 1 (June 21st): Introduction and The State

- CP Samuels Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Lecture 2 (June 23rd): The State and Development Part I

- CP Samuels Chapter 11
- Acemoglu “Root Causes: A Historical Approach to Assessing the Role of Institutions in Economic Development”
- Easterly *The Elusive Quest for Growth* Chapters 11-12

### **4.2 Week 2: The State and Development Part II**

Lecture 3 (June 28th): Development - Geography and Resources

\*\* Quiz 1\*\*

- Sachs “Nature, Nurture, Growth” in *The Economist*
- Collier *The Bottom Billion* Chapters 3 and 4

Lecture 4 (June 30th): Comparative Authoritarianism

- CP Samuels Chapter 4 and 5
- Levitsky and Way *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 2010, Chapter 1

### **4.3 Week 3: Corruption, Violence and Midterm**

Lecture 5 (July 5th): Corruption and Violence

**\*\*Quiz 2\*\***

- CP Samuels Chapter 10
- Collier *The Bottom Billion* Chapter 2

Lecture 6 (July 7th): **Midterm**

### **4.4 Week 4: Democratic Institutions**

Lecture 7 (July 12th): Executive and Legislative Structures

- CP Samuels Chapters 3 and 9
- Clark, Golder, Golder Chapter 11

Lecture 8 (July 14th): Elections in Democracies and Autocracies

**\*\*Quiz 3\*\***

- Clark, Golder, Golder Chapter 12, pp. 464- 507
- Thachil *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India*, 2014, Chapter 1

## 4.5 Week 5: Representation and Identity Politics

Lecture 9 (July 19th): Decentralization

- Clark, Golder, Golder Chapter 15, pp. 676-699
- Ahmad et al “Decentralization and Service Delivery” 2005, World Bank

Lecture 10 (July 21st): Ethnicity and Gender

**\*\*Quiz 4\*\***

- CP Samuels Chapters 6 and 8
- Duflo “Women Empowerment and Economic Development” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 2012

## 4.6 Week 6: Welfare Politics (in High and Low-income Countries) and Final

Lecture 11 (July 26th): Political Economy of Redistribution

- CP Samuels Chapter 12
- Flowers “What Would Happen If We Just Gave People Money?” *FiveThirtyEight*, 2016
- Matthews “Basic income: the world’s simplest plan to end poverty, explained” *Vox.com*, 2016

Lecture 12 (July 28th): **Final**

## 5 Academic Integrity

UCLA is a community of scholars. In this community, all members including faculty, staff and students alike are responsible for maintaining standards of academic honesty. As a student and

member of the University community, you are here to get an education and are, therefore, expected to demonstrate integrity in your academic endeavors. You are evaluated on your own merits. Cheating, plagiarism, collaborative work, multiple submissions without the permission of the instructor, or other kinds of academic dishonesty are considered unacceptable behavior and will result in formal disciplinary proceedings usually resulting in suspension or dismissal.

As specified in the UCLA Student Conduct Code, violations or attempted violations of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic dishonesty.

For greater detail on UCLA's standards for academic integrity please see:

- Student Code of Conduct

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>

- Use of Copyrighted Material

<http://copyright.universityofcalifornia.edu/use/index.html>

## **6 Resources**

### **6.1 Office for Students with Disabilities**

UCLA OSD provides “services designed to meet the unique educational needs of regularly enrolled UCLA students with documented permanent and temporary disabilities.” If you need to register with OSD, please visit:

<https://www.osd.ucla.edu/>

### **6.2 Online**

There are many excellent online blogs and news sources on politics around that world that you might enjoy reading:

- <http://america.aljazeera.com/>

- <http://democracyinafrica.org/>
- [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>
- [chrisblattman.com](http://chrisblattman.com)
- [vox.com](http://vox.com)

### **6.3 Journals**

- Some of the major venues for comparative politics research in English are:
  - American Political Science Review
  - Perspectives on Politics
  - Annual Reviews of Political Science
  - World Politics
  - Comparative Politics
  - Comparative Political Studies
  - British Journal of Political Science
  - PS: Political Science and Politics (for research notes and articles on pedagogy)

### **6.4 Campus Resources**

If you have any concerns about:

- Academic Writing: You can make a one-on-one appointment at the undergraduate writing center: <http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html>

- Academic counseling: If you are a non-UCLA student, you can contact the Student Affairs Officer for summer sessions, Lola Green, at [lgreen@summer.ucla.edu](mailto:lgreen@summer.ucla.edu).
- Mental health: You can speak to a therapist or counselor through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) services: <http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/>.

## **7 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will improve in their ability to:

1. Think critically about basic political processes, institutions, and concepts as these operate in different national and cultural contexts. Evaluate arguments in an impartial fashion after distilling relevant texts to their core arguments.
2. Make written and oral arguments about significant political processes and concepts using appropriate evidence, with sensitivity to opposing perspectives.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with various approaches to the study of politics (including both qualitative and quantitative evidence), and their application to specific questions, puzzles, and debates.