# Introduction to Comparative Politics

**FALL 2020**

MR 2:00-3:10 HYBRID

LC102

Professor Kathleen Dowley Office Hours:

JFT 814 [dowleyk@newpaltz.edu](mailto:dowleyk@newpaltz.edu)257-3558 virtual, by appointment

This course examines the basic principles, theories, conceptual tools, and research methods comparative politics scholars use to answer questions about political events and outcomes in the world. We could choose any number of interesting questions to do this, but this semester we will focus on the following set of inter-related questions: “Why have some countries developed stable democratic systems while others have not? Are there pre-requisites to democracy? What factors contribute to democratic consolidation? And how do democracies die?”

Despite progress in democratization since the early 1970s, one-party states, military-backed dictatorships, oligarchies, and theocratic regimes survive challenges to their rule, adapt, and endure. Some have become ‘electoral autocracies’ and many states have only taken partial or unstable steps towards democratization. Current thinking in the field suggests that you are living through a period of democratic decline or backsliding, reflecting broad pessimism about what was once though the inevitable triumph of democracy. This course seeks an answer to the questions suggested by these dramatic developments—what are the necessary conditions for democracy to emerge and succeed in diverse societies around the globe? And how do comparative politics scholars try to uncover patterns among successful and failed cases across time and space? In the process of answering these questions, students will learn the following:

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to identify and explain the differences between the approaches to the study of comparative politics (political economy, political culture and political institutions);

Second, students will be able to explain how the political systems of several major countries are similar and different when compared to their own;

Third, students will come to understand how social scientists design research in order to answer important questions like “why are some countries stable democracies and others not?”

**Required Readings:**

David J Samuels, *Comparative Politics* (Pearson Learning, 2nd edition, 2021). Can be rented or purchased, used editions “ok” too. Additional readings are located in Weekly folders in the Content section of the class Blackboard page. All readings for Week 1 are in the Week 1 folder, along with any additional assignments for the online portion of the course.

**Grading:**

Your course grade will be determined by your attendance and participation in seated classes, your performance on three exams, completion of 4 web based assignments, a short country research paper, and final group presentation of a group PPT on the status of democracy in that country.

Attendance: 5%

Web Assignments/Participation: 10%

Exam #1 20%

Exam #2 20%

Final Exam 20%

Short Paper 20%

Group PPT Presentation 5%

**A short 5-page paper is due on Wednesday November 17**

Students are expected to write a paper on one of the countries listed below, all of which have experienced some level of democratization in the past decade. Some have since undergone “reversals”, while others have seemingly stabilized. The central goal of the paper is to try to determine which factors, among those discussed in class (political economy, culture, institutions, external factors), seem most important in explaining success of failure in your country. Try to integrate course readings and materials in making your assessments. Additionally, every paper should include an appendix of the information listed below for the chosen country. The research for this appendix MUST BE COMPLETED by the time the student meets with the instructor in country groups on **Monday, October 26.**

**Appendix Information:**

Country size, geographic location, population size, type of political institution (presidential or parliamentary, federal or unitary), date country became independent and from whom, date of last national election (or coup), Freedom House ranking/score, current leader and length of tenure, major external allies and enemies, size of the military, GNP or GDP/per capita (relative level of wealth), GINI coefficient for income inequality, religious/ethnic make-up of the population.

Students will present their findings virtually, at the end of the semester. 4-5 will work on each country, though papers and conclusions should be completed on your own. On the day papers are due (Thursday November 18) you will have the class period to meet with your country group and discuss your findings and make arrangements to create a ppt for the class that summarizes your group findings with regards to the status of democracy in your country.

Countries to Choose From:

**Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea, Bolivia, Brazil, Tunisia, Turkey, Poland**

Papers will use the **American Political Science Association Style Guide** to model APSA citation formatting in citing relevant scholarly and news sources in their papers. These are posted to the class Blackboard page.

**Maintaining Public Health (to be included in syllabi for courses with seated components while campus-wide COVID-19 precautions are in place):**

To protect the health of everyone in this class, students are required to do the following:

- complete the daily health screening from a phone or computer each morning;

- wear a mask or face covering over their nose and mouth before entering the building; and

- stay 6 feet apart from everyone else in the hallway and the classroom.

If you arrive and you have not completed the daily screening, you will be asked to complete it outside of the room. If you arrive without a mask or face covering, I may be able to supply you with one; however, you may be required to return to your residence to get one, or go to a designated location on campus to get a mask or face covering. *There are no exemptions or waivers of this policy.* If you refuse to wear a mask or face covering, you will not be able to enter the classroom and participate in the class. Refusal to wear a mask or face covering will be reported to the Student Conduct Office based on the Student Conduct Code’s ‘Non-Compliance with Official Requests’ (which includes public health policy). Remember that the theme of the semester is “We, not Me.” If we each do our part to care about the college community of which we are a part, we will have a productive experience.

Please note that with any temporary illness, students must make arrangements to make up coursework.

*For more information about The Pledge and expectations, go to “Protect New Paltz: A Pledge to Stop the Spread of COVID-19.”*

***Academic Policies:***

**1. Academic integrity policy statement:** Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. New Paltz’s policy on academic integrity is found at http://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies\_integrity.html, and several excellent resources to help with avoiding plagiarism are available on the Sojourner Truth Library’s website: http://lib.newpaltz.edu/assistance/plag.html.

**2. Reasonable accommodation of individuals with disabilities statement:** Students needing classroom and/or testing accommodations related to a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (Student Union, Room 210, 845-257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide students’ instructors with an Accommodation Memo verifying the need for accommodations. Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Deanna Knapp, Assistant Director (knappd@newpaltz.edu).

**3. Veteran and Military Services statement:** New Paltz’s Office of Veteran and Military Services (OVMS) is committed to serving the needs of veterans, service members and their dependents during their transition from military life to student life. Student veterans, service members or their dependents who need assistance while attending SUNY New Paltz may refer to www.newpaltz.edu/veterans; call 845-257-3120, -3124 or -3074; or stop by the Student Union, Room 100 South.

**4. Computer and network policies statement:** Users of New Paltz’s computer resources and network facilities are required to comply with the Acceptable Uses and Privacy Policy and other institutional policies related to computer and internet access and usage.

**5. Identity verification policy statement for online courses:** New Paltz’s *Online Identity Verification Policy* is designed to verify that students enrolled in our online courses and/or programs are the ones who take the courses, complete the programs, and receive the academic credit.

**6. Title IX and related policy statement:** Gender discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, stalking, and power-imbalanced sexual/romantic relationships between faculty and students are strictly prohibited within the SUNY New Paltz community. We encourage students to report, confidentially discuss, or raise questions and concerns regarding potential violations. Reports can be made to the Title IX Office, the department chair and/or the dean of your school. The Office of Human Resources, Diversity & Inclusion (HRDI) can provide more information on Title IX reporting and support as well as the College’s Consensual Relationships Policy.

**Schedule of Readings and Lecture Topics:**

**Week 1** Introduction: Comparative Politics

***Online assignment (read before first class)***

*Reading:* “Crises Only Sometimes Lead to Change: And Here’s Why,” by Sheri Berman*, Foreign Policy (Summer 2020)*

Monday, Aug 24 Go Over Syllabus, Discuss “Hybrid” Course Expectations

Talk about the reading: asking good questions about current events

Thurs, Aug 26 The Art and Science of Comparative Political Science

Reading: Chapter 1 in *Comparative Politics* text

**Week 2**

Monday, Aug 31 The Units of Analysis: Origins and Definition of Modern States

Reading: Chapter 2, *Comparative Politics* Text

*Online Assignment: Measuring State Strength, see Week 2 Content Folder for Task*

*Fragile States Index:* [*https://fragilestatesindex.org/*](https://fragilestatesindex.org/)

Thursday, Sep 3 Strong and Weak States

Reading: Charles Tilly, “State Making and Organized Crime,” and “War and the State in Africa,” by Jeffrey Herbst

**Week 3**

Monday, Sep 7 Democratic Political Regimes

Reading; Chapter 2, Comparative Politics Text (pp. 55-64)

“What Democracy Is…And Is Not” Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, *Journal of Democracy (Summer 1991)*

*Online assignment: Measuring Democracy, Freedom House assignment, Week 3 Folder*

Thurs, Sep 10: Different Institutions of Democracy and why They Matter\

Reading: Chapter 2, *Comparative Politics* Text (finish)

Federalist Papers 10/51 (link in Week 3 folder)

**Week 4:**

Monday, Sep 14 Capitalism and the Evolution of Democracy in Britain

Reading**:** B. Moore, “On the contribution of violence…” from *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*

*Online assignment: Watch Prime Minister’s Q & A (link in Week 4 folder*

Thursday, Sep 17 Explaining Democracy: Modernization Theory and Its Critics

Reading: Przeworski and Limongi, “Modernization: Theories and Facts” *World Politics* (1997)

**Week 5:**

Monday, Sep 21 Types of Non Democratic Regimes and Sources of Stability

Reading: Chapter 3 in *Comparative Politics* text

Thursday, Sep 24 Hybrid Regimes

Reading: Levitsky and Way, “The New Competitive Authoritarianism” *Journal of Democracy* (2020)

**Week 6**

Monday, Sep 28 Regime Change: Historical Trends and Domestic Causes

Reading: Chapter 4 in *Comparative Politics* text

“Political Culture” chapter by Sodaro,

*Online Assignment:* *The World Values Survey assignment in Week 6 Folder*

Thursday, Oct 1 Political Culture and Civil Society: An Overview

Reading: Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, Chaps 1 & 4

**Week 7**

Monday, Oct 5 FIRST EXAM

*Online Assignment:* ***Wed, Oct 7 Remote Library Training (for new students)***

Thursday, Oct 8 Political Identity and Identity Based Challenges to Regimes

Reading: Chapter 6 in *Comparative Politics* text

**Week 8:**

Monday, Oct 12 Diversity and Democracy

Reading: “India Was a Miracle Democracy…” in Week 6 Folder

And “Does Diversity Hurt Democracy,” M. Steven Fish and Robin Brooks, *Journal of Democracy (2004)*

*Online Assignment: Watch Documentary: The Day India Burned: Partition*

Thursday, Oct 15 Religion and Politics: India Again

Reading: Chapter 7 in *Comparative Politics*

**Week 9**

Monday, Oct 19Contentious Politics: Protest Movements, Violence, Revolution

Reading: Chapter 9, *Comparative Politics* text

*Online Assignment*: Reading “The Future of Non Violent Protest,” Erica Chenoweth, *Journal of Democracy* (July 2020) and submit response

Thursday, Oct 22 Revolutions and Political Violence

Reading, Chapter 10 in *Comparative Politics* text

**Week 10**

Monday, Oct 26 3rd Wave of Democracy: Case Study of Latin America/Mexico

Reading: Karen Remmer, “The Process of Democratization in Latin America,” *Studies in International Development* (1992)

*Wed, Oct 28 Upload Country Appendix to Blackboard Page*

Thursday, Oct 29 Democracy in Mexico: Mexico from the Revolution to Present

From Single Party Rule to Democracy?

Reading: A. Schedler, “Mexico’s Victory: The Democratic Revelation,” *Journal of Democracy* (2000)

\*I**mportant Deadline: Friday, October 30 is the last day to withdraw from a class this term**

**Week 11**

Monday, Nov 1 Democratic Stagnation/Backsliding in 3rd Wave Countries

“Fate of 3rd Wave Democracies,” Mainwaring and Bizzarro, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2019

*Online Assignment: Watch Election Results Come in*

Thursday, Nov 4 **American Democracy in Comparative Perspective**

**Discuss Election in Comparative Perspective**

**Week 12**

Monday, Nov 8  **TEST #2**

*Wed, Nov 10 Small Country Group meetings (remotely) to plan PPT presentations*

Thursday, Nov 11 Comparative Politics and Economic Development:

Does Democracy Make Life Better?

Reading: Chapter 11, in *Comparative Politics* Text

**Week 13**

Monday, Nov 15 Comparative Politics and Inequality

Reading: Chapter 12, in *Comparative Politics* Text

***Wed, Nov 17* PAPERS DUE! Upload to Turnitin (Groups Meet to Discuss Results)**

**Thursday, Nov 18 First Set of Student Presentations**

**Week 14**

**Monday, Nov 23 Second Set of Student Presentations (last live class)**

***THANKSGIVING BREAK: Thursday, Nov 26-Sunday Nov 29***

**Week 15**

Monday, Nov 30 Gender and Politics

(remote but synchronous class in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra…link in Week 15 folder)

Reading: Chapter 8 in *Comparative Politics* text

Review for Final Exam

**Online Final Exam Thurs, December 3, 12:30-2:30 pm**