

PS9566A: Comparative Politics

Department of Political Science – Western University, Fall 2023

Thursday 1:30-4:30pm, SSC 7236

Instructor: Dr. Mathieu Turgeon (mturgeo4@uwo.ca)

Office hours: Wednesday 12-2pm or by appointment

Course description

This course offers a broad introduction to the field of comparative politics. Comparative politics, when taught in Canada, would encompass any study that is country specific but that is not Canada, or any study that compares two or more countries, including Canada or not. Comparativists explore a wide range of topics and adopt a variety of methodological (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) and theoretical (e.g., rational choice theory, historical and sociological institutionalisms, cultural and psychological approaches, etc.) approaches. They are generally (although not exclusively) concerned with "big questions" shaping the world like democratization, democratic backsliding, group and racial inequalities, interest groups and social movements, electoral and party systems, executive-legislative relations, public policies, and, more broadly, how institutions (rules and norms) affect economic and political actors and outcomes.

Class organization

This course adopts a seminar format where all students come prepared to discuss the assigned weekly reading. We will be reading one book in its entirety every week. The books have been selected to cover a wide range of topics and methodological and theoretical approaches. The selected books have been praised by the political science community and most of them have received prizes from professional associations in the past ten years. The selection of books should give students a general idea about how comparativists go about producing high-quality research on a variety of topics.

Course assessment

Students will be assessed as follows:

- **Class participation, 10%:** Students will be responsible to lead class discussions. Class responsibilities will be assigned at the beginning of the semester depending on the number of registered students.
- **5 reading quizzes each worth 3%, total 15%:** To ensure that students keep up with the readings, I will apply six reading quizzes during the semester. Quizzes will take place at the very beginning of class. For your final grade, I will count your five highest scores. There will be no make-up for quizzes under any circumstances. Don't be late!
- **Short discussion papers, 25%:** Students are responsible to turn in five 2-page, single-spaced discussion papers on the weekly reading of their choosing (5% each, total 25%).

Discussion papers should address theoretical and/or methodological aspects of the assigned reading. Discussion papers should be uploaded on OWL (see Assignments tab) *before* class. No short discussion paper will be acceptable after class has started.

- **Individual term paper, 50%:** Students are required to produce one final term paper of 2500-3000 words. The term paper is due at the end of the semester (no later than December 18 at noon). Details about the term paper will be provided in class. Students should also discuss with the instructor what they intend to do for their research paper before working on it.

Weekly readings

Week #1 (September 7)

Review of syllabus and class organization.

Week #2 (September 15)

Wimmer, A., 2020. *Nation building: Why some countries come together while others fall apart*. Princeton University Press.

Week #3 (September 21)

Jusko, K.L., 2017. *Who speaks for the poor? Electoral geography, party entry, and representation*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #4 (September 28)

Rickard, S.J., 2018. *Spending to win: Political institutions, economic geography, and government subsidies*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #5 (October 5)

Hassan, M., 2020. *Regime threats and state solutions: Bureaucratic loyalty and embeddedness in Kenya*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #6 (October 12)

Chwieroth, J.M. and Walter, A., 2019. *The wealth effect*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #7 (October 19)

Stolle, D. and Micheletti, M., 2013. *Political consumerism: Global responsibility in action*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #8 (October 26)

Bussemeyer, M.R., 2014. *Skills and inequality: Partisan politics and the political economy of education reforms in western welfare states*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #9 (November 2): *Spring reading week. Enjoy the break!*****

Week #10 (November 9)

Htun, M., 2016. *Inclusion without representation in Latin America: Gender quotas and ethnic reservations*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #11 (November 16)

Goodman, S.W., 2022. *Citizenship in hard times: How ordinary people respond to democratic threat*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #12 (November 23)

Boone, C., 2014. *Property and political order in Africa: Land rights and the structure of politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Week #13 (November 30)

Mares, I. and Young, L.E., 2019. *Conditionality and coercion: Electoral clientelism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford University Press.

Week #14 (December 7): Class reserved for discussion of final term paper.