

Political Science 2545F
Foundations of Comparative
Politics
Fall Term 2026

Course Director

Professor Bruce Morrison

SSC 7225

(519) 661-2111 ext. 84937, bmorris2@uwo.ca

Office hours: Thursday 4-5:30 or by appointment

Course Description

Why do states vary so much in terms of their capacity and impact? Why do we see different political regimes in different countries and regions, and at different times? Why have different parts of the globe taken up different pathways to economic development, and with varying results? Why do democracies differ in institutional structure, and with what performance effects? Why have we seen a broad turn to populist approaches to politics in recent years? These are amongst the key questions we will address in Comparative Politics 2545G. More broadly, the course has the aim of setting out the major themes, concepts, and approaches used in comparative politics while at the same time providing students with an introductory look at the character of political life in a variety of areas of the world. It will emphasize that comparative politics is both a subject and a method. Accordingly, its practitioners aspire to learn not simply by studying other countries, but by systematically comparing and contrasting their political processes and structures in the hope of deriving more general knowledge. This comparative enterprise is, however, best conducted on a solid conceptual, theoretical, and historical foundation, the development of which will concern us greatly over the course of the term.

Learning Outcomes

This course aims to enable students to:

- (1) define the subfield of comparative politics and expand their understanding of politics through structured comparative analysis
- (2) identify the key features of the world's political systems, as well as the major differences setting regions and countries apart from each other
- (3) understand and apply the major concepts and theories that help us make sense of these similarities and differences

Course Format

This course features two-hour lectures on Thursdays, and one-hour tutorials at scheduled times on Wednesdays. The lectures will contextualize and clarify the readings, draw out key connections and implications, and extend well beyond the readings in relevant ways. This is where the various components of the course come together. Tutorials will focus on questions posted on OWL in your weekly reading guides. Learning benefits from engagement, so come prepared to earn your grades through effective participation. Respectfully sharing your thoughts on the relevant issues is good, but doing so in direct response to the assigned readings and lecture materials is much better. Show us that you understand what you're being taught, that you can

apply it to the issues at hand, and ideally that you are capable of thinking critically about the concepts and theories you're addressing. Asking well-informed questions can also be a key element of good tutorial participation. Keep working at it over the course of the term, and you will likely see the quality of your contributions steadily improve, along with your understanding of the course materials.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for purchase this term. The weekly readings will be accessible on OWL, at the "Course Readings" site.

*****Prerequisites:** Political Science 1020E OR Political Science 1025F/G and 1026F/G, OR permission of the instructor. **Anti-requisites:** Political Science 245E or 2245E. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite.

Requirements and Evaluation

- (1) a one-hour mid-term exam, in class on November 5th, covering weeks 2-7 – multiple choice format (25%); if required, and supported in your case by Academic Advising (no undocumented absences – see below), the makeup exam will take place Friday, November 13th
- (2) a two-hour final exam, during the formal exam period – hybrid format: multiple choice and written answers (45%)
- (3) a case analysis paper of 5-6 pages in length, due November 20th at 11:59 pm, though with 72 hours flexibility – so no late penalty before 11:59 pm on November 23rd, two points per day thereafter (20%)
- (4) regular, active, and informed participation in the weekly tutorial meetings (10%)

Further details on the various graded requirements will be provided at the introductory class on September 10th, and in more detailed assignment descriptions on the OWL site.

Extensions and Accommodations

The mid-term exam will be the course requirement with accommodation limited exclusively to those providing supportive documentation on medical or compassionate grounds. Undocumented absence will not justify missing the exam. The one and only makeup exam is scheduled for November 13th for those granted such accommodation. The case analysis paper will feature built-in deadline flexibility – if you require medical or compassionate accommodation, this must be registered before the proper deadline, *not* the flexible deadline, which means by November 20th. All requests for accommodation must proceed through Academic Advising, not the professor or TAs. Students with a formal accommodation permitting them to write exams separately or with extra time should contact Accessible Education as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and AI

Academic offenses such as plagiarism and reliance on AI technologies such as ChatGPT will be taken very seriously. Students are expected to research and write their own assignments in full.

The substantial benefits derived from engaging in independent research, formulating and organizing your own thoughts, and expressing them clearly and persuasively cannot otherwise be accessed.

Plagiarism involves reliance on the work of another author without attribution. Students must compose their own essays and assignments, in their own words. Whenever students incorporate an idea, or a passage, or data from another author, they must fully acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by properly citing the borrowed material.

Plagiarism can be direct, involving straightforward copying of an author's work without providing both attribution and quotation marks. It can be less direct, involving lightly paraphrasing an author's work, rearranging their sentences while maintaining the same general structure and meaning, or stitching together material from two or more sources — these would count as plagiarism even with the source or sources identified, as they rely too heavily upon the way the author or authors chose to present their ideas. Take note that students may satisfactorily write up an author's ideas in their own words, but then neglect to cite the source or sources of the ideas, which also counts as plagiarism. And students may plagiarize themselves by submitting work they have previously submitted in other courses.

Plagiarism is a major academic offence, one which is taken seriously at Western.

See Scholastic Offence Policy and Procedures in the Western Academic Calendar for more detail:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Use of Artificial Intelligence for generating content is prohibited in this course. The aim of the paper project is to improve your ability to think, to develop and organize your ideas, and to present the results cogently and effectively. The ideas as well as their expression should be your own; anything else is plagiarism. AI-generated writing tends in any case to be bland and mediocre, which your grader may easily recognize. When using AI, reliance on false citations (i.e., AI hallucinations) will also be considered as an academic offence. Although this doesn't involve plagiarizing from a specific author, it does involve inclusion of AI-generated material without proper attribution, and which simply may not even exist to properly attribute.

Appeals

Grade appeals must first be made through your TA, beginning with a brief statement (1-3 paragraphs) of what you feel the grader missed or failed to fully appreciate in your paper. The appeal will only be taken up if the provided reasons are sufficiently compelling. Please wait at least 48 hours after the release of grades before submitting a grade appeal. No appeal will be accepted beyond three weeks after the release of grades.

Grading and Grade Adjustments

The Department of Political Science has a policy that undergraduate final course grades will only be rounded to the next whole grade if they end at 0.5 or higher; otherwise, they will be rounded down. Grade adjustments will only occur based on the appeals process, as above.

Lecture Notes

Success in this course requires lecture attendance and a good set of notes for studying. Students who miss a lecture should acquire notes from a classmate. Lecture slides will not be provided to students. I will, however, make exceptions in cases of long quoted passages or exceptionally wordy slides, which will be posted.

Support Services

Please contact accessibility@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

<https://accessibility.uwo.ca/index.html>.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the Wellness and Wellbeing website <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One

Course Introduction (September 10)

No required readings. No tutorials – they will begin in week two.

Week Two

The Comparative Method: Concepts, Theory, and Cases (September 17)

Arend Lijphart, 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 64: 682-93.

Peter A. Hall, 2006. "Systematic Process Analysis: When and How to Use it." *European Management Review* 3: 24-31.

Daniele Caramani, 2010. "Of Differences and Similarities: Is the Explanation of Variation a Limitation to (or of) Comparative Analysis?" *European Political Science* 9: 34-48.

Week Three

State Formation and Fragility (September 24)

Max Weber, 1958. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds., HH Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Galaxy, pp. 77-84.

Charles Tilly, 1985. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, eds., Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge University Press.

Jeffrey Herbst, 1990. "War and the State in Africa." *International Security* 14 (4): 117-39.

Week Four

Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Identity (October 1)

Benedict Anderson, 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso), chapters 1 (pp. 5-7) and 3 (pp. 37-46).

Rogers Brubaker, 1990. "Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany: A Comparative Historical Analysis." *International Sociology* 5 (4): 379-407.

Daniel Posner, 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529-45.

***No tutorials this week, due to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Week Five

Capitalism, Class, and Conceptions of Political Development (October 8)

Seymour Martin Lipset, 2003. "Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics," in Robert Dahl, Ian Shapiro, and Jose Antonio Cheibub, eds., *The Democracy Sourcebook* (The MIT Press), pp. 56-64.

Karl Marx, 1978. "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (WW Norton & Company), pp. 473-91, 499-500.

Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49 (2): 155-83 (pp. 155-78; the rest is recommended rather than required).

*****Break Week: No tutorials October 14, no lecture October 15**

Week Six

Colonial and Post-colonial Politics (October 22)

Nicolas van de Walle, 2007. "Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa." In *Patrons, Clients, and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*, eds., Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson. Cambridge University Press.

Maya Tudor, 2017. "The Nationalist Origins of Political Order in India and Pakistan." In *States in the Developing World*, eds., Miguel Centeno, Atul Kohli, and Deborah J. Yashar. Cambridge University Press.

Week Seven

Logics and Patterns of Development in the Global South (October 29)

Andre Gunder Frank, 1984. "The Development of Underdevelopment." In *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, ed., Charles Wilber. Random House, pp. 99-108.

Peter B. Evans, 1989. "Predatory, Developmental, and Other Apparatuses: A Comparative Political Economy Perspective on the Third World State." *Sociological Forum* 4 (4): 561-87 (pp. 561-76 and 581-7; the rest is recommended rather than required).

Ha-Joon Chang, 2003. "Kicking Away the Ladder: Infant Industry Promotion in Historical Perspective." *Oxford Development Studies* 31 (1): 21-32.

Week Eight

Mid-term Exam (November 5)

***No tutorials this week – good luck preparing for the exam!

***After the exam, before moving on to next week's readings, *please view the posted lecture (at Week Eight) on civil society and social capital*. The following readings are merely RECOMMENDED, BUT NOT REQUIRED:

Robert Putnam, 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press), chapters 4 (pp. 86-106) and 6 (pp. 167-81).

Peter A. Hall and Michele Lamont, 2009. "The Wear and Tear of our Daily Lives." *The Globe and Mail* (Op. Ed., Friday November 13).

Week Nine

Regime Change I: Sources of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism (November 12)

Natasha Ezrow and Erica Frantz, 2011. *Dictators and Dictatorships: Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and their Leaders* (Continuum), pp. 1-7.

Sheri Berman, 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49 (3): 401-429.

Thomas P. Bernstein, 2013. "Resilience and Collapse in China and the Soviet Union." In *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe*, ed., Martin K. Dimitrov. Cambridge University Press, pp. 40-64.

Week Ten

Regime Change II: Democratization, Waves, and Hybrids (November 19)

Jorgen Moller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, 2013. *Democracy and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Conceptions, Conjunctures, Causes, and Consequences* (Routledge), pp. 65-68.

Staffan I. Lindberg, 2026. "Fifty Years of the Third Wave(s): From Democratization to Autocratization." *Democratization* 33 (3): 676-694.

Jorgen Moller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, 2026. *Seven Myths About Democracy* (Routledge), chapter 5.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 51-65.

***No tutorials this week – good luck with your case analysis papers!

Week Eleven

Institutionalizing Democracy (November 26)

Jan-Erik Lane, 2011. "Two Great Constitutional Paths," in Lane, *Constitutions and Political Theory* (2nd edition; Manchester University Press), chapter 1 (pp. 19-33).

Juan J. Linz, 2003. "The Perils of Presidentialism." In *The Democracy Sourcebook*, eds., Robert Dahl, Ian Shapiro, and Jose Antonio Cheibub. The MIT Press, pp. 258-65.

Arend Lijphart, 1991. "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (1): 72-84.

Week Twelve

Populism, Parties, and Partisanship (December 3)

Cas Mudde, 2017. "Populism: An Ideational Approach." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds., Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy. Oxford University Press, pp. 27-46.

Kurt Weyland, 2021. "How Populism Corrodes Latin American Parties." *Journal of Democracy* 32 (4): 42-55.

Sheri Berman and Maria Snegovaya, 2019. "Populism and the Decline of Social Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 30 (3): 5-19.