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Office Hours: by appointment

## Political Science 102B: Comparative Politics

### Approach:

One of the primary goals of a course in comparative politics is to familiarize students with a broad array of political systems. In most instances, this goal is pursued by marching students through case studies of as many countries as possible. Popular textbooks give their readers widely accepted facts about these countries, grouping those facts into categories such as: political culture, parties and elections, interest groups and social movements, government institutions, public policy, etc.

For a number of reasons, this is not the approach we will take. “Facts” that someone else “gives” you are easily forgotten. They also quickly become history, the relevance of which to ongoing events may not be obvious. What is more, we need to think explicitly about the relationship among the categories into which facts are being grouped. Finally, the countries of interest today (to me) may not be the countries of interest tomorrow (to you).

The approach we will take this semester can best be characterized as the active acquisition and use of a set of tools for looking at the political world. In other words, instead of putting all our emphasis on what textbook writers think expert political scientists know, we will put our emphasis on the big questions and concepts that have occupied comparativists and on building knowledge for ourselves. This is a better approach because it equips you with a set of tools that you can continue to use long after this course is over and because you will retain knowledge you build for yourself much longer than you will retain facts that someone else tries to give you. Plus, we will be free to focus our attention on the historical, recent, and current events of our choosing.

In contrast, as social scientists we will approach the study of comparative politics using the tools of the scientific method. We will engage questions that explore cause and effect, using falsifiable hypotheses and empirical data to test our theories. We will consider questions such as the following: What is a state and where did it come from? What is democracy, and how do states democratize? Is democracy consequential for citizens’ wellbeing? If so, how so? Why is ethnicity politicized in some countries and not others? Why do some countries have many parties whereas some have very few? What are the implications of different kinds of governments? A scientific approach to studying the political world structures our attempts to understand these types of questions by encouraging the advancement of well reasoned hypotheses that are grounded in theory, including some indication of what it would mean for our hypothesis or theory to be incorrect. The goal is to build theories that allow us to generalize beyond particular people, places, countries, or events to build causal models of the political world that are applicable to as many specific questions as possible.

We will adopt a strategic approach to theory construction, meaning that we will assume that rulers and citizens are forward thinking, goal-oriented, and rational given the behavior they expect of others. A useful approach for understanding the interdependency of actors’ behavior is game theory, which we will use extensively. To test our theories, we will subject our hypotheses to real world data, commonly relying on statistical analysis of quantitative data.

### The Team:

I have the good fortune of being assisted by a few people this semester. Mr. Jonathan Homola and Ms. Jeong Hyun Kim are graduate students in our Ph.D. program. Mr. Scotty Jacobs is an undergraduate major. They will help me prepare lecture materials, develop assignments, and evaluate your work.

### Course Materials:

There is one required book in the course, available for purchase at the bookstore or your favorite online retailer. We will refer to this text as “CGG” (authors’ last names) for short.

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2013. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Please obtain a copy of this text and bring it to class on the days for which a chapter from it has been assigned.

Occasionally, I will provide you with or direct you to additional readings beyond CGG.

### Tasks:

You must keep up with the reading assignments, and they are detailed below. Readings and class discussions will often be quite distinct — so, one cannot be substituted for the other. Also, plan ahead because the length of reading assignments varies quite widely across class sessions. I sought to avoid this whenever possible. However, in order to cover the material in the class sessions provided, some imbalances were unavoidable.

I strongly encourage you to participate during class. Don't hesitate to ask questions or to offer relevant points of observation. We have several problem sets and in-class activities planned for the semester, and your participation in these will be essential. In exceptional circumstances, outstanding levels of participation, high or low, may result in a change of one grade level (from B to B+ or vice versa, for example). To assure you have done the readings and are prepared to participate, we will have frequent quizzes. At the end of the semester, we will drop approximately 25% of your quizzes – those with the lowest score including zeros for absences – and use the remainder to determine 25% of your final grade.

There are three exams scheduled for the semester. The dates are detailed below. If you have a valid reason for not being able to take an exam as scheduled, you must consult with me regarding alternate arrangements within the first week of the semester. Forms of questions on the exams could include true/false, multiple choice, matching, short answer, essay, etc. You are encouraged to suggest possible exam questions. Each exam will account for 25% of your final grade. The purpose of the exams is to assess your comprehension of the tools we are discussing and your ability to employ them in the explanation of the major components of political systems. They will draw on all aspects of the course: readings, lectures, class discussions, and exercises.

This class is designed to encourage you to work steadily during the course of the semester. To do well 1) keep up with the readings, 2) come to class every day, 3) take good notes, 4) participate in the discussions, 5) seek out assistance at the first sign of difficulty, and 6) start preparing for known due dates as early as possible. If you shirk the regular reading assignments and class attendance or try to cram your work into short time periods, you will probably have a difficult time.

### Additional Policies

Please read these additional policies carefully. They will govern various aspects of how the class will function this semester.

**One-on-One Consultation.** I strongly encourage you to stop by frequently to see me about the course. Just send me an e-mail, and we will find a mutually convenient time to get together. Staying engaged with the course materials and getting informal feedback at regular intervals will have a big impact on your performance on the required assignments.

**Due Dates.** Due dates are detailed in the syllabus. If you foresee a conflict with some due date, see me immediately to talk about options, if I can offer any. I do not grant last-minute exceptions, and I will penalize any late work severely.

**Attendance.** I highly recommend it! It can directly and indirectly impact your grade. See the quizzes description above. In addition, I do not circulate lecture outlines or presentation slides. So, the only way to see them firsthand is to be in class.

**Technology.** There will be times during the semester when I will encourage you to make use of laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Other than those exact times, please abstain entirely from texting, surfing the web, etc. Students who are repeatedly disruptive to my train of thought or the focus of their fellow students will be administratively dropped from the course.

**Special Accommodations.** If you require any, set up a time to meet with me early in the semester so that I can make sure your needs are met.

**Academic Integrity.** Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresenting one's identity, etc. will not be tolerated. Please review the university's policies in this regard at:  
<http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

TUESDAY 1/13 – Course Overview

### PART I: What Is Comparative Politics

THURSDAY 1/15 – Introduction/What Is Science?

CGG Chapters 1 & 2

TUESDAY 1/20 – What Is Politics?

CGG Chapter 3

### PART II: The Modern State: Democracy or Dictatorship

THURSDAY 1/22 – The Origins of the Modern State

CGG Chapter 4

TUESDAY 1/27 – The Origins of the Modern State

CGG Chapter 4

THURSDAY 1/29 – Democracy and Dictatorship: Conceptualization and Measurement

CGG Chapter 5

TUESDAY 2/3 – The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 6

THURSDAY 2/5 – The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 6

TUESDAY 2/10 – Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 7

THURSDAY 2/12 – Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 7

TUESDAY 2/17 – *Exam 1*

THURSDAY 2/19 – Democratic Transitions

CGG Chapter 8

TUESDAY 2/24 – Democratic Transitions

CGG Chapter 8

THURSDAY 2/26 – Democracy or Dictatorship: Does it make a Difference?

CGG Chapter 9

PART III: Varieties of Democracy and Dictatorship

TUESDAY 3/3 – Varieties of Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 10

THURSDAY 3/5 – Varieties of Dictatorship

CGG Chapter 10

*SPRING BREAK*

TUESDAY 3/17 – Problems with Group Decision Making

CGG Chapter 11

THURSDAY 3/19 – Problems with Group Decision Making

CGG Chapter 11

TUESDAY 3/24 – *Exam 2*

PART III: Varieties of Democracy and Dictatorship continued

THURSDAY 3/26 – Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies

CGG Chapter 12

TUESDAY 3/31 – Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Democracies

CGG Chapter 12

THURSDAY 4/2 – Elections and Electoral Systems

CGG Chapter 13

TUESDAY 4/7 – Elections and Electoral Systems

CGG Chapter 13

THURSDAY 4/9 – Social Cleavages and Party Systems

CGG Chapter 14

TUESDAY 4/14 – Social Cleavages and Party Systems

CGG Chapter 14

THURSDAY 4/16 – Institutional Veto Players

CGG Chapter 15

PART IV: Varieties of Democracy and Political Outcomes

TUESDAY 4/21 – Consequences of Democratic Institutions

CGG Chapter 16

THURSDAY 4/23 – Consequences of Democratic Institutions

CGG Chapter 16

TUESDAY 5/5 – *Exam 3* (6:00 to 7:30 p.m.)