PSCI 204:

Introduction to Comparative Politics: Interrogations of the State

Williams College Fall 2021

MTh 1:10pm – 2:25pm Instructor: Beth Wellman (she/her/hers)

Room: Griffin 2 Email: biw1@williams.edu

Zoom Meeting ID: 870 323 5454 Office: 205 Schapiro Hall

Passcode: 3G0589 Student Hours: M/Th 11-12a, 4-5p

Course Description

This course is an Introduction to Comparative Politics, one of the four major subfields within political science. The study of comparative politics is interested in **documenting, analyzing, and explaining variation** in political phenomena, both across and within countries as well as over time. We are interested in both the causes of political outcomes as well as their effects: how do the institutions of the past shape current dynamics of political competition and economic growth? Why are some countries stable democracies while others struggle with military coups or authoritarian rule? What sparks nationalist protests or ethnic violence?

I have designated the sub-heading of this course “Interrogations of the State” for two major reasons. First, the course is organized thematically around questions concerning the state which are central to comparative politics. We look at state formation and how states operate, whether as democracies, autocracies, or something in between; We examine “who” defines a nation-state, or more accurately, how the interactions of nationalism, ethnicity, and citizenship regimes create a national population; we explore how different institutional choices—e.g. electoral systems, economic policies, even bureaucratic staffing—shape political incentives and, thus, behavior of elite actors and mass populations. We also investigate state breakdown or failure, whether in the form of civil conflict, competing authority, or democratic backsliding.

“Interrogations of the state” has a second meaning. In addition to the major themes of comparative politics, this course is an introduction to how we produce comparative politics research; in other words, throughout the class we will also interrogate the state of the *field* of comparative politics. We achieve this by exploring not only the key *concepts* of comparative politics (e.g. democracy, nationalism, conflict, state capacity) but also how we *measure* those concepts in order to design research studies using comparative analysis. We will both employ and evaluate case-studies—a key building block of comparative politics research—to draw broader lessons about politics.

As an introduction course, we are going to learn the fundamentals (core concepts and themes) as well some initial exposure to cutting edge research and comparative research design. You may fall in love with the field. You may decide it’s not your thing. Regardless, learning to use the lens of comparative politics will change the way you see the world and understand politics. I’m excited to get started.

Learning Objectives

* Understand key concepts in the study of comparative politics and how they are measured.
* Apply theoretical concepts from the readings to historical and contemporary political events around the world.
* Develop and demonstrate skills in evidence-based and critical reasoning.
* Learn how to critically interrogate comparative politics research. Understand and evaluate comparative research methodology.
* Analyze different sources of data (quantitative, qualitative, and visual); be able to read and interpret regression tables and data visualizations.
* Have a solid understanding of foundational comparative politics texts (and scholars) as well as current debates in the field.
* Learn how to ask good questions: of your readings, of our guest speakers, or (future) research questions.

Course Structure and Format

Our class features both in-person and online components. Our scheduled course time will be a mix of lectures, discussions, active learning exercises, and guest speakers. I incorporate media into many classes and assignments, whether watching a news story, documentary film, or listening to a podcast. *You are expected to have completed readings, watched documentaries and other assignments prior to class*. Most classes will be held in-person; there will be at least a few days where we hold class remotely.

Course Assessments

**Course Participation: 15%**

Every student must not only attend class, but actively participate in the course activities and discussions. This includes participation during class discussions, contributing to the “continuing the conversation” discussion thread on GLOW, and submitting discussion questions and interview questions when assigned. Critical to active participation is asking questions—of the readings, of your fellow students, and of our guest speakers.

Active participation also includes:

* Interventions that indicate substantive and original thinking.
* Insights that integrate evidence from the readings in support of the argument you are making.
* Comments and questions to the group (and our guest speakers) that deepen the conversation, particularly with regard to evaluating the strengths, limitations, and scope conditions of theories or cases under discussion.
* Contributing to small group and class collaborations.
* Engaging with other class members’ ideas and constructive feedback on their projects. If disagreeing with others’ ideas, disagreements are stated clearly and respectfully.

**Reading Response Paper I: 10%**

You will write a 3-5 page critical reading response based on one (or more) of the articles by Friday, October 8 (covering classes 1-8).

**Video Response: 15% (10% video, 5% comments)**

Prior to class on **Monday November 1 (by 3pm Sunday October 31)** you will upload a 7-10 minute video of you summarizing and evaluating one article of your choice assigned for class on 11/1 OR 11/4. You will then post either short a video or written (1-2 min) response to another classmate’s video on the topic you did not review. For instance, if you made your video review about a reading on gender, then you should comment on one video about class. In this short response, share what you’ve learned from your classmate’s subject review. You should post your comments to other videos by **November 3**.

**Midterm Exam: 25% (Online November 11)**

**Final Project: 25% (20% content, 5% presentation)**

Inspired by Professor [Hakeem Jefferson](https://twitter.com/hakeemjefferson/status/1332728135683514368), for the final you have a choice of project: either a) teach outsiders about a core comparative politics concept or idea we’ve learned this semester or b) perform a “comparative politics” analysis of a piece of pop culture (e.g. a movie, tv show, etc.). As a class we will come up with a list of central concepts and ideas that are fair game. I’ll also share a few examples from past classes.

All mediums are allowed except for a standard essay: you can record a podcast, write a Wikipedia page, make a Spotify playlist, curate a photo exhibit, write a long-form blog post, make an interactive map or a series of data visualizations (just no standard essays). Final Projects must be submitted before the last class on Thursday, December 9, when you will present your project for 3 minutes.

**Final Reading Response: 10%**

You will write a five page critical response drawing on at least one piece of academic scholarship, one multimedia text, and one of your fellow classmates presentations (video or final). This response is due **3pm December 16.**

Course Policies

**Learning During a Pandemic**

We are living through a difficult moment right now. You most likely know people who have lost their jobs, have tested positive for COVID-19, have been hospitalized, or are no longer with us. You and your family may have been displaced and have had to move or relocate abruptly. You may have increased (or possibly decreased) work and/or family care responsibilities. There is a lot of stress, uncertainty, and upheaval.

I am fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you are hoping to learn from this class. I will make whatever accommodations I can to help you get through the semester, especially as you (and I) may encounter unforeseen challenges. Please let me know if you are unable to attend class due to COVID restrictions.  I will work with you to develop a plan that allows you to continue making progress in the course during your time in isolation/quarantine.

Recognizing when you are over your head, reaching out when you need additional support: these are actions of courage and strength. Do not suffer in silence. We will figure it out.

**Classroom Inclusivity**

Many topics covered in the course can be controversial, divisive, and often difficult.

Creating a community of respect, inclusion, and support is integral to the success of this course. The Williams community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and non-visible categories. I welcome all students into this class and am committed to creating an environment where people feel supported, and a diversity of experiences and learning styles are acknowledged and valued. We will work together as a class to establish ground-rules for discussion, and I will check in to assess what’s working (and what’s not) and adjust the course to better meet the needs and interests of the class. If you have any concerns about the classroom climate, please come to me to share your concern. My student hours (whether in-person or on Zoom) are also, always, a safe haven if for anyone who believes they are being treated with prejudice.

**Community Health**

Creating an in-classroom community during a pandemic requires a stronger commitment than usual to protecting our own well-being in order to safeguard each other’s health. In an attempt to keep our classroom environment as healthy as possible, you will be required to wear a mask at all times in the classroom*.* If you feel sick, please do not come to class. I will be happy to work with you to make sure you can make up any missed portions of class. We must navigate the next few months together as a community.

**Health/Accessibility resources**:

Students with disabilities of any kind who may need accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Dr. GL Wallace (Director of Accessible Education) at 413.597.4672.  Also, students experiencing mental or physical health challenges that are significantly affecting their academic work or well-being are encouraged to contact me and to speak with a dean so we can help you find the right resources.  The deans can be reached at 413.597.4171. Finally, I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you. If you are experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking, please talk with me and I will listen to you, support you, and connect you with resources.

**Lecture Slides**

I will post lecture slides before class. The slides are meant as a guide to help you through lecture, especially if learning remotely; they are in no way a substitute for attending class. My hope is that by providing slides – which often have information like definitions – you will not have to spend the entire class furiously note taking but can pay more attention to the lecture, ask questions, and participate.

**Computer Use in Class**

Given mounting evidence of the benefits of [taking notes by hand](http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/) I highly recommend using a pen and paper in class, especially as a break from staring at a screen. It is also difficult for all of us not to get distracted by email, etc. Speaking of paying attention, please email me your favorite pop culture from this summer (song, book you’ve read, tv show, etc.) before the first class. If you believe it is best for your learning, you are welcome to use your computer in lecture for note taking and referencing reading material. Internet should be switched off, phones should be on silent and out of reach during class. If laptops become too distracting I reserve the right to change this policy.

**Recording in-person classes**

I will inform you whether the course or any particular sessions are being recorded.  By participating with your camera on, using a profile image, or with audio unmuted, you are consenting to having your video, image, and audio recorded.  If you do not want to be recorded, please be sure to keep your camera off, do not use a profile image, and keep your microphone muted.  Students who choose to not be recorded may participate by means of the chat feature.

**Late work policy**

Please let me know by email if you are not going to be able to submit an assignment on time, the earlier the better. An email request for an extension should state a) why the assignment will be late and b) the date/time you are requesting for an extension. I plan on being additionally lenient and flexible during this semester; please do not abuse it.

**Academic Integrity**

Although much of the learning in this class will be collaborative, **all submitted written work must be your own**. Throughout the course you will be sharing with and learning from other students within our class. One way to be sure you are not violating the honor code is to refrain from writing/typing/crafting your response to the assignment with others.  Rather, save the writing until you are on your own and working independently.

Please review the [Williams College Honor Code](https://web.williams.edu/wp-etc/acad-resources/survival_guide/Integrity/HonorCode.php) and consult the website for resources on how to properly cite sources within your work. I will also provide additional guidance throughout the semester. If you have any questions about how the Honor Code applies to your work, please come talk with me. I’m always happy to have those conversations, especially as you research and write. I take plagiarism and cheating extremely seriously, and I reserve the right to check a digital form of any of your written work with software designed to check for plagiarism.

**Contacting the Professor**

The best way to reach me is by email: biw1@williams.edu. I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible. Please note responses may be delayed during evenings and weekends. I also strongly encourage you to come to student hours (Monday/Thursdays 11-12pm and 4-5pm) in Schapiro 205. We can also schedule appointments over zoom, using this link through [Google Appointments](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/selfsched?sstoken=UUVkdW4ybksxeUVYfGRlZmF1bHR8MzVlYmJiYWI2MjcxYjdjMWE3MmE2OWJjNzA4OWQwMDI). I am happy to talk about anything related to the course, answer questions, listen to concerns, or if you feel you need help.

Course Readings

In addition to research articles as well as news pieces, we will watch a number of documentaries and listen to podcasts. We will treat these as political texts, reading them just as we read academic scholarship.

To stay up-to-date on comparative politics in real time, I highly recommend subscribing to the podcast “[Scope Conditions](https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/)” a deep dive into cutting edge Comparative Politics research. I also highly recommend [The Monkey Cage](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/06/10/about-monkey-cage/), full of accessible explainers where political scientists write short, relevant news analyses related to their research. Perusing the journals [World Politics](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-politics), [Comparative Political Studies](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/cps) and [Comparative Politics](https://jcp.gc.cuny.edu/) in addition to the “Big 3” political science journals ([American Political Science Review](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review), [American Journal of Political Science](https://ajps.org/), and [Journal of Politics](https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/jop/current)) will be useful to get a sense of the current state of the field. You can also follow many of these journals—and the scholars we read—on twitter.

Course Schedule

**Class 1: Introduction**

**Sep 9** What is Comparative Politics?

O’Neil, Patrick H. Essentials of Comparative Politics (7th edition).

Chapter 1: Introduction.

"[How to Think](https://faculty.georgetown.edu/kingch/How_to_Think.htm)" by Charles King

**What is the State?**

**Class 2: States: An Origin Story**

**Sep 13** O’Neil Chapter 2: States

Taylor, Brian D. and Roxana Botea. 2008. "Tilly Tally: War-Making and State-Making in the Contemporary Third World" *International Studies Review*, *10*(1), pp.27-56.

Olson, Mancur. 1993.. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American political science review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 567-576.

**Class 3: The Question of State Strength**

**Sep 16** Scott, James C. “Introduction” in *Seeing Like A State.* 1998.

"[The Middle East Quasi-State System](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/27/the-middle-east-quasi-state-system/)" by Ariel I. Ahram in *The Washington Post Monkey Cage* (2014)

[Review of Milli Lake’s](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/08/16/strong-ngos-weak-states-takes-an-intriguing-look-path-justice-congo-south-africa/) *Strong NGOs and Weak States* by Laura Seay in *The Washington Post Monkey Cage* (2019)

Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. “[How to read political science”:](https://www.ameliahoovergreen.com/uploads/9/3/0/9/93091546/howtoread.pdf)

**Listen**: "[Why is state capacity so uneven?](https://poddtoppen.se/podcast/1282553335/rocking-our-priors/why-is-state-capacity-so-uneven-professor-anthony-pereira)” Professor Anthony Pereira podcast *Rocking Our Priors*(2018)

**Who is the State?**

**Class 4: Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Citizenship**

**Sep 20** Posner, Daniel, 2004. “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi.” *American Political Science Review.*

Marx, Anthony W. 1996. "Race-Making and the Nation-State" *World Politics*

Aktürk, Şener. "Regimes of ethnicity: comparative analysis of Germany, the Soviet Union/post-Soviet Russia, and Turkey." *World Politics* 63.1 (2011): 115-164.

Listen: [The Upside of Nationalism](https://www.scopeconditionspodcast.com/episodes/episode-3-the-upside-of-nationalism-with-aram-hur) with Dr. Aram Hur *Scope Conditions Podcast Ep 3 2020*

**Class 5: Ethnic Politics continued**

**Sep 23**

**Class 6: Political-Economic Systems / Development and Democracy**

**Sep 27** O’Neil Chapter 4: Political Economy

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy:

Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53(1): pp. 69-105.

Przeworski, Adam, R. Michael Alvarez, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. No. 3. Cambridge University Press, 2000. Chapter 2: Economic Development and Political Regimes, pp. 78 – 141.

**Class 7: Democratic Erosion**

**Sep 30 Class will not meet today!**

Diamond, Larry. 2002. “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes.” *Journal of Democracy,* Volume 13 (2).

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, “[This is How Democracies Die](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/this-is-how-democracies-die).” *The Guardian.* January 21, 2018.

Watch: “The Edge of Democracy” Petra Costa, 2019 (on Netflix)

**Democratic Regimes**

**Class 8: What is Democracy?**

**Oct 4**  Dahl, Robert. 1972. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Y ale University Press. Chapter 1.

Karl, Terry Lynn and Philippe Schmitter, “What Democracy Is…and Is Not,” *Journal of Democracy* 3 (1991): 75-88.

**Class 9: Democratization and Democratic Backsliding**

**Oct 7** Geddes, Barbara. 2007. "What Causes Democratization?" in the Oxford Handbook of Political Science.

Schedler, Andreas. 2002. “Menu of Manipulation.” *Journal of Democracy.* Volume 13 (2).

Marcinkiewicz, Kamil and Mary Stegmaier. [“Poland appears to be dismantling its own hard-won democracy.”](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/21/poland-appears-to-be-dismantling-its-own-hard-won-democracy/) *The Washington Post*. July 21, 2017.

**Oct 8: Reading Response due by 9:00 pm TODAY**

**Oct 11 WILLIAMS FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

Please take these days to do something restorative, however you define it.

**Class 10: Measuring Democracy**

**Oct 14** Pick one of the countries we have featured during class (e.g. Brazil, South Africa, Poland, Russia, Turkey) to explore the metrics of the following measures of democracy:

[Varieties of Democracy (V-dem)](https://www.v-dem.net/en/): Explore website; skim Democracy Report 2020, Interactive Maps

[Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy); Explore website, Freedom in the World 2020 report

[Polity5](https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html): Skim “About Polity” and examine graphs

**Nondemocratic Regimes**

**Class 11: Guest Speaker**

**Oct 18:** Sarah Repucci, Director of Research Freedom House

**ONLINE**

**Class 12: Nondemocratic regimes**

**Oct 21** Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. “Believing in Spectacles” Chapter 1 of *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*.

Kendall-Taylor, Andrea and Erica Frantz. 2015. [“How democratic institutions are making dictatorships more durable”](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/03/19/how-democratic-institutions-are-making-dictatorships-more-durable/) *The Washington Post’s Monkey Cage* (2015)

**Listen: “**[A military that murders its own people](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/05/podcasts/the-daily/myanmar-military-coup-economy.html)” *The Daily (New York Times podcast)**April 5, 2021*

**Political Violence**

**Class 13: Political Violence**

**Oct 25** Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Laia Balcells. "International system and technologies of rebellion: How the end of the Cold War shaped internal conflict." *American Political Science Review* (2010): 415-429.

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. "Organizing rebellion: Rethinking high-risk mobilization and social networks in war." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013): 418-432.

**Class 14: Protests, Resistance, Revolution**

**Oct 28**  Kuran, Timur (1991). “Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.” *World Politics* 44:1, pp.7-48.

Wasow, Omar. "Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting." *American Political Science Review* 114.3 (2020): 638-659.

McPhee, Peter. 2019. [We live in a world of upheaval. So why aren’t](https://theconversation.com/we-live-in-a-world-of-upheaval-so-why-arent-todays-protests-leading-to-revolutions-126505)

[today’s protests leading to revolutions?](https://theconversation.com/we-live-in-a-world-of-upheaval-so-why-arent-todays-protests-leading-to-revolutions-126505) The Conversation.

Watch: Orange Revolution (PBS 2006): <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/orange-revolution-english/>

**Oct 31: Reading Response Video must be uploaded by 3pm TODAY**

**Class 15: Comparative Politics of Class**

**Nov 1** Bellin, Eva. 2000. "Contingent democrats: Industrialists, labor, and democratization in late-developing countries." *World Politics*: 175-205.

De La O, Ana L., and Jonathan A. Rodden. 2008. "Does religion distract the poor? Income and issue voting around the world." *Comparative Political Studies* 41.4-5: 437-476.

Wang, Zhengxu, and Long Sun. 2017. "Social class and voter turnout in China: local congress elections and citizen-regime relations." *Political Research Quarterly* 70.2: 243-256.

**Class 16: Comparative Politics of Gender**

**Nov 4** Clark, Janine Astrid, and Jillian Schwedler. "Who opened the window? Women's activism in Islamist parties." *Comparative Politics* (2003): 293-312.

Edgell, Amanda B. "Vying for a man seat: Gender quotas and sustainable representation in Africa." *African Studies Review* 61.1 (2018): 185-214.

Teele, Dawn Langan. "How the west was won: Competition, mobilization, and women’s enfranchisement in the United States." *The Journal of Politics* 80.2 (2018): 442-461.

**Class 17: Midterm Review**

**Nov 8**

**Class 18: Midterm Exam**

**Nov 11**

**Class 19: “Developing Countries” *Note Change in Readings***

**Nov 15** Wellman, Elizabeth Iams. “Chapter 1: Introduction” (Draft 1.6) from book manuscript *The Diaspora Vote Dilemma.*

**SKIM:** Feierherd, Germán. Forthcoming. "Courting Informal Workers: Exclusion, Forbearance, and the Left." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Dupuy, Kendra, James Ron and Aseem Prakash. “[Across the globe, governments are cracking down on civic organizations. This is why](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/05/__trashed-4/).” Monkey Cage Blog, The Washington Post, July 5, 2017.

Watch: [An African Election](https://williams.kanopy.com/video/african-election) (Dir: Merz, Jarreth, 2011, 87 minutes

**Class 20: Post-Communism**

**Nov 18** Pop, Eleches, Grigore and Joshua Tucker. 2019. [What are the lessons from](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/12/europes-communist-regimes-began-collapse-years-ago-still-shape-political-views/)

[post-communism?](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/11/12/europes-communist-regimes-began-collapse-years-ago-still-shape-political-views/) Monkey Cage Blog, The Washington Post. November 12, 2019.

Rosenfeld, Bryn. "Reevaluating the middle-class protest paradigm: a case-control study of democratic protest coalitions in Russia." *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 4 (2017): 637-652.

Watch: [Power Trip](https://williams.kanopy.com/video/power-trip) (Devlin Pix, 2003) @ Williams.kanopy.com

**Class 21: Europe, immigration, and the rise of the far right**

**Nov 22** Alarian, Hannah. 2020. Cause or Consequence?: The Alternative for

**ONLINE** Germany and Attitudes toward Migration Policy. *German Politics and Society*, *38*(2), pp.59-89.

Bonikowski, Bart. "Ethno‐nationalist populism and the mobilization of collective resentment." *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (2017): S181-S213.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Hannah Alarian, University of Florida

**Nov 24 – 28 Thanksgiving Break**

**Transnationalism and Globalization: New Directions in Comparative Politics**

**Class 22: Globalization**

**Nov 29** Peters, Margaret E. 2015. "Open trade, closed borders immigration in the era of globalization." *World Politics* 67: 114.

Watch: Turkey’s Tigers: Integrating Islam and Corporate Culture (2006, 57 minutes)

**Class 23: Political Transnationalism**

**Dec 2:** Wellman, Elizabeth Iams. 2021. "Emigrant Inclusion in Home Country Elections: Theory and Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa."  *American Political Science Review,* *115*(1), 82-96.

Paarlberg, Michael Ahn. 2017. "Transnational militancy: Diaspora influence over electoral activity in Latin America." *Comparative Politics* 49.4: 541-562.

**Class 24: Class Recap**

**Dec 6** Concepts, Measures, Cases

**Class 25:** **Final Project Presentations**

**Dec 10**

**Final Response Paper due December 16**