PS 50: Comparative Politics

Graeme Blair

Winter 2018

Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graeme Blair (Instructor)</th>
<th>Galen Murray and Marcel Roman (TAs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office: 3274 Bunche</td>
<td>Bunche 3288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office hours: Tues. and Thurs. 12:30-1:30pm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:graeme.blair@ucla.edu">graeme.blair@ucla.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:gpmurray@g.ucla.edu">gpmurray@g.ucla.edu</a> and <a href="mailto:mfrmarcel@ucla.edu">mfrmarcel@ucla.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL: graemeblair.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

- Lectures: Tues. and Thurs. 9:30-10:45am in Haines Hall A2

Why are some countries democracies and some dictatorships? Why are governments sometimes headed by presidents, like in the United States, and sometimes prime ministers, like in the United Kingdom? Do these institutional differences matter for important outcomes like political stability and economic inequality? These are questions of comparative politics. In order to answer them, political scientists have developed a set of analytic tools of comparison that help us learn through the comparison of cases about the causes and consequences of different kinds of institutions, the political behavior of elites and citizens, and public policies.

The goal of this introductory course is to help you learn about the questions that occupy scholars of comparative politics but also to help you develop the tools to answer these kinds of questions for yourself. This course will not directly give you deep knowledge of any country. Instead, it will give you tools to think about institutions and political behavior in other countries – as well as this country. Because there is so much to cover, it is also a very demanding course; more demanding, in fact, than most upper division political science courses.

The course is organized around three substantive themes. After an introduction to comparative politics, we take on democratic political institutions. We then study the determinants of democratic and authoritarian institutions.

In the last third of the course, we consider the often-assumed claim that once a country achieves a certain level of economic and political development, democratic consolidation is permanent. Recent events in the U.S., Europe, and beyond have led some commentators to question this assumption. In the last portion of the course we will explore the causes and consequences of democratic erosion in comparative and historical perspective, with in the back of our minds a focus on better understanding our own unique political moment. Importantly, this module is not intended as a partisan critique of any particular American politician or political party. Rather, it is designed to provide an opportunity for you to engage, critically and carefully, with the claims you
have doubtlessly already heard about the state of democracy in the US and elsewhere; to evaluate whether those claims are valid; and, if they are, to consider strategies for mitigating the risk of democratic erosion here and abroad.

This module on democratic erosion is a cross-university collaboration. This year, faculty at roughly two dozen universities will teach similar material at roughly the same time. Students at participating universities will collaborate on a cross-university blog, and will be expected to engage not only with their own classmates, but also with students at other universities.

Course Requirements

The course requires an in-class midterm, an analytic blog post, and a comprehensive final examination. It also requires attendance at, and active participation in, section discussions. Your section participation grade will be assessed by your teaching assistant on the basis of your active, constructive participation. Mere attendance in section, if passive or unproductive, will yield no points for this portion of your course grade.

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

- section participation (20%)
  Attending sections is required. You are expected to have done the required readings for the week before your section meets and taken notes on them. Your TA may set additional assignments for section including pop quizzes on the readings.
  For students who are shy or who prefer not to speak in section, we will offer alternative written assignments. Please see your TA.

- in-class midterm exam (25%)
  The midterm exam for the course is scheduled for Tuesday, February 6 during the lecture.

- analytic blog post and commenting (15%)
  Contribute a blog post representing a short analytical argument as well as two comments on blog posts written by students taking this course at other universities. Details on this assignment will be distributed after the midterm.

- final exam (40%)
  The final exam for the course is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20 from 3-6pm.

The format of both exams will be one section of identification of terms discussed in the course and a set of one or more short essays. A set of terms will be distributed a week before each exam as a study guide for the identification section. All students must take the midterm and final exam at the dates and times noted above. **If you know that you have a conflict with either date/time, then you should not enroll in the course.** If you cannot take the exam because you are sick, you must provide a written note from your doctor stating that you were unable to take the exam.

Grade appeals are permissible only if you believe that an error was made. You must hand-deliver to your TA a typed note (maximum one page, double spaced) describing why your grade ought to be revised upwards within one week of receiving the graded item. We reserve the right to re-grade the entire assignment/question, so it is possible that your score will go down.
Attendance in lecture is highly recommended. A good deal of the material on the exams will come solely from lecture. Do not show up late, which means you should plan to arrive at least two minutes early. If you must leave early, please ask permission before class begins, and sit as close to the door as possible so as to minimize your intrusion on others’ attention.

No phones are allowed. Laptops and tablets are permitted for note-taking. However, I encourage you instead to take hand-written notes, which research shows is more effective for learning.

There is a single required text for the course: Clark, Golder and Golder, Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Edition (CQ Press 2017), which is available at the UCLA Bookstore. Additional readings are posted on the Moodle (UCLA log in required) and are available for your own use.

Campus resources

For any substantive or administrative concerns specific to the class, please come to see one of us – the instructor or a TA. Each of us holds two hours of office hours every week and we look forward to meeting with you.

If you have concerns about or difficulty with academic writing, you can visit the writing center. More information is available at http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html

Contact the college academic counseling office for help with any academic concerns you have via http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling/contact-us.html.

If you are having other difficulties and need to speak with a therapist or counselor, you can contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) here: http://www.counseling.ucla.edu/

UCLA is committed to providing help to students with disabilities. If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform either Professor Blair or your TA and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at A-255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501 (voice); (310) 206-6083 (TTY); http://www.osd.ucla.edu.

Lecture topics and readings

Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics

January 9: Introduction to the Course: What Comparative Politics is All About

January 11: If Every Country is Unique, How Do We Compare?

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 1 (only pp. 2-8).
- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 2 (entire).

Part II: Democratic Political Institutions

January 16: Presidents vs. Prime Ministers

- Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 453-458) and ch 16 (only pp. 762-780).

January 18: Electoral Systems
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 13 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 738-758).
• article on Hamas win in Palestinian elections in 2004/5

January 23: Political Parties, Party Systems, and Social Cleavages
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 14 (entire).

January 5 Institutional Veto Points and Federalism
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 15 (entire) and ch. 16 (only pp. 759-762).

January 30: Public Policies and Policy Implementation
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 16 (only pp. 726-738).

February 1: Government Formation
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 12 (only pp. 458-511).

February 6: In-class midterm exam

Part III: Democracy and Dictatorship

February 8: The Economic Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch 5 (only pp. 147-150) and ch. 6 (entire).

February 13: The Social and Cultural Determinants of Democracy and Dictatorship
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 7 (entire).

February 15: Democratic Transitions
• Clark, Golder and Golder, chs. 3 (only pp. 48-74) and ch. 8 (entire).

February 20: Democracy or Dictatorship: Does it Make a Difference?
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 9 (entire).

February 22: Varieties of Dictatorship
• Clark, Golder and Golder, ch. 10 (entire).

Part IV: Democratic Erosion (Note: Readings announced after the midterm)

February 27: Theories of Democratic Erosion

March 1: Uses and Abuses of Democratic Institutions

March 6: Populism and Demagoguery

March 8: Propaganda and Restrictions on the Press

March 13: Polarization

March 15: Resistance