



# Introduction to Comparative Politics

**Instructor:** Prof. Elizabeth (Bit) Meehan [she/her]

**Semester:** Summer 2022

**Meeting Time:**

**Location:**

**Email:** [emeehan@gwu.edu](mailto:emeehan@gwu.edu)

**Office:**

**Office Hours:** [By Appointment](#)

## SUMMARY

This class is an introduction to the study of comparative politics. You will learn about politics in a select group of countries as well as some of the major concepts used in the study of comparative politics. The course covers a range of topics, including nation-state formation, democratization, authoritarianism, globalization, economic development, civil society, and identity. We will discuss some issues that have been important in the policy-making community in recent years, such as state-building, the resource curse, the rise of populism, and the problem of income inequality. We will also discuss current events in relationship to topics studied in comparative politics.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this class, you will:

- ⇒ Learn basic concepts in political science and comparative politics;
- ⇒ Apply these concepts across a wide array of countries;
- ⇒ Compare countries to understand why they differ in their political and economic trajectories;
- ⇒ Analyze and evaluate core concepts in comparative politics and apply them to country cases;
- ⇒ Critically evaluate writings on a range of topics and countries.

## CREDIT HOURS AND TIME USE

This is a three-credit class: 250 minutes per week will be spent in lecture. You should plan to spend an average of 10 hours per week reading course materials, preparing for class discussion, and studying for the exams.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### READINGS AND PARTICIPATION

There is no required textbook; all course readings will be posted on Blackboard. **Read the assigned material before our class meetings.** This will help you better understand the lecture, participate in discussions, and will be necessary to do well on the end-of-class quizzes. A key element of this course is to become critical consumers of social science research. This includes contextualizing and critiquing the texts we read; these will be part of our discussions as well.

There is no participation grade for this class. However, students who participate a few times per class and who offer substantial, thoughtful comments about the readings or fellow students' ideas tend to do better in the course overall. Asking questions when you do not understand something also counts as participation – there are no dumb questions when you are learning a subject for the first time.

### ASSIGNMENTS

**(9) Quizzes:** At the end of lecture from the second through the tenth class, you will complete a 10-question quiz about the material from the readings and the lecture materials that day. These questions will be a mix of multiple-

choice and short answer (3-5 sentences). Each quiz will only cover material from that class period; if you miss class that day, you will take an alternate quiz within 24 hours of the end of the lecture. I will drop your lowest quiz to calculate your final grade. We will discuss the previous class quiz at the start of the following lecture.

**(1) Current Event Presentation:** For this assignment, you will select a current event and give a 5-minute presentation to the class. You will describe the relevant background of the event (around 1 minute), discuss how material from a course lecture or reading helps us to understand this current event (around 3 minutes), and offer some questions or conclusions based on your analysis of the event (around 1 minute). You will also create a slide presentation of no more than 5 slides to aid class discussion of your chosen event, including [Chicago-style author-date citations](#) to referenced materials. We will discuss the event as a group after each presentation.

**(3) Memes:** For this assignment, you will submit a meme along with a 1-paragraph (5-7 sentences) explanation of the meme citing material from the course lectures and/or readings using Chicago-style author-date citations to explain how course materials inspired your meme and what they are referencing. This [template generator](#) is a great place to start. Your memes must come from 3 separate lecture days. We will view and discuss your memes at the end of each lecture. Below is my weak example from the 2022 French elections:



**(1) Exam:** On the last course day, you will take a two-hour in-class exam. The exam will be cumulative, including material from the first through the eleventh classes. It will be open notes. All questions will be either 3-5 sentence short answers or 5-7 paragraph short essays. The goal of the exam is to assess your ability to understand and apply course concepts, to compare and contrast country cases, and to make and defend arguments.

### GRADING

You will receive numerical grades on all work. Your final grade will be calculated based on these numbers according to the weights listed below.

- ⇒ Quizzes: 50%
- ⇒ Presentation: 10%
- ⇒ Memes: 15%
- ⇒ Exam: 25%

The correspondence between numerical and letter grades is as follows:

97-100 = A+	94-96 = A	90-93 = A-	87-89 = B+	84-86 = B	80-83 = B-	77-79 = C+
76-74 = C	70-73 = C-	65-69 = D	Below 65 = F			

## CURRENT EVENTS

One goal of the class is to make you a more sophisticated interpreter of current events. To keep up with current events, I suggest you regularly read one of the major national newspapers (*The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*) or international newspapers (*Financial Times*). Some useful magazines and journals that are available through the library include *The Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, and the *Journal of Democracy*.

## CLASS POLICIES

### MUTUAL RESPECT

I expect students to treat myself and one another with dignity and respect in both verbal and written communication. This includes properly addressing me (as Ms. or Prof. Meehan) and [writing emails in a professional manner](#). Both your time and my time are valuable. I will respond to all emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday and within 48 hours on the weekends (i.e., If you send an email on Friday afternoon, do not expect a response until Sunday afternoon). I am also happy to generally discuss your grade or standing in the class at any time, but I encourage you to initiate these conversations sooner, rather than later, so our conversation can have the most impact. Overall, communicating your needs sooner rather than later helps me to better support you as a student.

### MISSING CLASS, LATE WORK, AND ACCOMODATIONS

Because this is an intensive summer course over 6 weeks, attending class is vital. It will help you gain a deeper understanding of the course materials and help you keep up with content prior to the final exam. If you need to miss class, let me know and send me any questions you had about the readings of lecture slides from that day. Let me know if you have circumstances that mean you will need to miss more than 2 classes; taking this course may not be the best option for you.

If you know you will not be able to make the deadline for a project assignment, email me and let me know when you will turn it in. Assignments for this class are not worth losing sleep over or stressing your mental/physical health. If you are struggling to make progress on the course assignments or to understand the material, make an office hours appointment to help me to help you succeed.

If you are (acutely, as opposed to chronically) sick, do not come to class. You do not need to give me a detailed list of your symptoms to “justify” your absence. I believe you. Noncommunicable conditions, like injuries, flareups of chronic illness and/or mental illness, and sensory overloads are also very good reasons not to come to class, as are major upheavals in your life, such as the death or serious illness of someone close to you. Since you know what your body and mind can handle far better than I ever could, I leave it to your discretion as to where your threshold for “unable to attend class” is. But within that discretion, I encourage you to be compassionate to yourself. I only ask, as ever, that you open communication with me so I know how best to help you. **In short: DO NOT infect your fellow students. DO take your own symptoms seriously.** (*adapted from Rebecca J. Epstein-Levi*)

I want to make sure you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class! I will make every effort to make whatever specific accommodations you need to succeed in this class. When you ask for an accommodation, you *never* owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical). If I can't help you, I usually know someone who can. **You do not have to suffer in silence.** Talk to me – I will work with you. I promise.

### BLACKBOARD

In addition to the readings, you will find other useful information on Blackboard, such as a copy of the syllabus, information about assignments, and your grades. I also will post tables, graphs, or maps shown, as well as the content we create together during class. To access Blackboard, you must have a school e-mail account and be registered for this course. You may have trouble accessing the articles posted on Blackboard if you are not using

a university-networked computer. In that instance, you should download articles on a university-networked computer and print or save them to read at home.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Laptops, iPads and related devices are allowed during class discussion **if they are on airplane mode**. This helps you to remain focused during class and not be distracted by notifications. You will turn on your Wi-Fi at the end of class to take each quiz. You are always welcome to take notes by hand; studies show that people who take notes by hand have greater retention.

## **REMOTE COURSEWORK**

If classes need to be held virtually due to pandemic or other unforeseen circumstances, I will work with you to determine how the class will continue to meet. The default will be to hold one synchronous section at a time determined by the class to facilitate discussion while remaining flexible to your needs. These sessions will be recorded so students can watch them asynchronously and maintain course participation. Students will also be able to recommend alternative meeting times and changes to the class syllabus at this time for consideration.

You will need a laptop, tablet, or cell phone with a student Zoom account and a working microphone to participate in online class discussions (contact student support for assistance - [online.gwu.edu/student-support](https://online.gwu.edu/student-support)). Students will not be required to turn on their video during class if we move to remote coursework. I strongly encourage being on video because it allows you to get to know your classmates better, and it's helpful to be able to read nonverbal cues during discussion. We will use the chat feature to ask questions when we are discussing together as a whole group; I will moderate and guide the discussion based on your insights and your questions.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The Code of Student Conduct can be found [at this link](#).

**Plagiarism is a serious offense.** Students who plagiarize will receive an F on the assignment and be referred to the Academic Integrity Council. We will discuss the problem of plagiarism in class, and there is more information about plagiarism on Blackboard under the Assignments tab.

### **USE OF ELECTRONIC MATERIALS AND CLASS RECORDINGS**

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact Disability Support Services at [disabilitysupport.gwu.edu](https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu) if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

## RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students must notify faculty during the first week of the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, or as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls within the first three weeks of class, the student must inform faculty in the first week of the semester. For details and policy, see “Religious Holidays” at [provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines](http://provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines).

## WRITING CENTER

GW’s Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online at [gwu.mywconline](http://gwu.mywconline).

## ACADEMIC COMMONS

Academic Commons provides tutoring and other academic support resources to students in many courses. Students can schedule virtual one-on-one appointments or attend virtual drop-in sessions. Students may schedule an appointment, review the tutoring schedule, access other academic support resources, or obtain assistance at [academiccommons.gwu.edu](http://academiccommons.gwu.edu).

## SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (202-994-8250)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at [disabilitysupport.gwu.edu](http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu) to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

## COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (202-994-5300)

GW’s Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. [healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services](http://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services).

## EMERGENCIES DURING CLASS

- ⇒ In an emergency: call GWPD 202-994-6111 or 911
- ⇒ Monitor [GW Alerts](#) and [Campus Advisories](#) to [Stay Informed](#) before and during an emergency event or situation
- ⇒ For situation-specific actions: refer to GW's [Emergency Response Handbook](#) and [Emergency Operations Plan](#)
- ⇒ In an active violence situation: Run. Hide. Fight.

## COURSE READINGS

### June 27 (Monday): How and why do we compare politics? How do electoral institutions shape outcomes?

- [FHSU Press](#), “Chapter 8: Comparative Politics.”
- [FairVote](#), “Electoral Systems 101,” “Worldwide Electoral Systems,” “Comparing Single-Winner Methods”

### June 29 (Wednesday): What is a state? How are states created and destroyed?

- [Fukuyama](#), “The Imperative of State-Building.”
- [Boas and Jennings](#), “‘Failed States’ and ‘State Failure’: Threats or Opportunities?”
- [Byman and King](#), “The Mystery of Phantom States.”
- [Fukuyama](#), “The Pandemic and Political Order.”

### July 6 (Wednesday): What factors determine a country’s regime type, and how do they change over time?

- [Inglehart and Welzel](#), “How Development Leads to Democracy.”

- [Mainwaring and Bizzarro](#), “The Fates of Third Wave Democracies.”
- [Frantz et al.](#), “How Personalist Politics Is Changing Democracies.”
- [Carothers](#), “The Surprising Instability of Competitive Authoritarianism.”
- [Levitsky and Way](#), “The New Competitive Authoritarianism.”

**July 11 (Monday): What factors influence a country’s economic development and growth?**

- [Milanovic](#), “Winners of Globalization.”
- [Hu and Spence](#), “Why Globalization Stalled.”
- [Sachs](#), “Government, Geography and Growth.”
- [Sharma](#), “Resurgence of the Rest”
- [Dadush and Dervis](#), “The Inequality Challenge.”
- [Alami et al.](#), “What is the new state capitalism?”
- [Diamond and Mosbacher](#), “Petroleum to the People.”

**July 13 (Wednesday): How do people participate in politics?**

- [Foley and Edwards](#), “The Paradox of Civil Society.”
- [Tucker et al.](#), “From Liberation to Turmoil.”
- [Brownlee et al.](#), “Why the Modest Harvest?”
- [Sadouskaya-Komlach](#), “Belarus Goes Its Own Way”
- [Mudde](#), “Europe’s Populist Surge”
- [Rueda](#), “Is Populism a Political Strategy?”

**July 18 (Monday): How does identity shape political outcomes?**

- [McGarry and O’Leary](#), “The Political Regulation of National and Ethnic Conflict.”
- [Nodia](#), “The End of the Postnational Illusion.”
- [Htun](#), “Is Gender Like Ethnicity?”
- [Encarnación](#), “Gay Rights: Why Democracy Matters.”
- [Pew](#), “The Global God Divide”
- [Pew](#), “The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists”

**July 20 (Wednesday): UK & France – Populism, Protest, & Democratic Fragility**

- [Whitehead](#), “The Hard Truths of Brexit.”
- [Russell](#), “Brexit and Parliament: The Anatomy of a Perfect Storm.”
- [Menon](#), “The Never-Ending Brexit.”
- [Kuhn](#), “French Revolution? The 2017 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.”
- [Goldhammer](#), “The Yellow Vest Protests.”
- [Mayer](#), “From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen.”

**July 25 (Monday): Russia & China – The State, Development, & Changing Authoritarianism**

- [Fish](#), “The Kremlin Emboldened: What is Putinism?”
- [Lanskoy and Myles-Primakoff](#), “Power and Plunder in Putin’s Russia.”
- [Morris](#), “Russia’s Incoherent State.”
- [Treisman](#), “Putin Unbound”
- [Shirk](#), “The Return to Personalistic Rule.”
- [Qiang](#), “President Xi’s Surveillance State.”
- [Pantucci](#), “The Many Faces of China’s Belt and Road Initiative.”
- [Rosen](#), “The Age of Slow Growth in China.”

**July 27 (Wednesday): Mexico & Nigeria – Development, Identity, & Populism**

- [Magaloni and Razu](#), “Mexico in the Grip of Violence.”
- [Dresser](#), “Can Mexico Be Saved?”
- [Piscopo](#), “When Informality Advantages Women.”
- [Obadare](#), “Nigeria’s Two Decades of Zero-Sum Democracy.”
- [Kendhammer](#), “The Sharia Controversy in Northern Nigeria.”
- [Dionne and Obolade](#), “The Niger Delta’s Oil Wealth Has Made Inhabitants’ Lives Worse.”

### **August 1 (Monday): India & Iran – The State, Identity, & Inequality**

- [Varadarajan](#), “Can Modi Deliver a New India?”
- [Ganguly](#), “Threats to Pluralism.”
- [Chandra](#), “Patronage, Democracy and Ethnic Politics in India.”
- [Deshpande](#), “How India’s Caste Inequality Has Persisted—and Deepened in the Pandemic.”
- [Milani](#), “Iran’s paradoxical regime.”
- [Vakil and Rassam](#), “Iran’s Next Supreme Leader.”
- [Vatanka](#), “How Deep is Iran’s State?”
- [Boroumand](#), “Iranians Turn Away from the Islamic Republic”

### **August 3 (Wednesday): In-Class Final Exam**

#### **Supplementary Readings**

- [Naim](#), “The Dictators’ New Playbook.”
- [Carothers and Carothers](#), “The One Thing Modern Voters Hate Most: Corruption.”
- [Youngs et al.](#), “Civil Society and the Global Pandemic”