

The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs
Georgia Institute of Technology

Pacific Study Abroad
Spring 2016

International Affairs 3203
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Professor Brian Woodall
Office: TBA
E-mail: brian.woodall@inta.gatech.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

The chief aim of those engaged in the study of comparative politics is to find solutions to “puzzles” involving real-world phenomena that are counterintuitive or at odds with the expectations of existing theory. “Comparativists” seek to identify the causes of change *and* stability within and across national boundaries and to explain cross-national variation and similarity in policy, process, and politics. For example, why do broadly similar polities pursue distinctly different means in addressing common policy challenges? Consider the issue of climate change – how can it be “impossible” to achieve lower carbon emissions in one advanced industrialized country when this objective is being realized through policymaking or social change in another country at a similar level of advancement? In many cases, “in country” fieldwork is needed to collect data, conduct interviews, and carry out site visits, while the “comparative method” provides a ready set of tools to assist in case selection and in determining causation. Most comparativists are proficient in at least one foreign language and possess deep contextual and cultural familiarity concerning a particular country (e.g., Australia or Fiji), region (e.g., Latin America or Western Europe), or socio-economic grouping (e.g., the Global South or OECD countries).

A primary aim of this course is to survey the five “lenses” that together constitute the theoretical core of comparative politics. Using the comparative method, we will employ these theoretical lenses to assess why and how different polities address critical policy challenges in the particular manner in which they do. Although we will examine a variety of issues in this course, we will focus intensively on the complex interplay of factors that produces cross-national variation in policy responses to the challenge of climate change. In so doing, it will become clear that policy responses cannot be divorced from economic concerns, particularly as pertain to energy use. Indeed, as a former British prime minister observed, energy and environment are so inextricably interconnected as to represent “two sides of the same coin.” In the final sessions of the course, we explore the interconnectedness of environmental and energy policies in cross-national perspective through a group exercise. As de Tocqueville put it, “Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.” The principal aim of this course is to provide students with the mental tools needed to explain change and stability through comparative analysis.

CORE AREA/ATTRIBUTES

Successful completion of this course counts toward fulfillment of Georgia Tech's Social Science General Education requirement and the Global Perspectives Overlay area. The expected learning outcomes of these requirements are explained on the Registrar's Office website (<http://www.registrar.gatech.edu/students/gened.php>).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The success of this course depends upon active, informed student participation. In addition, course grading will be determined by student performance on two examinations, a research design project using the comparative method, and a 3-5 page writing assignment (movie critique). During the final weeks of the semester, students will be assigned to "country teams" tasked with exploring the sources of variation in national responses to the challenge of climate change. Be advised – "free riding" will not be tolerated! Course grades will be weighted as follows:

- participation: 10 percent (includes attendance and active, informed participation)
- research design project: 10 percent
- examination #1: 25 percent
- writing assignment (movie critique): 10 percent
- group project: 20 percent (includes in-class presentation, PPT slides, and findings)
- examination #2: 25 percent

Honor Code: Academic honesty is required of all Georgia Tech students by the Institute's honor code, the text of which is found at www.honor.gatech.edu.

Special Accommodations: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a documented disability are required to register with the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) at <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>.

LEARNING GOALS

- Cultural, contextual, and ethical awareness. Students will become more aware of the diversity of cultural and ethical systems in the world. Includes the ability to identify, critically analyze, and apply distinguishing traits/perspectives/ formulations/ institutions in comparative or international empirical cases or issue areas. May include ability to communicate in a foreign language.
- Students will come away with a basic understanding of the *major theories, paradigms, and models* that comprise the theoretical core of the field of comparative politics.
- Students will be able to use the *comparative method* to critically assess the ability of the theoretical core of comparative politics to explain the political and economic change.

- Students will apply the comparative method and best practices in *teamwork* to solve a current problem in the field of comparative politics.
- Students will prepare compelling, evidence-based, arguments to defend their critical assessments and problem-solving proposals. These arguments will be presented in *written, oral, and audio-visual formats*.

READINGS

The textbook listed below is required. Other required readings will be posted to T-Square or can be downloaded from the Georgia Tech Library's *eJournals*.

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson
Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty [Paperback]
 Publisher: Crown Business
 Date of publication: 2013
 ISBN: 978-0-307-71922-5

Students wishing to pursue a particular topic in more depth should feel free to consult with the Instructor.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Session 1: Introductions and Course Overview
 Date: February 15 (Sydney)

Session 2: What Is Comparative Politics?
 Date: February 16 (Sydney)
 Reading: Acemoglu & Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 1-44

Session 3: Globalization
 Date: February 17 (Sydney)
 Reading: Barry Eichengreen, "The Globalization Debate: One Economy, Ready or Not – Thomas Friedman's Jaunt Through Globalization," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78 (No. 3, May/June 1999), pp. 118-122 (download from GT Library eJournals); Richard Florida, "The World Is Spiky," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2005), pp. 48-51 (uploaded to T-Square); "Leviathan Stirs Again," *The Economist*, January 21, 2010 (uploaded to T-Square)

Session 4: The Comparative Method
 Date: February 18 (Sydney)
 Reading: Collier, "The Comparative Method" (uploaded to T-Square)

Session 5: Theoretical Core of Comparative Politics
 Date: February 22 (Sydney)

Reading: contributions by Peter Evans and Peter J. Katzenstein, "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium." *World Politics* 48 (October 1995): 2-15 (download from GT Library eJournals)

Session 6: Rational Choice Theory

Date: February 23 (Sydney)

Reading: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book I, chapter 2 ("self-love"); Book IV, chapter 2, paragraph 9 ("invisible hand"); Book 4, chapter 9, paragraph 51 ("duties of the sovereign") (online at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/smith-adam/index.htm); "Political Scientists Debate Theory of 'Rational Choice,'" *The New York Times*, 26 February 2000 (uploaded to T-Square as "NYT – Rational Choice")

Session 7: World System Theory

Date: February 24 (Sydney)

Reading: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/date/index.htm), chapters 1, 2, and 4

Session 8: Modernization & Development Theory

Date: February 25 (Sydney)

Reading: Herbert Spencer, "The Social Organism" Readings: Herbert Spencer, "The Social Organism" (<http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Spencer/spnMvS9.html>), 9.0-9.19

Session 9: Cultural Explanations

Date: February 29 (Sydney)

Reading: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/cover.html>), chapter 5; and Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone" (uploaded to T-Square)

Session 10: Institutionalism

Date: March 1 (Sydney)

Reading: Acemoglu & Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 45-123

Session 11: Review for Examination #1

Date: March 2 (Sydney)

Session 12: Examination #1

Date: March 3 (Sydney)

Session 13: Comparing Institutions I – United Kingdom

Date: March 7 (Heron Island)

Reading: TBA

Session 14: Comparing Institutions II – Australia & New Zealand

Date: March 8 (Heron Island)

Reading: “New Zealand Parliament” (<http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/how-parliament-works/fact-sheets/00HOOCPubResAboutFactSheetsWhat1/parliament-brief-what-is-parliament>)

Session 15: Comparing Institutions III – Japan

Date: March 9 (Heron Island)

Reading: Woodall, *Growing Democracy*, 1-30 (uploaded to T-Square)

Session 16: Comparing Institutions IV – China

Date: March 10 (Heron Island)

Reading: Susan V. Lawrence & Michael F. Martin, *Understanding China’s Political System*. (CRS Report No. R41007). Washington DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service. (2013).

Session 17: Understanding Policy Variation – *Focus: Environmental Policy*

Date: March 14 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Readings: Martin Janicke, “Trend-Setters in Environmental Policy: The Character and Role of Pioneer Countries,” *European Environment* 15 (No. 2, 2005): 129-142 (download from GT Library eJournals); Miranda A. Schreuers, “Divergent Paths: Environmental Policy in Germany, the United States, and Japan,” *Environment* 45 (No. 8, 2003): 9-17 (download from GT Library eJournals).

Session 18: Policy Variation, continued

Date: March 15 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Readings: Clair Gough and Simon Shackley, “The Respectable Politics of Climate Change: The Epistemic Communities and NGOs” (uploaded to T-Square); Brian Woodall and Siqui Han, “Environmental Protection and the Developmental State in Japan, South Korea, and China,” *China Currents* 13 (No. 1, 2014) (available online at http://www.chinacenter.net/2014/china_currents/13-1/the-development-of-chinas-developmental-state-environmental-challenges-and-stages-of-growth/).

Session 19: Policy Variation, continued

Date: March 16 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Readings: *Green Parties: Reflections on the First Three Decades* (2006): 1-41 (uploaded to T-Square).

Session 20: Preparation for GP⁴

Date: March 17 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Readings: *Green Parties: Reflections on the First Three Decades* (2006): 42-76 (uploaded to T-Square).

Session 21: GP⁴ Group Meeting

Date: March 21 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Session 22: GP⁴ Presentations

Date: March 22 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Session 23: Course re-cap

Date: March 23 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Reading: Acemoglu & Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, 368-427

Session 24: Review for Examination #2

Date: March 24 (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)

Session 24: Examination #2

Date: TBA (Pacific Harbor, Fiji)