

Sam Nunn School of International Affairs
Georgia Institute of Technology

Fall Semester
2019

International Affairs 3203
INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Professor Brian Woodall
Office: Habersham 146
E-mail: brian.woodall@inta.gatech.edu
Office Hours: by appointment
Telephone: 404-894-1902

Teaching Assistant: Kayleigh Haskin

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

Comparative politics explores the sources of change *and* stability within and across national and subnational boundaries and seeks to explain variation in policies, processes, and politics. For example, why do broadly similar polities pursue different approaches in attempting to remedy similar policy challenges? For example, 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 broadly similar country? The study of comparative politics often requires in-country fieldwork to collect data, conduct interviews, and carry out site visits. For this reason, most comparativists are proficient in at least one foreign language and possess deep contextual and cultural familiarity with regard to at least one country (e.g., Australia, Fiji, etc.), region (e.g., Latin America, Western Europe, etc.), or socio-economic grouping (e.g., the Global South, OECD countries, etc.).

This course surveys the main theories of comparative politics and introduces the comparative method, a tool for explaining why and how broadly similar – or distinctly different – polities employ different approaches in seeking to solve common problems. 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 challenges of sustainable development, which is the theme of Georgia Tech’s current Quality Enhancement Plan. The final weeks of the course will be devoted to a problem-based learning exercise that explores this issue. This group exercise will highlight the importance of politics, context, and international interdependence in efforts to achieve sustainability. As de Tocqueville wisely put it, “[w]ithout comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.” The aim of this course is to provide students with the mental tools needed to explain change, stability, and variation through comparative analysis.



This course is part of Georgia Tech’s *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.

CORE AREA/ATTRIBUTES

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course grades will be determined by student performance on a combination of individual and group work. The individual work involves class participation and two in-class *examinations*, while the group work includes a research design project, oral presentation, and a 5-7 page policy brief. Course grades will be weighted as follows:

- class participation (as measured by attendance and active engagement): 5 percent
- research design project (group exercise): 10 percent
- two examinations: 50 percent (25 percent each)
- oral presentation (group exercise): 25 percent (includes submission of PPT slides)
- policy brief (group exercise): 10 percent

INSTITUTE POLICIES

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>.

Diversity & Inclusion: The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts – of which the Nunn School is a constituent part – supports the Institute's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in broader society.

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,



This course is part of Georgia Tech's *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.

- critically analyze, and apply distinguishing traits/perspectives/ formulations/ institutions in comparative or international empirical cases or issue areas.
- Students will acquire a basic understanding of the *core theories, paradigms, and models* that comprise the theoretical core of comparative politics.
 - Students will apply the *comparative method* to critically assess the core theories' ability to explain political, economic, and social change.
 - Students will apply the comparative method and best practices in *teamwork* to solve a current problem of comparative politics.
 - Students will defend their critical assessments and problem-solving proposals through compelling, evidence-based, arguments in *written, oral, and audio-visual formats*.

READINGS

The textbook given below is required. All required readings will be posted to Canvas or can be accessed from the Georgia Tech Library's *ejournals* portal. Students wishing to pursue a particular topic in more depth are encouraged to consult with the Instructor.

Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* – Paperback or Kindle. New York: Crown Business, 2013.
 ISBN-10: 0307719227
 ISBN-13: 978-0307719225

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 – Lecture Topics:

- August 20: Comparative Politics – An Overview
 - August 22: The Context of Comparative Politics
- Common readings:* Barry Eichengreen, “One Economy, Ready or Not: Thomas Friedman's Jaunt Through Globalization,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78 (No. 3, May/June 1999), pp. 118-122; Richard Florida, “The World Is Spiky,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 296 (October 2005): 48-51; “Globalization: the rise and fall of an idea that swept the world,” *The Guardian* (February 14, 2017).

Week 2 – Lecture Topics:

- August 27: The Comparative Method
 - August 29: The Classical Paradigm
- Common readings:* David Collier, “The Comparative Method,” in Ada Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1993), pp. 105-119; and Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 1-3.

Week 3 – Lecture Topics:

- September 3: Core Theory #1 – Neo-liberalism



This course is part of Georgia Tech's *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.

- September 5: Core Theory #2 – Neo-Marxism

Common readings: “Political Scientists Debate Theory of ‘Rational Choice,’” *The New York Times*, 26 February 2000 (uploaded to Canvas as “NYT – Rational Choice”); John Williamson, “Democracy and the Washington Consensus,” *World Development*, Vol. 21 (1993), pp. 1329-1336; and Andre Gunder Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” *Monthly Review* (September 1966), pp. 17-31.

Week 4 – Lecture Topics:

- September 10: Core Theory #3 – Modernization & Development
- September 12: Core Theory #4 – Cultural Explanations

Common readings: Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapter 9; W.W. Rostow, “The Stages of Growth,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1959), pp. 1-16; Robert Putnam, “Bowling Alone,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6 (January 1995), pp. 1-17.

Week 5 – Lecture Topics:

- September 17: Core Theory #5 – Institutionalism
- September 19: Research design for group project (in-class group exercise)

Common readings: Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 4-7.

Week 6 – Lecture Topics:

- September 24: Applying Core Theories to Country Cases
- September 26: Examination Review

Common readings: Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 10-12.

Research Design Project due: September 24th

Week 7 – Lecture Topics:

- October 1: Exam #1
- October 3: *Global North* Country Case #1 – United Kingdom

Common readings: Douglass C. North, “Institutions and economic growth: An historical introduction,” *World Development*, Vol. 17 (Issue 9, September 1989), pp. 1319-133.

Week 8 – Lecture Topics:

- October 8: *Global North* Country Cases #2 & #3 – New Zealand & Australia
- October 10: *Global North* Country Case #4 – Japan

Common readings: Samuel P. Huntington, “The Third Wave,” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 2 (No.2 Spring 1991), pp. 12-34.

Fall Recess: October 15

Week 9 – Lecture Topics:

- October 17: *Global North* Country Case #5 – Denmark

Common readings: Brian Woodall, “The Development of Japan’s Developmental State,” in Shiping Hua, ed., *The East Asian Development Model* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 101-120;



This course is part of Georgia Tech's *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.

Adjo Amekudzi-Kennedy, Brian Woodall, Alex Karner et al, “Institutional Arrangements, Transportation System Investments and Socio- Economic Outcomes: Affecting the Development of Shared Regional Prosperity” (2018).

Week 10 – Lecture Topics:

- October 22: *Global South Country Case #6 – China*
- October 24: *Global South Country Case #5 – Fiji*

Common readings: Nick Anda, “Explaining Underdevelopment in the Pacific: Modernization vs Dependency Theories” (2015), available on-line at:

<https://nicholasanda.wordpress.com/2015/09/01/explaining-underdevelopment-in-the-pacific-modernisation-vs-dependency-theories/>; Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 13-15.

Week 11 – Lecture Topics:

- October 29: Sustainable Development
- October 31: Energy Security

Common readings: Liam Denning, “Trump’s Latest Energy Insecurity Plan,” *Bloomberg* (June 1, 2018); Eric Lipton, “As Trump Dismantles Clean Air Rules, an Industry Lawyer Delivers for Ex-Clients,” *New York Times* (August 19, 2018).

Week 12 – Lecture Topics:

- November 5: Environmental Stewardship
- November 7: Examination Review

Common readings: Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (No. 3859, Dec. 1968): 1243-1248 (access from GT Library eJournals); Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, pp. 1-28; Miranda A. Schreuers, “Divergent Paths,” *Environment* 45 (No. 8, 2003): 9-17 (access from GT Library eJournals)

Week 13 – Lecture Topics:

- November 12: Examination #2
- November 14: GP4 Meeting (group)

Readings: decided by group

Week 14 – In-class Activity:

- November 19: GP4 Meeting (group)
- November 21: GP4 Meeting (group)

Readings: decided by group

Week 15 – In-class Activity:

- November 26: *Virtual GP4 meeting*

Readings: decided by group

Thanksgiving Holiday: November 28



This course is part of Georgia Tech's *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.

Week 16 – In-class Activity:

- December 3: Group Presentations



This course is part of Georgia Tech's *Serve-Learn-Sustain* (SLS) initiative, which provides students with opportunities to combine their academic and career interests with their desire to make worthwhile contributions to the world and build sustainable communities where people and nature thrive, in Georgia, the United States, and around the globe. More information about SLS can be found at www.serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu. Visit the website to sign up for the SLS Email List, view the full list of affiliated courses and projects, and find links to Facebook, [Instagram](#) and Twitter.