

GVPT 280: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Instructor:	Guy Ziv	Meeting Time:	Tue. & Th., 4:00 p.m. – 7:20 p.m.
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Office Hours:	Tue. & Th., before class or by appointment		

Overview

This course is an introduction to comparative politics, one of the largest and most dynamic subfields of political science that focuses on the domestic politics of governments around the world. During our six-week summer session, we will cover a variety of themes including the state, nationalism and ethnic politics, democracy, electoral systems, political economy, civil society, transitions to democracy, and the politics of development. This course aims not only to enhance your understanding of these critical topics, but also to broaden your knowledge of specific countries around the world. To that end, we will focus in particular on the politics of governments in three regions: North America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. At the same time, however, we will learn about other areas of the world such as Western Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

The assigned readings for this course will comprise selections from the assigned textbook, as well as journal articles available in the library and electronically, via JSTOR. Students will want to consult additional sources for the research paper, which will be due at the beginning of class on Thursday, August 9th. (Students are encouraged to hand their papers in sooner, if possible.) Class meetings will consist primarily of lectures and discussions concerning the readings and their application to contemporary political trends. To that end, students are encouraged to keep up with current events by regularly monitoring the news in dailies like *The New York Times*. Relevant videos and possibly a guest speaker or two will also be incorporated into class sessions.

Required Reading Material

- Michael J. Sodaro, *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*, Second Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).
- Selected academic articles, which can be found on JSTOR through the university's library system.

Criteria for Evaluation

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Paper: 25%
- Video Documentary Analysis: 15%
- Final Exam (In-Class): 40%

Attendance and Participation: Students are required to attend class regularly and participate actively in class discussions and debates. Absences will negatively impact a student's grade. Only a physician's note will excuse absences from class.

Paper: Students are expected to write a 5-6 page paper on a comparative topic of their choice, subject to approval by the instructor. A good paper will have a clear thesis; a coherent structure (including an introduction and a conclusion); a well-developed argument; quality research based on scholarly sources (a bibliography must be included); and demonstrated knowledge about the topic. Students will be expected to refer to both theoretical concepts covered in class and empirical findings. The paper will be due at the beginning of class on August 9th. Students are asked **not** to email the exams.

Video Documentary Analysis: There will be several video presentations to complement class discussions. Each student will be required to submit a two-page, double-spaced analysis of *one* of the video documentaries. A strong analysis will not just summarize the message of the video, but will contain a thoughtful, independent critique of the relevant topic. If students so desire, they may submit up to two analyses, and the better one will be counted in their final grade. Students can submit the analysis at any time but not later than the last day of class, August 23rd.

Final Exam: There will be an in-class final examination, which will be comprehensive, covering the assigned readings, topics brought up in class discussions, videos and guest speaker presentations. There will be no makeup exams, except for doctor-excused illnesses and family emergencies.

Outline of Topics

Week 1: Introduction to the Study of Comparative Politics

- I. **Tuesday, 7/17: Overview**
 - Introductions and overview of course topics and expectations
 - What is comparative politics and why should we care about it?
 - **Trivia game**

- II. **Thursday, 7/19: Key Concepts and Themes in Comparative Politics**
 - State vs. Nonstate Actors
 - Democracy vs. Authoritarianism
 - Rational Choice Theory

Readings:

- Sodaro textbook, Ch. 1 & 2 (pp. 3-55)

Week 2: The State, Nationalism, and Ethnic Conflict

- III. **Tuesday, 7/24: Power and the State**
 - Power: What is it and who has it?
 - Defining the State and its Institutions
 - Is state sovereignty eroding?

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 4 & 5 (pp. 96-140)

- IV. **Thursday, 7/26: Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict**
 - What constitutes a nation?
 - Nationalism and National Identity
 - How can we explain ethnic conflict?

- Case Studies: (1) Israel and the Palestinians and (2) Yugoslavia's Disintegration
- *** Video: Battle for the Holy Land (Frontline) ***

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 6 (pp. 141-161)
- P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994-1995), pp. 130-166.
- Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 103-124.
- Recommended: Daniel L. Byman, *Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- Recommended: Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
- Recommended: Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.
- Recommended: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

Week 3: Democracy

V. Tuesday, 7/31: Democracy

- What constitutes a democracy?
- Trade-offs between Liberty and Equality
- Models of Democracy
- Conditions for Democracy

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 7 (pp. 162-184) & 9 (pp. 207-229)
- Recommended: Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

VI. Thursday, 8/2: Electoral Systems

- Electoral Systems
 - Presidentialism
 - Parliamentary Government
 - Presidential-Parliamentary Democracies
- Voting: Is it a Rational Act?
- Political Parties

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 8 (pp. 185-206) & 10 (pp. 230-254)

Week 4: Ideology and Political Economy

VII. Tuesday, 8/7: Ideology

- Competing Ideologies
 - Liberalism – social welfare liberalism vs. conservatism
 - Socialism – communism vs. social democracy
- Political Islam
- *** Video: The Roots of 9-11 ***

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 12 (pp. 270-294)

VIII. Thursday, 8/9: Political Economy

- Economic Concepts
 - GNP/GDP
 - Inflation
 - Surplus, Recession, and Depression
 - Deficit and Debt
- Monetarism vs. Keynesian Economics
- *** Video: Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy (Part III) ***
- **Papers Due**

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 13 (pp. 295-315)

Week 5: Civil Society and Transitions to Democracy**IX. Tuesday, 8/14: Civil Society**

- Competing Definitions of Civil Society
- Grassroots Activism vs. Initiatives from Below
- The Relationship between Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation
- Case Studies: (1) Italy and (2) The Revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe

Readings:

- Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997): 401-429.
- Michael Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (Summer 1993): 307-326.
- Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Civil Society, Pluralism, and the Future of East and Central Europe," *Social Research* (Winter 2001). Available on-line: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-83144755.html>
- Recommended: Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

X. Thursday, 8/16: Democratic Transitions

- Conditions for Successful Transitions to Democracy
- What is Democratic Consolidation?
- The Future of the "Third Wave" of Democratization

Readings:

- Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience," *World Politics* 55 (January 2003): 167-192.
- Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 2002): 5-21.
- Doh Chull Shin, "On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research," *World Politics* 47 (October 1994): 135-170.
- Recommended: Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

- Recommended: Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- Recommended: Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
- Recommended: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- Recommended: Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Week 6: The Politics of Development

- XI. Tuesday, 8/21: Developing Countries**
- Categories of Developing Countries
 - Explanations of Underdevelopment
 - ***Presentations of Students' Papers***
 - ***Review for Final Exam***

Readings:

- Sodaro Textbook, Ch. 14 (pp. 316-337)

- XII. Thursday, 8/23: Wrap-Up and Final Exam**
- ***Course Evaluations***
 - ***Last day to submit Video Analysis.***
 - ***Final Exam***