

Comparative Political Systems

GOVT 1400 Summer 2025 Second Session

Professor Eric Langenbacher

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Lectures: M-R 1:00-2:55 CBN 302

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Overview

This course introduces students to the study of comparative politics. The first section looks at the general concepts and processes that characterize politics, such as the state, the nation, democracy and civil society with reference to why these phenomena developed and what functions they fulfill. The second portion delves into the specific elements and institutions of modern political systems, including the executive, parliaments, subnational and supranational governance, political parties and party systems. We also conduct several mathematical calculations to better understand political life. The final section looks at several more specialized topics in comparative politics—such as corruption, political and economic challenges in the developing world and the process of European integration. Overall, the course intends to provide students with an overview of the field of comparative politics, a deeper understanding of modern political systems and a set of skills with which countries can be analyzed.

Requirements

Midterm examination	30%
Presentation	30%
Final examination	30%
Participation	10%

The **midterm** covers the material from the first part of the course and consists of one over-arching essay question. The **final examination** covers the material from the second and third portions of the course and consists of several calculations and an essay question. For the **presentation** (15-20 minutes), students will choose a country and apply the concepts and formulas learned in class to describe and analyze it. More information will be posted on-line at the appropriate time.

Attendance to both the lectures and discussion sections is mandatory and students are expected to come fully prepared for class, completing all assigned readings beforehand. All course materials including powerpoints and recorded lectures will be posted on Canvas.

*** Students must abide by the code of academic conduct as outlined in the Georgetown Honor System ***

Texts

The required text, Eric Langenbacher, *Comparative Politics: Mapping Institutions, Power, and Legitimacy*, 1st Edition (Sage/CQ Press, 2025) is available for purchase at the bookstore. All other readings are available on Canvas. Powerpoint presentations and other additional materials for the week will be posted on the Monday of that week. Students should check Canvas regularly for such materials. Students are urged to follow current international events in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Economist*.

Course Schedule

Part I: Concepts and Themes in Comparative Politics

1. July 7 **Introduction to Comparative Politics**
Langenbacher Ch. 1

The State
Langenbacher Ch. 2
Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970 (1958)).

Suggested Reading: Margaret Levi, et al., "Conceptualizing Legitimacy, Measuring Legitimizing Beliefs," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53, no. 3 (2009): pp. 354-375.
2. July 8 **The Nation and Nationalism**
Langenbacher, Chs. 3 & 4
Yael Tamir, "The Enigma of Nationalism" (Review Essay), *World Politics* 47, No. 3 (1995): 418-440.
Suggested Reading: Rogers Brubaker, "Populism and Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism*, 26, no. (2020): pp. 44-66.
3. July 9 **Regime Types**
Langenbacher, Ch. 5
Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, "Modern Non-democratic Regimes"
Suggested Readings: Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The New Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 51-65.
Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 1-26, 155-191
4. July 10 **Democracy**
Langenbacher, Ch. 6
Wolfgang Merkel, "Embedded and Defective Democracies," *Democratization* 11, no.5 (2004): 33-58.

Suggested Reading: Larry Diamond, "Breaking Out of the Democratic Slump," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 36-50.

Civil Society

Langenbacher, Ch. 6

Michael Foley and Bob Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society," Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone"

Suggested Reading: Ifeanyichukwu Michael Abada and Elias Chukwuemeka Ngwu, "Corruption, governance, and Nigeria's uncivil society, 1999-2016," *Analise Social*, 54, no. 231 (2019): pp. 386-408.
Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 1-16, 163-185

5. July 14

Political Cleavages and Parties

Langenbacher, Ch. 7

Suggested Readings: Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems"

Hanpeter Kriesi, "The transformation of cleavage politics:

Robert Ford and Will Jennings, "The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2020): pp. 295-314.

Modernization and Postmodernization

Langenbacher, Ch. 11 (up to Permissive and Restrictive Elements)

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, "How Development Leads to Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): 33-48.

6. July 15

Summary/Discussion

7. July 16

MIDTERM

Part II: Institutions and Elements of Democratic Systems

8. July 17

The Executive

Langenbacher, Ch. 8 (from Forms of Governance and Executive Choice onwards)

Horowitz, Linz and Lipset, "Presidential v. Parliamentary Democracy: A Debate"

Parliaments

Langenbacher, Ch. 8 (up to Forms of Governance)

9. July 21

Subnational Governance

Ch. 9 (up to Electoral Systems)

Alfred Stepan, "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model"

10. July 22

Electoral Rules

Langenbacher Ch 9. (from Electoral Systems onwards)

The Consequences of Electoral Rules

Calculating Seat Allocation and Proportionality

Langenbacher, Appendix (relevant sections)

11. July 23

Party Systems: Theory

Calculating the Effective Number of Parties

Langenbacher, Ch. 10, Appendix (relevant sections)

12. July 24

Government Formation

Langenbacher Ch. 10

Coalitions

Calculating Volatility, Coalition Options and Party Power Index

Langenbacher, Ch. 10, Appendix (relevant sections)

13. July 28

Pluralism and Corporatism

Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Ch. 9

Summary: Majoritarian versus Consensus Democracy

Langenbacher, Ch. 11 (from Permissive and Restrictive Elements onwards)

III. Topics in Comparative Politics

14. July 29

Challenges of Development

O'Neill Ch. 10.

Keith Griffin, "Underdevelopment in History," Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment" in Charles. K. Wilbur, ed. *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Random House, 1979)

Suggested Reading: Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 13-53, 189-226, 282-298

15. July 30

The European Union

Thomas Christiansen, "The EU's New Normal: Consolidating European Integration in an Era of Populism and Geo-Economics," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58 (2020): pp. 13-27.

15. July 31

Memorials Worldwide

15. August 4

Student Presentations

16. August 5 **Student Presentations**

17. August 6 **Student Presentations**

18. August 7 **Final Examination**

Title IX Syllabus Statement (endorsed by Faculty Senate)

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician

More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](#) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process.

More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).