GOVT 133: Introduction to Comparative Politics  
Mason Korea  
Fall 2022  
Tuesday and Thursday 16:30-17:45

Professor: Soyoung Kwon  
Office: G572  
Office Hours: Monday 15:00-17:00 or by appointment  
E-mail: skwon14@gmu.edu

Course Description:
This course introduces students to the key concepts of comparative politics, comparative methods, and theoretical and analytical tools used in social sciences broadly. The themes include logical explanations, games of politics, state formation, regime types, democratization, determinants and consequences of differing types of political rules. The course is structured to help students understand the existence of different types of political system; political processes and outcomes based on rational choice of actors involved; and their implications for the globalized world today. It is also designed to encourage students to read cases related to each topic and apply comparative analysis with other similar/different cases. The curriculum includes some exercise and assignments aiming to design comparative research, critically assess causal explanations, and to logically explain the political phenomenon and international politics of today.

This course meets the university general education core requirement of Global Understanding.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of GOVT133, you should be able to:

- identify differing types of political rule
- apply the comparative method to critically assess causal explanations
- recognize, understand and apply key terms related to comparative politics
- develop an understanding of global patterns and processes and their interaction with society
- formulate analytical, practical, or creative responses to political problems or issues
Textbook:

Reference Books:
- David J. Samuels. 2013. *Comparative Politics*, Pearson. (Chapter 1 will be required)

Relevant chapters will be posted on Blackboard (located on MyMason). Blackboard will also be used to post announcements including schedule changes and assignment details.

Course Policies and Information:

Diversity Statement: George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. Please see: http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/ for the full GMU diversity statement.

Participation and Attendance: Participation in this class includes completing readings and assignments on time; coming to class regularly and on time; and listening and engaging
attentively to discussions made in class. Active participation based on thoughtful consideration of the literature and experience in class discussions will be expected. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your final grade and you will not be able to make up work, quizzes or other assignments due to these unexcused absences. With few acceptations, more than 12 hours (4 weeks) of unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. An absence is excused when it is due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. To claim an excused absence, you must provide proper proof within three calendar days of your return from that absence. You are responsible for all announcements, assignments, materials and date changes covered or made in class while you are absent.

During each class session, take notes. **Lecture PPTs will not be provided.** Lecture notes are essential for exams and quizzes. Brief outlines or study guides will be provided prior to mid-term and final exams. It is your responsibility to be alert and aware in order to benefit from this class.

**Readings:** Students are **required** to read everything assigned for that day/week prior to class. This will be the basis for lectures, discussions, and assignments during the class. Some weeks have additional suggested readings, which are encouraged to be taken as reference. Your quizzes and tests will be based on the assigned readings.

**Class Discussion:** Students will participate in discussions in this class, especially on assigned readings and module topics. All questions and vigorous discussion are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. In our class, we may deal with sensitive and sometimes controversial materials, videos, and ideas. I expect that you approach our class with seriousness, critical thinking, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and respect for your peers, our guests, the material and myself. Above else, have fun and enjoy the interaction and vigorous exchange of thoughts.
Writing Guidelines

Your written assignments for this class will be graded according to the following criteria. The relative weight given to each of these categories will vary depending on the nature of the assignment.

- Clear and sound content, including a well-stated thesis, related points to support that thesis, and applicable, logically presented, and specific evidence; clarity of argument.
- Depth of engagement with ideas; originality; seriousness of thought; conceptual complexity.
- Well-organized structure; text “flows” with coherent and effective transition between and among ideas; appropriate voice, tone, and style for audience and purpose (e.g. no slang or contractions); accurate word choice.
- Sufficiently and consistently cited and documented; one style of citation used throughout the paper; references adequate number and appropriate type of sources; uses quotations and reference marks appropriately.
- Correct mechanics including grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.

All papers should be thoroughly proofread before being handed in and will be marked down for excessive typographical errors. Quality of writing is critical because if the writing is poor, then you will be unable to communicate clearly or deliver your argument. The BB has self-assigned function to check if you copied sentences or parts from existing sources (and other students’ paper). You cannot steal other people’s work without referencing. Plagiarism is taken very seriously and results in a failing grade.

Electronic Devices: Before each class, please remember to silence or turn off any electronic devices, especially cell phones. No calls or texting during class. If you must use your cell phone during class time for a personal emergency, please leave the room without disturbing the class. You may use your laptops or tablets to take notes and look up information pertinent to our class topics. You may NOT use this opportunity to complete tasks that are not related to our classroom, play games, surf the internet or chat with your friends on social media or elsewhere.
In the event that this opportunity is abused, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately.

**Communication:** Office hours are assigned to talk with and assist you. You could also communicate with me via email. However, please bring any questions and concerns you may have to me in a timely manner. Do not hesitate to ask for guidance and clarification, whatever the issue is.

**Email Policy:** In compliance with a university-wide initiative, our correspondence will be only through GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements. This also means that you must use blackboard.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Participation:** Active participation means having arrived at class on time with questions/comments prepared for discussion. Occasionally, you will have to submit assignments to the class. Attendance is a part of participation.

**Quizzes:** You will have about four quizzes over the course of the semester based on the concept and terminology learned from the readings. The quiz will cover the required readings and NOT the suggested readings. If you miss a quiz without a valid excuse, there will be no make-up quiz.

**Exams:** You will have a mid-term and final exams. For the written mid-term, you will be asked to identify key terms and write short essay responses. The final exam will be based on a subject chosen in advance to conduct extensive research on the topic, and must include terms, theories and key parts of the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. It will be in a form of either oral exam or a short essay exam depending on the school policy on COVID.

**Short Paper (Article Review):** You will be required to write a short essay during the semester, which engage course readings and selective works of renowned comparative theorists. Choose one of the articles to review the work. Each article is related to one of the topics covered during the course. The article review should have the author’s main arguments and your critical
thinking on the scholarly work by linking it to the topic learned during the class. More information will be giving on BB. You can find the list of works at the end of this syllabus. All papers will be in Microsoft Word format and double spaced; have one-inch margins on all four sides; use 12in Times New Roman Font; and use consistent style of citations with bibliography.

An excellent source on how to write papers, properly site and use a bibliography is at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/). I also highly suggest you download and use Zotero citation software ([https://www.zotero.org](https://www.zotero.org)) and use it with Firefox web browser in order to help you properly cite sources. You are required to submit all papers electronically via blackboard by the due date.

**Grading Rubric: subject to change depending on the online/offline class format**

| Participation, Discussion, Assignments, Topic presentations | 20% |
| Quizzes: | 20% |
| Short Paper: Approximately 800-1,200 words, 3+ Citations | 20% |
| Mid-term Exam: | 20% |
| Final Exam: | 20% |

**Grading scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Accumulated</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>78-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
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**Blackboard and Email Policy:** You must activate your Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with the department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. Please check the syllabus before emailing me regarding course matters. I am happy to respond to clarification requests on assignments, though I strongly prefer to address these matters during class time.
**Academic Accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability and need academic accommodations or assistance, please see me at the beginning of the semester. Even if the disability is not documented, speak with me right away so I can get you the assistance you need.

**Important Dates:** [http://masonkorea.gmu.edu/academic-calendar/](http://masonkorea.gmu.edu/academic-calendar/)

**Course Assignments**

*Weekly topic, readings & assignments*

- Clark et al. Ch. 1, pp.5-8

**Week 2. Why do we compare? (8/30)**
- O’Neil Ch. 1 pp.7-19
- Samuels Ch. 1 pp.2-8

**Week 3. Social Science and Comparative Methods: How do we compare? (9/1 and 9/6)**
- Clark et al. Ch. 2 pp.23-42
- Explain logically with concepts, theories, and cases

**Week 4. Research Workshop: design your comparative research (9/13 and 9/15)**
- Samuels Chap. 1 pp. 8-27

**Week 5. The State (9/20 and 9/22)**
- O’Neil Ch. 2
- Discussion:
  - Methods: How do we measure stateness?
  - Case: Pakistan and State Failure

- O’Neil Ch. 3
- Discussion:
  - Methods: Can Federalism Solve Ethnic Conflict?
  - Case: Has Nepal's New Constitution Ended Civil War?
  - Assignment: Identity evaluations

**Week 7. Political Economy (10/4 and 10/6)**
- O’Neil Ch. 4
- Discussion:
  - Comparative Studies: Mercantilism in Japan and China; Poverty and Inequality in the Soviet Union and Russia
  - Case: Why have Poverty and Inequality declined in Latin America?
Week 8. Mid-term Exam (10/13)

Week 9. Democratic Regimes (10/18 and 10/20)
- O’Neil Ch. 5
- Discussion:
  - Methods: What is undermining democracy?
  - Case: What explains democratization in Asia?

Week 10. Nondemocratic Regimes (10/25 and 10/27)
- O’Neil Ch. 6
- Supplementary reading: Clark et al. Ch. 10 “Varieties of Dictatorship”
- Discussion:
  - (Video) Rules for the Rulers
  - Methods: Are resources good for democracy?
  - Case: what explains the different paths of Zimbabwe and South Africa?
  - Assignment: same source, different outcomes

Week 11. Communism and Post-communism & Democratic Transition (11/1 and 11/3)
- O’Neil Ch. 9
- Discussion:
  - Methods: What explains variations in the exit from communism?
  - Case 1: Why did reform fail in the Soviet Union but Succeed in China?

Week 12. What is Politics? The Exit, Voice, Loyalty Game (11/8 and 11/10)
- Clark et al. Ch. 3 “What is Politics”
- Discussion:
  - Case: why people don't revolt in North Korea?
  - EVL model

- O’Neil Ch. 8
- Discussion:
  - Methods: What explains authoritarian views in developed democracies?
  - Case: what explains Greek Economic Crisis

Week 14 Developing Countries (11/22 and 11/24)
- O’Neil, Ch. 10
- Discussion:
  - Methods: how can countries avoid the middle-income trap?
  - Case: Why did Asia industrialize faster than Latin America?
Week 15 Globalization and Future of Comparative Politics (11/29 and 12/1)
- O’Neil, Ch. 11
- Discussion:
  - Case: Is Globalization causing climate change?

Week 16 Final Exam (12/7-12/14)

Appendix. List of Works by Comparative Theorists for an article review.

You can also find these works on Google Scholar or GMU library ([https://library.gmu.edu/](https://library.gmu.edu/)).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Topic</th>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The State</td>
<td>Sovereignty</td>
<td>Krasner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nations and Society</td>
<td><em>War and the State in Africa</em></td>
<td>Herbst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Economy</td>
<td><em>Root Causes: A historical Approach to Assessing the Role of Institutions in Economic Development</em></td>
<td>Acemoglu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Regimes</td>
<td><em>What Democracy Is… and Is Not,</em></td>
<td>Schmitter and Karl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-democratic Regimes</td>
<td><em>Modern Nondemocratic Regimes</em></td>
<td>Linz and Stepan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communism</td>
<td><em>The End of History and the Last Man</em></td>
<td>Fukuyama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-communism</td>
<td><em>The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers,</em></td>
<td>Azar Gat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td><em>The Clash of Civilization</em></td>
<td>Huntington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing countries</td>
<td><em>Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?</em></td>
<td>Collier and Gunning</td>
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