

## **POL 510 — Comparative Politics**

**New Draft: Fall 2026**

M/W 9h00-10h25

### **Instructional Methods and Activities**

Monday sessions are structured around the instructor. The goal is not passive listening but directed questioning: students will be called on without warning to summarize arguments, identify assumptions, defend positions, and respond to counter-examples. Come prepared to do this.

Wednesday sessions are structured around the country. Students are divided into functional groups (see below) and are responsible for a specific analytical angle on the week's country. The instructor will lead the discussion.

**Country desk groups** will be assigned at the start of the semester and rotate every two weeks. Each group prepares a specific angle on the Wednesday country:

- **Group A — Political Institutions:** How is power formally structured? Executive-legislative relations, electoral system, key constitutional features.
- **Group B — Regime Dynamics:** Where does this country sit on the democratic-authoritarian spectrum? What pressures is it under? What holds the system together?
- **Group C — Key Political Actors:** Who are the relevant parties, movements, leaders, and opposition forces? What do they want?
- **Group D — IR and Foreign Policy:** What are this country's principal foreign policy orientations? How do domestic factors shape its international behavior?
- **Group E — Current Events:** What has happened in this country in the past six months that is politically significant? How does it connect to the week's theoretical focus?

Every student is responsible for the full country picture, not only their group's angle. Groups exist to structure preparation and ensure the discussion covers the terrain; the instructor will not respect group boundaries when cold-calling.

### **Assessment**

**Reflections: 20%** - Each week will begin with a guided in-class written reflection on the readings for that week.

**Participation and desk reports 20%** - Students will be expected to come prepared and to participate in class discussions, including taking an active role in in-class simulations. In addition, each country desk will be required to produce a short report summarizing that week's country from the perspective of their group.

**Mid-term exam: 30%** - Short essay questions under closed-book exam conditions.

**Final exam: 30%** - Short essay questions under closed-book exam conditions.

## **Schedule of Classes and Readings**

### **WEEK 1 (Sept 7 / 9) — Introduction / USA**

#### **Monday — What is comparative politics? The unified-actor fallacy**

- Lijphart, Arend, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,"

#### **Wednesday — USA**

- Dahl, Robert A., *How Democratic Is the American Constitution*

### **WEEK 2 (Sept 14 / 16) — Liberalism, Rights, and the State / France**

#### **Monday — Liberal theory and the rights-bearing individual**

- Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789).
- Locke, John, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689), Chapter 8 ("Of the Beginning of Political Societies") and Chapter 19 ("Of the Dissolution of Government")
- Zakaria, Fareed, *The Future of Freedom*, Chapter 1 ("A Brief History of Human Liberty")

#### **Wednesday — France**

- Mériau, Eugénie, "The 60th anniversary of France's Fifth Republic: Out of breath?"
- "A Comprehensive Guide to the Semi-Presidential System"

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### **WEEK 3 (Sept 21 / 23) — Democracy: Definitions and Electoral Systems / Netherlands**

#### **Monday — What is democracy?**

- Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy Is... And Is Not"
- Lijphart, Arend, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapters 2-3.

#### **Wednesday — Netherlands**

- "Guide to Dutch Politics"
- Video: "Elections in the Netherlands: Dutch Democracy Explained"  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yMiq96BgRc>)

## **WEEK 4 (Sept 28 / 30) — Democratic Backsliding and Competitive Authoritarianism / Hungary**

### **Monday — How democracies erode**

- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism"
- Zakaria, Fareed, *The Future of Freedom*, Chapter 3 ("Illiberal Democracy")

### **Wednesday — Hungary**

- Bánkuti, Miklós, Gábor Halmai, and Kim Lane Scheppele, "Hungary's Illiberal Turn: Disabling the Constitution"

## **WEEK 5 (Oct 5 / 7) — Varieties of Authoritarianism / Turkey**

### **Monday — Types of authoritarian rule**

- Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set"
- Waller, Julian G., "Disentangling Authoritarianism and Illiberalism in the Context of the Global States System"
- Paxton, Robert O., "The Five Stages of Fascism"

### **Wednesday — Turkey**

- Esen, Berk, and Gümüşçü, Şebnem, "After Crackdown, Is Turkey an Autocracy?"

## **WEEK 6 (Oct 12 / 14) — The International Order / Morocco**

### **Monday — Hegemony, empire, and the international order**

- Benabdallah, Lina, "The Liberal International Order as an Imposition: A Postcolonial Reading"
- Farrell, Henry, and Abraham L. Newman. "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion"
- **Optional:** Bradford, Anu. "The Brussels Effect"

### **Wednesday — Morocco**

- Maghraoui, Abdeslam, "Monarchy and Political Reform in Morocco"

## **WEEK 7 (Oct 19 / 21) — Review / MIDTERM**

**Monday — Review and exam preparation** No new readings.

**Wednesday — MIDTERM EXAM** in-class, written, closed-book.

***FALL BREAK: October 24 – November 1***

**WEEK 8 (Nov 2 / 4) — Two-Level Games and Veto Players / Russia**

**Monday — Two-level games and the institutional anatomy of negotiation**

- Putnam, Robert, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games"

**Wednesday — Russia**

- Fish, Steven "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?"

**WEEK 9 (Nov 9 / 11) — NO CLASS (Geneva trip Monday; national holiday Wednesday)**

**WEEK 10 (Nov 16 / 18) — Political Economy / Iran**

**Monday — Rents, patronage, and the resource curse**

- Beblawi, Hazem. "The Rentier State in the Arab World"

**Wednesday — Iran**

- The Conversation / FIU News, "Iran's Ruling Structure Explained" (2026).
- Forozan, Hesam, and Afshin Shahi. "The Military and the State in Iran: The Economic Rise of the Revolutionary Guards"

**WEEK 11 (Nov 23 / 25) — Religious Politics / Israel**

**Monday – Religion and state**

- Stepan, Alfred. "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations.'"
- Kuru, Ahmet T. "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion."

**Wednesday — Israel**

- Gavison, Ruth. "Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the 'Ethnic Democracy' Debate."

**WEEK 12 (Nov 30 / Dec 2) — Civil (and Uncivil) Society / Guest Lecture TBD**

**Monday — Civil society**

- Tilly, Charles, and Sidney Tarrow, Contentious Politics, Chapters 1–2.

**Wednesday — Guest Lecture (Tunisia or Libya) Readings TBD.**

**WEEK 13 (Dec 7 / 9) — Synthesis / Interactive Activity**

**Monday — Synthesis** No new readings. Full review across the semester; comparative questions across cases.

**Wednesday — Interactive activity** Format TBD. No new readings unless the activity design requires them.