

# PS114 States, Institutions, and Post-Conflict Societies: Introduction to Comparative Politics

Seminar Leader: [Dr. Elena B. Stavrevska](#)

Course Times: Mon and Wed, 14:00 – 15:30

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Office Hours: Mon, 15:30 – 17:30

## Course Description

What constitutes a state and how are nations formed? What are the different systems in which political power can be organized? How do we account for the differences between democracies and autocracies and which institutional forms can they take? And why do some states provide better living conditions for their citizens and are better able to tackle contemporary challenges than others? These are some of the questions at the heart of the study of comparative politics. By the same token, they are also some of the most pressing questions faced by post-conflict societies in their efforts to organize political power anew. Drawing on examples and debates from peace and conflict literature, the course provides an introduction to key theoretical approaches and concepts in the comparative study of politics. The focus will be on core topics in political development, such as state- and nation-building, the role of the state, democratization, economic development, and ethnic conflict. We will also look at the different types of political regimes, electoral and party systems, the way they affect the structure, functioning, logic, and social role of political institutions, as well as the role of civil society. In exploring these topics from a comparative perspective, theoretical texts are combined with case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand important topics in domestic politics, grasp the diversity of political systems and regimes, and analyze current political developments.

## Objectives

The course aims to:

- introduce students to basic concepts and approaches in comparative politics;
- introduce students to some of the main debates in post-conflict societies;
- equip them with conceptual tools and cognitive skills to critically engage with the policy domain;
- provide them with an opportunity to work on a variety of case studies.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

- deploy the basic concepts and approaches used in the study of comparative politics, as well as some of the main debates in the study of post-conflict societies in better understanding and interpreting political developments, systems, and processes;
- construct viable arguments and present them in an effective way, both orally and in writing;
- gather, organize and use evidence from different sources;
- work independently and demonstrate initiative and self-organization;
- collaborate with others in achieving common goals.

## Requirements

### Attendance

Students' attendance AND active participation is critical in this course. Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Students are expected to be on time, attend classes, be attentive in class, be respectful towards their classmates and the instructor, raise questions, provide critical and constructive commentary on the assigned readings, and actively engage in classroom discussions. Repeated tardiness and/or use of phones during classes will affect the participation grade.

### Assessment

Students will be assessed based on their class participation and their written assignments.

The class participation includes:

- general contribution to classroom discussions and raising questions regarding the readings, both in class and in writing where assigned,
- two 10-minute media coverage presentations (in teams of 2-3 students),
- one 15-minute thematic presentation (in teams of 2-3 students).

The requirements and evaluation criteria for each of the above will be discussed at the beginning of the semester.

Students are required to carefully keep track of the course assignments, as they differ from week to week. Some of the assignments are individual and some are group-based. At the beginning of the semester all students will alphabetically be divided into two groups – group 1 and group 2 – which will then be divided into teams, composed of 2-3 students. The groups remain the same throughout the semester, while teams can change upon consultation with the instructor.

The teams will do two media presentations – one in relation to a media article about nations and/or nationalism and one in relation to a media article about political participation. The media presentations will be graded as follows:

- Selection of piece relevant to the topic – 15%
- Presentation/summary of the media piece – 20%
- Integration of the piece with the course material – 30%
- Raising relevant discussion questions – 20%
- Presentation skills and team work – 10%
- Time management skills – 5%

In addition, at the beginning of the semester, each team will sign up to do a thematic presentation at some point during the semester on a topic that is covered in class, but through the empirical lens of a country or region chosen by the team. The thematic presentations will be graded as follows:

- Theoretical explanation of the concept/phenomenon in question (integrating the readings) – 30%
- Empirical evidence of the concept/phenomenon in question (integrating theory and empirics) – 30%
- Raising relevant discussion questions – 10%
- Handout (content and organization) – 20%

- Presentation skills and team work – 5%
- Time management skills – 5%

All students are required to do all the readings and come to class prepared regardless of whether their team is presenting that day or not. Students' participation will be assessed based on both their active engagement in group-based activities and their individual contribution in the classroom.

### Writing Assignments

The students will have two writing assignments:

- 1. Mid-term review essay (2,000 words), worth 20% of the final grade, due by Sunday, March 18, 23:59**
  - The mid-term review essay is an individual writing assignment.
  - Each student is expected to choose one of the readings covered up to week 8 as the basis for their essay.
  - The essay should provide a review of the reading, summarizing the arguments and highlighting the strengths and the weaknesses of the reading.
  - The review essay should be organized as follows:
    - The first part should briefly summarize the main argument(s) of the text;
    - The second and main part should critically engage with the text, its arguments and any evidence there might be,
    - The third part should consist of a couple of paragraphs where the student specifically engages with a particular aspect of the reading and offers their contribution (theoretical or empirical).
    - The final part should outline the key takeaways from the reading and any discussion questions it raises.
  - The essays should be approximately 2,000 words ( $\pm 10\%$ , including page numbers), using a 12-point font, single-space, 1-inch margins, and page numbers.
  - The concept and the structure of a review essay will be discussed in week 7.
- 2. Final argumentative essay (3,000 words), worth 30% of the final grade (5% - outline; 25% - final essay), due by Sunday, May 20, 23:59**
  - The final argumentative essay is an individual writing assignment, which is due at the end of completion week.
  - Each student is expected to choose one from a list of 10 questions that will be distributed in week 12.
  - The essay should provide a clear argument on the selected question, supported by relevant course material, as well as literature and evidence from further research.
  - Students are required to send to the instructor a two-page outline of their final essay summarizing: (1) the question addressed and the main argument, (2) the structure of the essay, and (3) the type of sources and evidence that will be used. Outlines are worth 5% of the overall grade and are due by Sunday, May 6, 23:59. Students will receive feedback on them in the course of week 14.
  - The final essays, worth 25% of the overall grade, should be approximately 3,000 words ( $\pm 10\%$ , including page numbers, but excluding bibliography), using a 12-point font, single-space, 1-inch margins.
  - The concept and the structure of a research essay will be discussed in week 7.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Written assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). As per the Student Handbook, instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where the instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

### **Grade Breakdown**

- Active participation in class discussions and raising questions – 20%
- Two media coverage presentations (in teams of maximum three students) – 10% each
- One thematic presentation (in teams of maximum three students) – 10%
- Mid-term review essay (2,000 words) – 20%
- Final research essay (3,000 words) – 30%

### **Schedule**

Spring 2018 classes start on Monday, January 29 and run until Friday, May 18 with spring break planned from March 26 – April 2, 2018. Completion week is from May 14-18. Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

There are no textbooks or readers for this course. All readings are made available through Google Classroom. Students are responsible to check Google Classroom on weekly basis in order to download and read course materials regularly. The instructor reserves the right to change any reading listed below depending on students' feedback on the degree of difficulty of assigned readings, as well as students' expressed interests throughout the semester.

### Week 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics

#### **Monday, January 29**

Discussion on course structure, syllabus, and assignments. No assigned readings.

#### **Wednesday, January 31**

- Heywood, Andrew. 2013. "What is Politics?" In: *Politics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–26.

### Week 2: The State

#### **Monday, February 5**

- Weber, Max. 1946. "Politics as a Vocation." In: *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Hans H. Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (eds. and trans.). New York: Oxford University Press, 77–128.

#### **Wednesday, February 7**

- Spruyt, Hendrik. 2002. "The Origins, Development, and Possible Decline of the Modern State." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 127–149.
- Wimmera, Andreas, and Yuval Feinstein. 2010. "The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001." *American Sociological Review* 75(5): 764–790.

### Week 3: States and Nations

#### Monday, February 12

- Held, David. 1989. "Class, Power and the State." In: *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power, and Democracy*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 56–78.
- Kantola, Johanna. 2006. "Gender and the State: Theories and Debates." In: *Feminists Theorize the State*. New York: Palgrave, 1-21.

Assignment for each team in Group 1: Prepare a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation based on a recent media article in connection to the concepts of the state or statehood. Send the selected news article and the final slides to the instructor by Monday at noon.

#### Wednesday, February 14

- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1–7; 19–38.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 48–59.

Assignment for each team in Group 2: Prepare a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation based on a recent media article in connection to the concepts of nation or nationalism. Send the selected news article and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 4: Nations and Ethnicity

#### Monday, February 19

- Chatterjee, Partha. 1993. *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 3–13; 35–75.

#### Wednesday, February 21

- Varshney, Ashutosh. 2007. "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict." In: Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 274–294.
- Giley, Bruce. 2004. "Against the Concept of Ethnic Conflict." *Third World Quarterly* 25(6): 1155-1166.

\*Thematic presentation. The team should send the handout and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 5: Democratic Regimes

#### Monday, February 26

- Sorensen, Georg. 2008. *Democracy and Democratization: Process and Prospects in a Changing World*. Boulder: Westview Press, 3–27.

#### Wednesday, February 28

- Urbinati, Nadia. 2011. "Representative Democracy and its Critics." In: Sonia Alonso, John Keane, and Wolfgang Merkel (eds.) *The Future of Representative Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 23-46.

- Hendriks, Frank. 2010. "Participatory Democracy." *Vital Democracy: A Theory of Democracy in Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 107–131.

\*Thematic presentation. The team should send the handout and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 6: Non-Democratic Regimes

Monday, March 5

- Brooker, Paul. 2014. *Non-Democratic Regimes*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–40.

Wednesday, March 7

- Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *The American Political Science Review* 87(3): 567–576.
- Schatz, Edward. 2009. "The Soft Authoritarian Toolkit: Agenda Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan." *Comparative Politics* 41(2): 203–222.

\*Thematic presentation. The team should send the handout and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

### Week 7: Regime 'Transitions'

Monday, March 12 - Writing in Comparative Politics

Presentation by the instructor on how to write a review and an argumentative essay in comparative politics.

Wednesday, March 14

- Geddes, Barbara. 2007. "What Causes Democratization?" In: Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 317–339.
- Owusu, Maxwell. 1992. "Democracy and Africa: A View from the Village." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(3): 369–396.

Mid-term review essays due by Sunday, March 18, 23:59.

### Week 8: Electoral Systems

Monday, March 19

- Gallagher, Michael. 2017. "Elections and Referendums." In: Daniele Caramani, *Comparative Politics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 173–187.

Wednesday, March 21

- Reilly, Benjamin. 2001. *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapters 8.
- McCulloch, Allison. 2013. "Does Moderation Pay? Centripetalism in Deeply Divided Societies." *Ethnopolitics* 12(2): 111–132.

\*Thematic presentation. The team should send the handout and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

Spring break (March 26–30)

Week 9: No classes

Week 10: Party Systems and Political Parties

Monday, April 9

- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2007. "Party Systems." In: Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 522–554.

Wednesday, April 11

- Van Cott, Donna Lee. 2005. "Institutions, Party Systems, and Social Movements." In: *From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 22–48.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2016. "Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash." *HKS Working Paper* No. RWP16-026.

\*Thematic presentation. The team should send the handout and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

Week 11: Political Participation

Monday, April 16

- Van Deth, Jan W. 2014. "A Conceptual Map of Political Participation." *Acta Politica* 49(3): 349–367.
- Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. "Populism and Mobilization." In: *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 42–61.

Wednesday, April 18

- Spiros, Anthony J. 2011. "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(1): 1–45.

Assignment for each team in Group 2: Prepare a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation based on a recent media article in connection to political participation. Send the selected news article and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

Week 12: Social Movements

Monday, April 23

- Tarrow, Sydney. 2011. *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1: Contentious Politics and Social Movements, pp. 16-34.

Wednesday, April 25

- Brownlee, Jason, Tarek Masoud and Andrew Reynolds. 2013. "Tracking the 'Arab Spring': Why the Modest Harvest?" *Journal of Democracy* 24(4): 29–44.

- Molyneux, Maxine. 1985. "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua." *Feminist Studies* 11(2): 227–254.

Assignment for each team in Group 1: Prepare a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation based on a recent media article in connection to social movements. Send the selected news article and the final slides to the instructor by Wednesday at noon.

*Students receive a list of 10 essay questions.*

### Week 13: Political Economy

**Monday, April 30**

- Heywood, Andrew. 2013. "Political Economy and Globalization." In: *Politics*, 4th edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 128–150.

**Wednesday, May 2**

No readings. This session is dedicated to watching parts of a selected film and discussing how they relate to the week's readings.

Assignment for all students: Prepare a two-page outline of your final essay summarizing: (1) the question addressed and the main argument, (2) the structure of the essay, and (3) the type of sources and evidence that will be used. Outlines are due by Sunday, May 6, 23:59.

### Week 14: Development

**Monday, May 7**

- Escobar, Arturo. 1995. Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3–20.
- Frank, Andre Gunder. 1966. "The Development of Underdevelopment." *Monthly Review* 18.

**Wednesday, May 9**

- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2012. "Why Nations Fail Today?" In: *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. New York: Crown Publishers, 368–403.

Students receive feedback on their outlines. Consultations are to take place in the course of week 14.

### Completion Week (May 14–18)

**Monday, May 14**

- Wrap-up session (make-up class for April 4)

*Final essays due by Sunday, May 20, 23:59.*