

American Democracy and Governance in Comparative Perspective (Course Description)

Research on the Global South focuses on issues such as state capacity, corruption, ethnic violence, election integrity, elite capture, and democratic consolidation. In this course, we will examine these issues in the context of the United States. Drawing on readings from both the U.S. and Global South (e.g., India, Brazil, South Africa), we will examine topics such as corruption in city and state government; variation in state capacity within and across American states when it comes to public health; and the institutional roots of democratic backsliding. We will also examine policy solutions for these problems based on US or other cases and evaluate their effectiveness. Along with active discussions based on course readings, students will present a policy proposal to address one of the problems we discuss in class and write a research paper focused on a particular case (city, state, national policy issue). This class will be useful to students interested in applying social science concepts to understand policy challenges in developing countries, and particularly useful to those interested in careers in development.