

**Introduction to Politics  
Fordham University**

Spring 2025

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Class Location: Faber Hall 668

Section 1 (POSC-1100-R02): Tuesdays and Fridays, 10AM -11-15 AM

Section 2 (POSC-1100-R03): Tuesdays and Fridays, 10AM 11:30AM -12:45PM

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 230 PM and by appointment

**Course Description**

Aim of the Course

This course will introduce you to the ways that political scientists approach some of the most fundamental issues for democracy and democratic governance. We will address questions such as:

- What does it mean for a country to be democratic?
- Why do some countries maintain liberal democracies while others see backsliding at the hands of popularly elected leaders?
- How do different constitutional systems compare in how they govern?
- Is inequality compatible with democracy?
- Who has power in American cities and why are cities often unable to pursue ambitious reforms?
- Do democracies fight wars in different ways and with different adversaries than non-democracies?

We will learn about the different ways political scientists have responded to these questions (using qualitative research, surveys, experiments, and other methods) and how and why they disagree about what the correct answers are. We will also learn to read carefully (see the guide at the end of this syllabus), engage political science questions carefully with attention to logic and evidence (more than based on our personal opinions or what's in the news although we will discuss this in class).

**Required Books**

Clark, Golder and Golder, *Foundations of Comparative Politics*, First Edition (CQ Press 2018).

**Basic Rules**

In-Class: You are expected to be present every session and to participate in class discussions and partner/group activities. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for each day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings. To help you digest the readings, I provide a reading worksheet at the end of this

syllabus. I encourage you to copy and fill in this worksheet for each of the 1-2 main readings assigned each class. While taking notes on laptops is fine, I will ask you to refrain from using your phones or using your computers for anything other unrelated to note taking or class activities (e.g., social media, messaging, etc.).

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day-to-day politics as it related to course themes, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you). We also are a course on political science, which means that our discussions should focus on concepts, methods, and theory rather than current events for their own sake. Disciplining ourselves in this way can elevate discussions in a rigorous and insightful way.

**Absences:** If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). In line with Fordham's attendance policy you should report any excused absences with documentation by filling out the Excused Absence Form. I keep attendance and unexcused absences result in a lowering of your participation grade.

Note that Fordham's official attendance policy is that for courses that meet twice a week it is not allowed to have more than four absences in total across the course – while having more than four unexcused absences does not automatically result in failing this course, excessive absences make it very difficult to receive a passing grade.

**Covid Policies:** As of right now there are no specific Covid policies in place in this course. However, if conditions were to change we may have to adjust. That being said, if you are sick – Covid or otherwise – stay home, let me know, fill out the excused absence form, and get medical care if necessary. If you have any concerns or questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

## **Office Hours**

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on Tuesdays between 1:30 and 2:30 PM (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. You do not need to make an appointment for this time slot - so if you want to chat feel free to drop by! Also, it's fine to stop by if you want to talk about the course more broadly and you don't really have specific questions. Office hours are also a really helpful way to get feedback and questions answered about upcoming exams or assignments, so make sure you use them! If you want to meet but cannot make it during my office hours, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting.

## **AI and Academic Ethics**

AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Generative AI tools are not permitted in this course for any written assignments. Students must rely on their own originality, creativity and critical thinking skills to complete assignments, complete take-home exams, write papers, and engage with course material. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, relying on AI, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. This includes self-plagiarism – meaning, cases where students re-use material they wrote themselves for other courses.

## **Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade**

For the exams you can earn up to 100 points. Those points subsequently are converted to a letter grade which builds towards your final course grade in line with the scale below. For the paper and your participation, you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

<b>Exam Points</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Points toward Final Grade</b>
100-93	A	4.0
92-90	A-	3.7
89-87	B+	3.3
86-83	B	3.0
82-80	B-	2.7
79-77	C+	2.3
76-73	C	2.0
72-70	C-	1.7
69-60	D	1.0
59 and below	F	0.0

Grade Complaints: I will grade your performance in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course. It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and I am always willing to discuss your progress during the course to help you improve. If you believe the grade you received is an incorrect assessment of the quality of the work you produced, you can challenge your grade. If you want to do so, please email me to set up an appointment and send me a copy of your work and a written description explaining in detail why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed.

## **Notes**

Fordham generally provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, please do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in class, by email, or during an office hour appointment – whichever

you prefer. Also, please correct me if I ever mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun!

Fordham's Writing Center (in Walsh Library at Rose Hill and in Quinn Library at Lincoln Center) provides individualized assistance to students for writing assignments. You can make an appointment – free of charge! – to meet with someone who will read your paper and discuss it in detail with you. I strongly recommend using this system for your paper in this class and in other classes. You can sign up for an appointment at [https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing\\_center](https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing_center).

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham's Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham's Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham will seek to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are not mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit [www.fordham.edu/care](http://www.fordham.edu/care) or [www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct) for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide free assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7). If you prefer to access mental health services outside of Fordham, New York City provides free mental health support through NYC Well (<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

**15% - Class Participation.** Attendance is obligatory. An active role in discussions and class activities by everyone enrolled in the course is expected, as is the completion of required readings, activities, and exercises before the class session for which they are assigned.

**5% - Follow the News in a Different Country.** Each student will be asked to follow the political news in a country other than the US. You'll have an opportunity to mention what you've seen at the start of class during the "What's in the news" section of each class. You can look for regular domestic politics coverage and how US policy choices impact your country. Over the course of the semester, I'll ask you to write a 1-2 paragraph post on Blackboard describing a

news story in your country and how it related to the themes of the course. I'll provide a handout with news sources for the countries you suggest in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the course.

**5% Case Study Group Presentations.** Students will be asked to complete a case study presentation in groups of 3-4. These presentations should provide an overview of the way people rise to power, how the regime monitors or deals with the opposition, demographics, and the main social issues facing the country. Presentations should last 7-10 minutes.

**20 % - In-Class Midterm.** Students will be required to write an in-class exam. It will include a multiple choice section, 4 short answer ID questions and a longer essay section.

**25 % - Take-Home Midterm 2.** Students will be required to write an open book take-home exam. It will include 4 short answer ID questions and a longer essay section (3-4 pages).

**30% - Take-Home Final.** Students will be required to write a take-home final consisting of a short answer section and longer essay (5 pages) section.

9/2: Introduction (No Assigned Reading)

**Learning objectives:**

- Go over the syllabus
- Discuss course expectations
- Establish the stakes of the class for understanding a changing world
- Get to know you activity

9/5: What is Political Science and How Do You Read Political Science?

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2019. *Foundation of Comparative Politics*. Chapter 2 (pp. 13–31).

Amelia Hoover Green, "[How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.](#)"

**Learning objectives:**

- Discuss the basic tools of political science and social science research (hypotheses, methods of research).
- Review tools for effective and efficient reading using the reading worksheet

**PART I: Basic Institutions**

9/9: What is a State and Where Why Did European States Become Effective?

In-Class Exercise on Reading Tilly

Weber, Max. 1978. "Bureaucracy" in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pgs. 956-963.

Tilly, Charles. 1985. War Making as Organized Crime. In P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (Eds). *Bringing the State Back In*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**Learning objectives:**

- Learn about the role of war in state-building in Europe and its consequences for building professionalized bureaucracies.
- Practice active reading using the reading worksheet (class activity).

9/12: No Class. Attending the APSA Conference.

9/16: Colonialism, Weak State Capacity, and Governance in sub-Saharan Africa

Herbst, Jeffrey. 1990. "War and the State in Africa." *International Security*, 14(4) 117-139.

Herbst, Jeffrey. 2014. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton University Press, chapter 3.

**Learning objectives:**

- Learn about the ways that late state building in sub-Saharan Africa differed from early episodes of state formation?
- Why did post-colonial countries have problems building strong states?
- Understand what low-capacity states look like using sub-Saharan Africa and other examples provided in lecture.

9/19: What is Democracy?

Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy*. New Haven: Yale University Press: Chapter 1.

Zakaria, Fareed. 1997. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs*. November/December: 22-43.

9/23: What are Authoritarian Countries Like? Varieties of Autocracies

Clark, Golder, and Golder. 2018. *Foundation of Comparative Politics*. Chapter 8.

Lankov, Andrei. 2017. "Kim Jong-Un is a Survivor, Not a Mad Man." *Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/26/kim-jong-un-is-a-survivor-not-a-madman/>

9/26: When Do Elections Fall Short?

Lehoucq, Fabrice. 2003. "Electoral Fraud: Causes, Types, and Consequences." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6: 233-56.

Scheppele, Kim Lane. 2022. "How Viktor Orbán Wins." *Journal of Democracy* 33 (3) 45-61.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand how political scientists define democracy and how this contrasts with autocracy.
- Learn about the history of democracy in the world.

9/30: Democratic Transitions (from Authoritarian Rule)

Geddes, Barbara. 2009. "What Causes Democratization?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, chapter 14 (317–339).

Learning goals:

- Learn causes of democratic transitions.

10/3: Case Study Group Projects

Present case studies of the authoritarian, semi-authoritarian, or democratic regimes of a country in groups of 4-5. Countries will be assigned in class on 9/23.

10/7: Presidential Systems Vs. Parliamentary Systems?

Clark, Golder, and Golder. 2018. *Foundation of Comparative Politics*. Chapter 10 (217-40).

Moe, Terry M., and William G. Howell. 1999. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (4) 850-873.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the differences between presidential and parliamentary systems.
- Understand President authority and what powers can be used unilaterally (without congress).
- Understand the risks of presidential systems for democratic consolidation.

10/10: Federalism

Clark, Golder and Golder, *Foundation of Comparative Politics*, chapter 13 (321-31).

Stepan, Alfred C. 1999. "Federalism and democracy: Beyond the US model." *Journal of democracy* 10 (4) 19-34.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the powers of sub-national governments at the state and local level in the U.S.
- Understand the role of federalism in protecting or limiting democratic rights.

10/14: Electoral Rules

Powell, G. Bingham. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and proportional visions*. Yale University Press. Chapter 1.

[What is Ranked Choice Voting?](#)

10/17: In-Class Midterm

10/21: American Inequality in Comparative and Historical Perspective

Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (1) 51-73.

Watch at Home: [The Gilded Age](#)

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand how inequality has risen and fallen in the United States and how it compares to other countries.

10/24: What are the consequences of inequality?

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (University of Illinois Press, 1980), Chapter 1.

Scott, J.C., 2016. "Everyday Forms of Resistance." In *Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (pp. 3-33). Routledge.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the ways that people respond to economic marginalization in contexts of inequality.

10/28: When Does Activism Work?

Tarrow, Sidney G. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social movements and contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction and Chapter 6

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the role of political opportunity and activist strategies in making activism effective for policy and political change.
- Illustrate the effectiveness of activism using the case of the civil rights and environmental movements.

### 10/31: When Does Protest Limit or Reverse Democratic Backsliding

Beissinger, Mark. 2011. "Mechanisms of Maidan: the structure of contingency in the making of the Orange Revolution." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 16 (1) 25-43.

Markowski, Radoslaw. 2024. "The Polish election of 2023: Mobilisation in defense of liberal democracy." *West European Politics* 47 (7) 1670-1685.

Kingsley, Patrick. 2023. "Thousands Protest After Israeli Government Moves on Judicial Reform." *The New York Times*: A10-L.

## **PART II: Elections, Representation, and Policy**

### 11/4: Why Do People Vote? Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective

Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation." *American Political Science Review*, 89(2) 271- 294.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the basic rational model of voter turnout and how it applies to different demographics along age, income, and racial lines.
- Understand why turnout is higher in some countries than others based on laws and institutions.

### 11/7: Explaining Variation in Turnout in Different Countries

Jackman, Robert W. 1987. "Political institutions and voter turnout in the industrial democracies." *American Political Science Review*, 81 (2) Only read pages 405-411.

Ahuja, Amit, and Pradeep Chhibber. 2012. "Why the poor vote in India: "If I don't vote, I am dead to the state"." *Studies in comparative international development* 47: 389-410.

### 11/11: How Does Race and Gender Impact Who Runs for Office and How They Govern?

Lawless, Jennifer L. 2015. "Female candidates and legislators." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (1) 349-366.

Banks, Antoine J. 2014. *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Recommended: Gulzar, Saad. 2021. "Who enters politics and why?." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (1) 253-275.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the role of bias against racial minorities and women in electoral politics.

11/14: Why Do Voters Believe What They Believe? Challenges for Accountability

Zaller, John. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge university press. Chapter 1.

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why elections do not produce responsive government*. Princeton University Press, Chapter 4.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the role of partisan bias and elite cues in how voters process information about politics.

11/18: Social Media, News, and Political (Mis)Information

Guess, Andrew M., and Benjamin A. Lyons. 2020. "Misinformation, disinformation, and online propaganda." *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform*, Chapter 10.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the evolution of political news since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the consequences of social media for the news that gets the most attention.

11/21: Social Media, Hate, and Violence in the Global South

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2023. [Facebook, Telegram, and the Ongoing Struggle Against Online Hate Speech.](#)

**Learning Objectives:**

- Explain the role of social media in online radicalization and ethnic conflict.

**PART III: Democracy and International Relations**

11/25: Do Democracies Fight with One Another?

Owen, John. 1994. "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." *International Security* vol. 19 (2) 87-125.

Rosato, Sebastisan. 2003. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *American Political Science Review* vol. 97 (4) 585-602.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the theory of the democratic peace and its limitations.
- Understand how democratic backsliding or new democracies may differ on this.

11/28: No Class. Thanksgiving.

12/2: Do Democracies Cooperate More Often?

Mansfield, Edward D., Helen V. Milner, and B. Peter Rosendorff. 2017. "Why Democracies Cooperate More: Electoral control and international trade agreements." In *Global Trade*, pp. 215-252. Routledge.

Mira Rapp-Hooper, "[Saving America's Alliances](#)," *Foreign Affairs* (Mar/Apr 2020).

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the extent to which democracies cooperate more economically (and in other areas).
- Consider how the nature of economic and security alliances is changing and what this means for the global economy.

12/5: To Be Determined/Make-Up Class

Leaving a class session flexible in case of a need for a make-up session.

12/9: Course Conclusion

## Reading Worksheet

For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (non-graded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.