

**Introduction to Comparative Politics
Barnard College**

Spring 2026

Prof. Mark Schneider

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Class Time: 1:15-2:25PM T TH

Class Location: 408 Zankel, TC

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:45 – 4 PM or by appointment.

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the different approaches political scientists bring to studying politics with a focus on democracy. We will be dealing with questions such as: what does it mean to say a country is democratic? Why are some countries democratic while others are authoritarian? Why do some countries maintain liberal democracies while others see backsliding? How do elections incentivize ethnic and other divisions? How does democracy work differently in different contexts around the world? 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).

As a comparative politics course, this course has several main goals. First, I hope to help teach you how to read social science efficiently. We will cover this in the early part of the class and your TA will ask you to complete the reading worksheet (provided at the end of this syllabus) on several occasions beginning with Tilly's article on state making. Second, I hope to introduce you to the political systems and political dynamics of different countries. We will discuss India (my area of expertise), Brazil (the largest democracy in Latin America), Europe (particularly when it comes to constitutional systems) and the U.S. It is important to note that the field of comparative politics historically excludes the U.S., but we discuss the U.S. in this class when it can be compared and contrasted with other country's systems or political changes in the spirit of comparative politics. Third, this course aims to expose you to some basic research and communication skills through assignments such as a research design assignment and the peer teaching assignment.

Note: Columbia poli sci majors are welcome to take this class, but it will count as an elective. You will need to take this class at Columbia University to get cred for an introduction to Comparative Politics requirement.

Basic Rules

In-Class: You are expected to be present every session in lecture and your discussion section and to participate in class discussions and partner/group activities. We will have discussions in lecture (I come from the liberal arts college tradition and that is my style). You will also have more robust discussions in your discussion section as well as some activities that give you experience with social science. You should be sure to complete readings before lecture so you can get the most out of lectures. 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 more academic readings assigned in 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). This goes for lecture and discussion sections.

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 Thursdays between 2:45 and 4PM (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 1114 Milstein Center. 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. Typically, I can meet only on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

AI and Academic Ethics

AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Barnard College'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.

Exam Points	Letter Grade	Points toward Final Grade
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 collaboration with the Graduate Student Instructor for this course --- 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 your TA 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. Your TA will subsequently discuss your work and assess whether your grade should be changed. Note that your TA is the best person to talk to first as they will be grading your assignments and exams.

Before you contact your TA or myself about your grade(s), consider the following:

First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that is a fair representation of your performance: this means that any errors that lowered your grade will be corrected, but any potential errors that increased it will also be adjusted. The re-grading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, but also of a lower grade than what you received through the original grading process.

Second, a grade challenge means you must make a specific argument about why you think the grading does not reflect the quality of your work. This is a non-negotiable part of a grade challenge: it is not enough to state that you are confused by your grade, or that you feel that it does not reflect the amount of time and effort you put into the course. Both of those feelings

can be very frustrating! But they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct, and I will not entertain grading challenges based on these arguments.

Third, as you are assessing your work in comparison to the answer keys or comments by your Graduate Student Instructor, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right: you also have to incorporate those things you missed or got wrong. For example, if you received an A- for a midterm, it is easy to list a variety of things you got right. But those things are what likely earned you the A-. The point of a grade challenge is to show that I incorrectly withheld points for things you got wrong or failed to discuss (in enough detail).

Fourth, students sometimes try to ‘challenge’ their grade through a roundabout way – effectively having the instructor defend why they graded the work the way they did. Often, those students do not provide arguments for why they disagree with the grade. If you are unsure what you did wrong and you would like me to clarify, I am of course always happy to do so. But I will not engage the ‘roundabout grade challenge’: if you think the grade is incorrect, then you think I made one or more mistakes and you have to identify what I did wrong. If you cannot articulate why you think the grade is wrong, then that might just mean it is in fact a correct assessment of your performance.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation. The correct use of this process is not to look at your different grades at the end of the semester and to try to up one, or multiple, grade(s) with the sole goal of collecting enough points to increase your final letter grade. If you want to ensure you get the highest grade possible, I would advise you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions before the exams and paper deadline, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

Notes

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 Barnard’s Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Barnard 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 Barnard’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Barnard 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 Barnard 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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

10% - **Attendance**. Since this is a lecture course with a discussion section, attendance is obligatory in both lecture and discussion sections. Your TA will take attendance in lecture and in

discussion section to establish your attendance grade. An active role in discussions and class activities by everyone enrolled in the course is expected, as is the completion of required readings before the class session for which they are assigned. Each student is permitted up to 2 unexcused absence (i.e. without a written note from a doctor or a dean). Additional unexcused absences will affect the participation grade. If you wish to email regarding excused absences, please email your TA as your TA will be the one taking attendance.

10% - Participation. Participation is expected in discussion sections and in lecture. The participation grade includes reading the required readings before class, completing assignments on time, and participation in group activities in the discussion section. As a rule of thumb all students should participate at least once each week. To get full credit for participation, aim to participate in a thoughtful manner in each discussion section (after having completed the readings in advance). Also, you will be asked to buy a pack of index cards and write a summary of one article on one side of the index card and 1-2 questions that the reading makes you curious about or question you are not sure about on the other side. I will ask students about their questions in lecture from time to time as well. Note that strong attendance is a pre-requisite for strong participation (i.e., come to lectures and TA sessions and also participate in a prepared manner).

5% - Follow a Country in the News. You will be asked to follow the news related to governance and politics in the news throughout the term in a country other than the U.S. We'll check in on what you've found relevant to the broad course themes at the start of each week. Attempt to read at least one article every other week to keep up with your country. You will write a 3-page note on the trends you've seen in your country by the last day of class.

25% - In-Class Midterm. Students will be required to write a midterm consisting of 4 short answer questions and a longer essay section with two options for prompts. The in-class midterm will take place on March 10. You will have the entire class period to complete the exam.

10% - Research Proposal. The research proposal will be a 5-pages double spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding political science in relation to the readings you will read in this course. The goal of this paper is for you to come up with an original research question, a set of hypotheses derived from this question, and a research design that – if executed – would allow us to test these hypotheses and answer your question. You will not actually execute the proposal, but the goal is to think critically about what methodological approach would allow you to do so if you would – that is, what data you'd have to collect, how you would do so, etc. A one-page proposal will be due to your TA on March 29. There will be a workshop section the following week where students will give feedback to each other. The final version will be due on April 28.

5 % - Compare/Contrast the U.S. and Another Country Presentation. A pair of students (2) will be asked to present on similarities and differences between the U.S. and another country (its institutions, quality of democracy, voter turnout, attitudes or trust in government, or policy (healthcare, education, immigration policy, etc.). Each presentation should consider what the differences are and why they matter for some real outcome. If you choose similarities this should emphasize why these similarities tell us something important about an outcome (e.g., democratic backsliding, social policy, polarization). Presentations will be scheduled according to the class relevant to the topic. If you choose a policy area or topic beyond the syllabus, your TA will

suggest a time for the presentation. Note that each presentation should draw on at least 3 academic sources. The TA will also ask one person to ask a question to the presenter as a discussant

35% - In-Class Final Exam. Students will be required to write an in-class final exam consisting of a short answer section and longer essay section. The format will be similar to the midterm and largely based on the second half of the class with some cumulative questions related to democracy.

+1% Extra Credit - NYC Civic Bootcamp. As students of politics, nothing is more important than gaining direct experience with democracy where it is most accessible. Although this is a comparative politics class, I am a firm believer that direct experience with governance in your backyard is a valuable experience. This assignment (at the end of the syllabus) asks you to complete 100 points on Civic Bootcamp. This will involve learning about and engaging with local government here in NYC. To complete the assignment, you will be asked to both complete activities that add up to 100 points and to write a couple sentences about what you learned from each activity by the end of the term. Successfully completing this task will increase your overall grade by 1 percentage point (e.g., from a 89 % [B+] to a 90% [A-]). When you complete the assignment please email your write-up to both your TA and myself (mas2215@columbia.edu).

Class Schedule

1/20: Introduction (No Assigned Reading)

Learning objectives:

- Go over the syllabus
- Discuss course expectations
- Establish the stakes of the class for understanding a changing world

1/22: What is Comparative Politics?

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

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2019. *Foundation of Comparative Politics*. Chapter 2 (pp. 13–18).

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

PART I: Basic Institutions

1/27: What is a State and Why Did European States Become Effective? The European Story.

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).

Assignment: Complete the reading worksheet for Tilly and bring it to class.

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.

1/29: Weak State Capacity and Governance in sub-Saharan Africa

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?
- How did colonial choices impact state-building in sub-Saharan Africa?

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

Al-Marashi, Ibrahim. 2021. “*The Collapse of Afghan Military: We’ve seen this movie before.*” Al Jazeera ([link](#)).

Recommended:

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

Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. 2012. “The Making of Prosperity and Poverty.” In *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, chap. 3. New York: Crown Business.

2/3: Weak State Capacity and Rule of Law on the Ground

Learning Objectives:

- Understand what weak state capacity looks like on the ground.

Berenschot, Ward. 2010. "Everyday Mediation: The politics of public service delivery in Gujarat, India." *Development and Change* 41 (5) 883-905.

Suryanarayan, Pavithra. "[Hollowing out the state.](#)" Broad Street.

2/5: What is Democracy

Learning objectives:

- Understand how to think about definitions of complex concepts.
- Understand how political scientists define democracy and how this contrasts with autocracy.

Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy is... and is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (3) 75-88.

Read the Freedom House, Freedom in the World Country Reports for the U.K. and Brazil.

2/10: What is an Autocracy?

Learning objectives:

- Learn about the ways that authoritarian regimes run themselves.
- Understand the incentives around survival in these systems.

Frantz, Erica. 2018. *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, chapter 4.

Read the Freedom House, Freedom in the World Country Reports for Russia and China [read one carefully and skim the other].

2/12: What is an Illiberal Democracy?

Learning objectives:

- Broadly be able to evaluate elections according to whether they meet the criteria of democratic elections.
- Compare Freedom House reports in the UK and Turkey to understand differences between democracies and dictatorships.
- Understand the *mechanisms* through which elected leaders weaken democracy without abolishing elections.

Merkel, Wolfgang. 2004. "Embedded and Defective Democracies." *Democratization* 11(5)
Read only 33-49.

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

2/17: Presidential Systems (in contrast to Parliamentary Systems)

Learning objectives:

- Understand the powers of the presidency and how the US system differs from the British parliamentary system and the French Semi-Presidential System.

- Understand the risks of presidential systems for democratic consolidation.

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

[“Why Does Israel Have So Many Elections”](#) *New York Times*. December 1, 2023.

Recommended: Linz, Juan J. 1990. “The Perils of Presidentialism.” *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1): 51–69 [51-60 required].

2/19: Electoral Institutions and Party Systems (Why some countries have 2 parties and others have more?).

Learning Objectives:

- Understand why different electoral rules affect the number of parties in a country.
- Understand the difference between proportional representation and single member plurality districts and why these matters for the size of parties that are represented in government.
- Think about why the U.S. has 2 parties while Israel has 10+ parties.

Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. 2019. *Foundations of Comparative Politics*. Chapter 2, pp. 22–27.

Recommended: Blais, André, and Peter John Loewen. 2009. “The French Electoral System and Its Effects.” *West European Politics* 32 (2): 345–359.

2/24: Civic Education

Learning objectives:

- Introduce students to civic education and how it varies within the U.S. and beyond.
- Discuss the teaching activity as your think of what you want to teach your 3-6 people about.

Levine, Peter, and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. 2017. "The Republic is (Still) at Risk—and Civics is Part of the Solution." Medford, MA: Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University.

Colby, Anne, and Thomas Ehrlich. 2008. “Politics as a Vocation: Preparing Students for Citizenship.” *Journal of Political Science Education* 4(1): 81–98.

3/3: Federalism and Democracy

Note: Your TA will hold a review session in section this week. I’ll leave 30 minutes for midterm questions at the end of class on 3/5.

Learning objectives:

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

Stepan, Alfred. 1999. "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model," *Journal of Democracy* 10(4): 19-33.

Grumbach, Jacob M. 2023. "Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding." *American Political Science Review* 117 (3) 967-984.

3/5: What Do Programmatic Parties Do?

Learning objectives:

- Understand the role that political parties play in connecting voters to their political system and connecting issues to political competition.
- Understand why parties solve collective action problems in policy making and campaigning.

Samuels, David. "From Socialism to Social Democracy: Party organization and the transformation of the workers' party in Brazil." *Comparative political studies* 37, no. 9 (2004): 999-1024.

Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The origin and transformation of political parties in America*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. Chapter 3.

3/10: In-Class Midterm

3/12: What Makes Democracies Survive?

Learning objectives:

- Understand the ingredients of consolidated democracies – robust democratic institutions and a public that accepts democracy as “the only game in town.”
- Understand what a democratic culture means and think about the signs of this in a particular country.

Linz, Juan and Alfred Stepan. 1996. "Toward Consolidated Democracies." *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (2) 14-33.

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. "The Guardrails of Democracy." Chapter 5 in *How Democracies Die*. Crown.

3/17 to 3/19. No Class. Spring Break

3/24: Democratic Backsliding

Learning objectives:

- Understand the ways that democracy erodes – usually at the hands of elected leaders of consolidated democracies – robust democratic institutions and a public that accepts democracy as “the only game in town.”
- Understand how Turkey is an application of the model of backsliding.

Bermeo, Nancy. "On Democratic Backsliding." 2016. *Journal of Democracy* 27 (1) 5-19.

Turkey: Esen, Berk, and Sebnem Gumuscu. 2016. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly*, 37(9)1581-1606.

3/26: Who Votes Part I

Assignment: Complete your slides for the peer teaching assignment and send them to your TA for feedback.

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.

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.

Recommended: Birch, Sarah. 2010. "Full Participation: A Comparative Study of Compulsory Voting." Cambridge University Press (Ch. 1, "Why Compel?")

3/31: Explaining Variation in Turnout

Learning Objectives:

- Understand long-term voter mobilization strategies and shorter-term campaign-time strategies and think about when one or the other will be most effective.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94 (3): 653–663.

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.

Part II: Representation, Accountability, and Elections

4/2: Inequality and Democracy

Assignment: Submit your one-page research proposal to your TA today. Bring two copies of your proposal to section for an activity on proposal feedback.

Learning objectives:

- Understand why inequality can weaken democratic responsiveness and how the US compares to a canonical case of oligarchic power in Russia.

Martin Gilens. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (5): 778–796.

Winters, Jeffrey A. 2011. *Oligarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

4/7: Descriptive Representation

Learning objectives:

- Understand the gap in representation of female candidates and why this is the case.
- Examine different areas of success for female candidates.
- Learn about the role of gendered perceptions toward female candidates.

Anzia, S.F. and Bernhard, R., 2022. Gender Stereotyping and the Electoral Success of Women Candidates: New evidence from local elections in the United States. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), pp.1544-1563.

Chauchard, Simon. 2014. "Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs About a Stigmatized Group? Evidence from rural India." *American political Science review* 108 (2) 403-422.

4/9: Does Democratic Competition Encourage Ethnic Divisions?

Learning objectives:

- Understand what a natural experiment is and how Posner used this approach to understand the effect of ethnic demographics on politics.
- Understand how and when democracy can encourage ethnic polarization and conflict.

Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529-545.

Wilkinson, Steven I. 2005. "Communal riots in India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 44/45 (2005): 4768-4770.

4/14: When Do Civil Wars Happen?

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2006. "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 100 (3) 429-447.

4/16: Make-Up Class

We'll save this class as a make-up as needed.

4/21: Polarization, Media, and Misinformation

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the role of polarized media and polarized elite cues on susceptibility to misinformation.
- Think about the extent to which this is a technology problem (social media, AI) or a traditional media polarization problem.

Klein, Ezra. 2020. *Why We're Polarized*. Chapter 6 (Media)

Berinsky, Adam J. 2023. *Political Rumors: Why We Accept Misinformation and How to Fight It*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 6 ("The Role of Political Elites").

4/23: Guest Lecture: Rene Yaroshevsky on Census Elections. I will be away for a conference.

Learning Goals:

- Understand why elections sometimes resemble an ethnic census and when that can be a problem for democratic stability.

Ferree, Karen E. 2006. "Explaining South Africa's racial census." *The Journal of Politics* 68 (4) 803-815.

Chandra, Kanchan. 2005. "Ethnic parties and democratic stability." *Perspectives on politics* (2) 235-252 [read 235-238 on the out-bidding model].

4/28: Misinformation and Radicalization

Munger, Kevin, and Joseph Phillips. 2022. "Right-Wing YouTube: A Pathway to Radicalization?" *Political Communication* 39 (3) 367–389.

Badrinathan, Sumitra, Simon Chauchard, & Niloufer Siddiqui. 2024. "Misinformation and Support for Vigilantism: An Experiment in India and Pakistan." *American Political Science Review*, Volume 119 (2) 947–965.

4/30: Local Democracy + Course Conclusion

Learning objectives:

- Debate the merits of democracy compared to other systems.
- Discuss local democracy and experiences with NYC Civic Bootcamp
- Conclude the class on broad themes.

Sen, Amartya. 1999. "Democracy as a Universal Value." *Journal of Democracy* 10 (3): 3–17.

Le Galès, Patrick. 2021. "The Rise of Local Politics: A global review." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (1) 345-363.

Recommended: Brennan, Jason. 2011. "The Right to a Competent Electorate," *Philosophical Quarterly* vol. 61.

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. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
6. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
7. Come up with a question that this reading raises for you either based on its logic or conclusions.

Civic Bootcamp NYC (Extra Credit Assignment)

Goal: Earn 100 points across at least 8 activities (roughly one in-person action every two weeks).

Note: This is optional and an extra credit assignment. To receive extra credit (1/3 increase in your participation grade), please write 2 sentences on each activity you complete including what you did, what you learned, and any reactions to the experience. Also note that you need to obtain 100 points and can choose any activities to get to 100 points. The peer teaching activity can count for 20 points.

*This assignment is designed to expose students to how democratic institutions function in practice, not to promote any particular political position.

Learn and Engage

- **5** — Sign up for your Community Board newsletter (nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards)
- **5** — Sign up for your City Council Member's newsletter
- **5** — Follow your City Council Member and State Assembly Member on social media
- **5** — Find a bill or resolution your Council Member is sponsoring
- **5** — Subscribe to a local news outlet
(*THE CITY, Gothamist, NY Daily News, Hell Gate, City Limits, New York Times – Metro*)
- **10** — Write a short memo (½ page) on a local office that isn't Mayor
(*e.g., Borough President, Comptroller, Public Advocate, DA, Community Board*)
- **10** — Attend a Community Board, City Council, School Board (CEC), or zoning meeting (in person or online)
- **10** — Attend a meeting of a civic or advocacy group (ask one question or make one comment)
- **10** — Meet (office hours / Zoom) with a local representative or civic org staffer
- **10** — Attend a lecture, panel, or talk on NYC government or policy

Build Community

- **10** — Create a **GroupMe / WhatsApp / Discord** for 5+ classmates or neighbors around a local or state issue.
- **10** — Bring 5 friends to a local government, policy, or civic event.
- **20** — Organize a small **campus event** (film screening, dorm discussion, teach-in)
- **20** — Plan a volunteer day
(*park cleanup, mutual aid pantry, housing court watch, food distribution*)
- **20** — Join a student or community group tied to a civic or social issue
- **30** — Start a short **newsletter / flyer / Substack** for your dorm, building, or student org
- **40** — Run for (or already serve in) a leadership role in any organization

Teach

- **15** — Recruit a friend or classmate to participate in the Bootcamp
- **20** — Have a structured conversation about NYC politics or state politics with a family member or friend (*submit 5 bullet takeaways*)

- **20** — Teach family or friends about how one state or country differs from another on a particular issue of institution (example: health care, welfare programs, homelessness)
- **20** — Create a 2-3 minute video explaining government at national, state, or local levels and post it on social media.
- **30** — Lead a dorm, club, or community event on a civic issue

Influence

- **10** — Register to vote in **New York** (or update your registration) [if a US citizen]
- **10** — Sign a petition on a NYC issue you care about
(housing, transit, climate, education, public safety)
- **10** — Volunteer for a local cause
(mutual aid, housing advocacy, environmental justice, court watch)
- **20** — Convince **5+ classmates** to register to vote before the deadline [Also relevant to US Citizens of course]
- **10** — Join a civic or student organization with a NYC focus
- **20** — Attend a rally, workshop, or teach-in
- **30** — Volunteer on a local campaign
(City Council, DA, State Assembly, Congressional race, ballot initiative)
- **20** — Give a 5-minute dorm or class talk on why NYC local politics matters.
- **10** — Share an article or post about NYC government on social media and tag your Council Member
- **30** — Create and share an **online video** about NYC local politics