

Columbia University: Arts & Sciences
A&S Spring 2026 Standard Evaluation

Course: POLSUN3951_002_2026_1 - COMPARATIVE POLITICS SEMINAR: POLSW3951_002_2026_1_234685
Instructor: Mark Schneider *
Response Rate: 14/19 (73.68 %)

1 - What did you learn - in terms of knowledge, skills, or perspectives - in this course?The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.	
Response Rate	7/19 (36.84%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges to developing democracies including topics such as clientelism, bureaucracy, corruption, state capacity, ethnic conflict etc - focus on developing democracies • good • We studied the various democratic challenges around the world, including corruption, democratic backsliding, ethnic conflict, and democratic backsliding. Interesting class. • topics and controversies of governance in developing democracies, including state capacity, party organization and programmaticness, and clientelism. • In the course, we learned about the challenges that developing democracies currently face, such as ethnic conflict, corruption, clientelism, and climate change. Additionally, we discussed overarching topics within developing democracies, such as state-making, ethnic identity, and social policy. • I learned a lot about developing democracies (state capacity, clientelism, ethnic conflict, etc.) and I gained more insight into the politics of different developing democracies around the world (Brazil, India, Lebanon, etc.) • Basic problems and solutions for developing democracies around the world. 	

2 - What percentage of the work (including reading) assigned for this course did you complete on schedule?					
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
All or almost all	(1)	10	71.43%		
Most	(2)	4	28.57%		
Some	(3)	0	0.00%		
This question is not applicable	(4)	0	0.00%		
				0 25 50 100	
Response Rate					
14/19 (73.68%)					

3 - What is your overall assessment of the course? What are its strengths? In what ways might it be improved? In answering this question, you might address the value of readings and assignments, the structure of the course (including the relationship of sections to lectures), the contribution of the course to your knowledge of the subject matter and to the development of your analytical and reasoning skills, etc. We encourage you to use specific examples where possible.	
Response Rate	6/19 (31.58%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interesting readings and exploration of countries rarely explored in core POLSCI courses - comparative approach interesting: identifying patterns, differences etc - thinking about relevant solutions - interesting student presentations and discussions - i liked the civic bootcamp assignment as well • good • This class was good. It goes for breath rather than depth, so we did not follow specific counties across various different challenges to democracy. Workload included: posting weekly discussion question based on the readings, biweekly post about current news on a county of our choice which culminates in a memo write-up, one presentation, one midterm with short answer question and one longer essay, and a final of the same design. • The course gives a good introduction to some issues that affect developing democracies. However, the actual specific content on particular countries is relatively shallow, in part because a lot of class time is taken up by presentations which don't add much to my understanding of the readings. I feel as if I have gotten a very top-level understanding of what issues might affect certain countries but not a deep understanding of how they actually do play out in different contexts. Is clientelism different in South Asia vs. South America? India vs. Bangladesh? etc., these questions are not answered. • I found the course to be a tad on the easier side in terms of the seminar content. I say this because of the structure of the political science major, which requires a good portion of introductory or other electives within the main field (e.g., comparative) before taking a seminar, at which point I found the content already covered. However, if you do not have much background, the course content is interesting and varied. • This was definitely one of the best seminars I've taken. The course was very well structured, and I felt that each topic and reading built on the previous ones throughout the semester. The readings were engaging, and the discussions and Professor Schneider's slides helped deepen my understanding of the material. I also really enjoyed listening to my classmates' presentations, and I often learned something new through them. The news memo assignment was especially rewarding: following one country over the course of the semester helped me connect recurring themes and developments in a meaningful way, which culminated in the final memo writing. 	

4 - What is your overall assessment of the course?The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.							
Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means		
Excellent	(5)	6	42.86%		4.14		
Very Good	(4)	4	28.57%				
Good	(3)	4	28.57%				
Fair	(2)	0	0.00%				
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%				
				0 25 50 100	Question		
Response Rate			Mean			STD	Median
14/19 (73.68%)			4.14			0.86	4.00

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5 - Would you recommend this course to another student?The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Definitely recommend	(1)	5	35.71%		
Probably recommend	(2)	7	50.00%		
I'm not sure I'd recommend	(3)	2	14.29%		
Probably not recommend	(4)	0	0.00%		
Definitely not recommend	(5)	0	0.00%		
				0 25 50 100	
Response Rate					
14/19 (73.68%)					

6 - Please qualify your recommendations if you wish:The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.

Response Rate	2/19 (10.53%)
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- it depends on your political science level, if you are a beginner it's a good course but will offer a bit less if you are intermediate or advanced.
- I highly recommend this class!

7 - How does the workload in this course compare to Columbia courses with a similar structure (e.g. a lecture, seminar, laboratory, or language course)?The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Much heavier workload	(1)	0	0.00%		
Heavier workload	(2)	3	21.43%		
Similar workload	(3)	10	71.43%		
Lighter workload	(4)	1	7.14%		
Much lighter workload	(5)	0	0.00%		
No basis for comparison	(6)	0	0.00%		
				0 25 50 100	
Response Rate					
14/19 (73.68%)					

8 - How many hours a week did you devote to this course? (Note: Please include all time spent on this class including class time, discussion sections, readings, assignments, studying, etc.)The answer to this question will generally be available in Vergil.

Response Rate	5/19 (26.32%)
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- 5h weekly - more during midterm/final
- 5
- Maybe 9 hours a week.
- in class -- 2 homework readings -- 3
- Weekly Seminar Meeting: 1 hour and 50 minutes Weekly Readings: 2-3 Hours (depending on annotations) Weekly Discussion Post: 30 minutes Bi-weekly News Discussion Post: 1 hour Exams: A few days (dependent on student)

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9 - Please evaluate Mark Schneider. What are Mark Schneider's strengths? In what ways might their teaching be improved? In answering this question, you might address the clarity of the lectures or presentations and their relationship to the other elements of the course, the ability of Mark Schneider to generate enthusiasm and facilitate discussion, the quality of feedback, availability, the timeliness of the return assignment, etc. -

Response Rate	8/19 (42.11%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good discussions and presentations - helpful summary/analysis of the readings • good. lectures are straightforward, workload is reasonable. fair grader. really appreciate the extra credit opportunity. • Professor Schneider was a solid professor. He was very committed to the content. He was also very available during office hours and was responsive to emails. We had class discussions, but they were often vague or cut short. • Mark Schneider has a very deep grasp of the material, and is good at asking questions and promoting discussions. Though, sometimes class discussion can veer into unhelpful territory (for example, too much talking about US politics that is unhelpful for understanding developing democracies in themselves), and the class would be more productive if these discussions were limited. Lectures are generally good, although surface level as to the actual case of specific countries. There were a few good case studies at the start of the year, but these decreased as the year went on. Also, the grading process can feel a bit opaque sometimes, with grades being lowered or raised for unclear reasons. • Professor Schneider is very knowledgeable about the topics we discussed and had some good, funny quips throughout the semester. I would say my complaint (which could be attributed to the class time) is his speaking style. He speaks in a very soft tone, and his cadence tends to trail off at the end of his sentences. As a result, he can be on the quieter side in a bigger classroom and may sound uninterested (which, when you talk to him in other settings, is not true). If possible, I would like to see him add a tad more energy to his speaking style, which would help the class feel more engaged. Otherwise, he was a super helpful professor and made sure students learned rather than debating over grades, which was great! • Professor Schneider offered sufficient availability during his office hours and was always patient in answering my questions about the concepts covered in class as well as the assignments. He also inspired me to continue pursuing graduate studies in political science. • Professor Schneider is the best!! He is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the subject. He leads discussions thoughtfully, explains concepts clearly, and structures the class exceptionally well. I'm always engaged in his class, and the questions he asked pushed me to think more deeply about the readings and broader themes. He is also incredibly supportive and accommodating toward his students, and I found his office hours very helpful. • He is a solution-oriented person, he pushes the student to think deeply. At times a bit jumbled. 	

10 - What is the overall teaching effectiveness of Mark Schneider? -

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means	
Excellent	(5)	7	50.00%		 4.21	
Very Good	(4)	3	21.43%			
Good	(3)	4	28.57%			
Fair	(2)	0	0.00%			
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%			
				0 25 50 100	Question	
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median
14/19 (73.68%)				4.21	0.89	4.50

11 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of (discussion section leader, lab section leader, grader) as an instructor, and how might 's teaching be improved?

Response Rate	0/19 (0%)
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12 - What is the overall teaching effectiveness of ?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means	
Excellent	(5)	0	0.00%		 0.00	
Very Good	(4)	0	0.00%			
Good	(3)	0	0.00%			
Fair	(2)	0	0.00%			
Poor	(1)	0	0.00%			
				0 25 50 100	Question	
Response Rate				Mean	STD	Median
0/19 (0.00%)				0.00	0.00	0.00

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13 - How was your experience with the paper presentation? What was the hardest part? What was did you like the most/least?

Response Rate 5/19 (26.32%)

- experience with the paper presentation was overall positive because it pushed me to engage deeply with an academic article and really understand the author's methodology and findings - hardest part was analyzing and explaining the graphs, statistics, and regression models in a way that was clear to the class
- Fine experience. Difficult to make the presentation interesting.
- The paper presentation was an educational experience overall, although it didn't help me dig significantly deeper into the paper than I would have otherwise. For me as an individual student the paper presentation was somewhat helpful, but listening to other paper presentations was not at all helpful. The hardest part, and the most rewarding, was digging into the statistical analysis.
- I liked the paper presentation quite a lot. It offered a new way to think about a research paper I usually read for class discussion, and I found I took more away than I usually would! I do think for the paper I selected, I chose a much more complicated one than necessary. But I had a great time.
- I enjoyed the paper presentation because it gave me the opportunity to read a paper extremely thoroughly and explain it almost as if I were the author. The hardest part was probably condensing the presentation to around 10 minutes, since there was so much information and detail that could be discussed. I especially enjoyed getting to know one paper so well and breaking down the tables, data, and methodology to explain how the evidence supported the paper's conclusions.

14 - Did you complete 100 points or more in the civic boot camp extra credit assignment?

Response Option	Weight	Frequency	Percent	Percent Responses	Means
Yes	(1)	9	64.29%		1.36
No	(2)	5	35.71%		
				0 25 50 100	Question
Response Rate			Mean	STD	Median
14/19 (73.68%)			1.36	0.50	1.00

15 - If you completed the boot camp extra credit assignment, please describe if you found this a good experience, what you learned, and if this impacted how you think about politics in as much detail as possible. If you did not get much out of it please also explain why or what you think would make it better.

Response Rate 7/19 (36.84%)

- - I appreciated that many of the activities involved discussions with other people, because it made civic engagement feel social and led me to have meaningful conversations - pushed me to engage with politics outside of class in a more concrete way. - I think the assignment worked well because it encouraged students to connect politics to their own daily life and community - One thing that could make the assignment even better would be incorporating more group-based activities as part of the class e.g. attending a talk together, participating in a local community event, or volunteering as a group could make the experience more engaging and would encourage more discussion between students in the class = real community experience rather than individual tasks (maybe voluntary but sharing opportunities on courseworks discussions and see who would want to join?)
- i havent done all yet
- Helpful experience for engaging with New York politics. Very interesting to be involved in community organizing.
- n/a
- I found the experience to be extremely fun. I do believe it impacted my view of politics by highlighting more of the local battles occurring in our democracy. Another component is that I was already quite involved in campus life and ran various events related to the civic boot camp topics, which helped me see them in a new light and thus see more value in them.
- I found the boot camp assignment to be a very rewarding experience because it pushed me to engage with local politics and civic life in a much more active and concrete way. Rather than only learning about politics conceptually in the classroom, the assignment encouraged me to pay closer attention to the organizations and individuals that actively shape everyday civic life in New York City. One part I especially enjoyed was subscribing to and reading local news through THE CITY. Before this assignment, I had not followed local journalism closely, so reading about local journalism helped me feel more connected to the city and the community around me. I also enjoyed looking into the work of City Council member Shaun Abreu and specifically the bills he introduced and sponsored. This made local politics feel much more tangible in how it directly affects our lives.
- Great experience!

16 - Did your experience in the boot camp assignment make you more or less interested in learning more about local civic issues or getting involved in the political process (voting, volunteering, joining a student group). Please respond with as much detail as possible.

Response Rate 6/19 (31.58%)

- - the boot camp made me more interested in learning about local civic issues and becoming involved - made me see that there are many different ways to participate in civic life beyond formal politics. - before this assignment, I mainly followed politics at a national or international level - As a political science student, the bootcamp made me realize that although I study politics academically, I am not as personally involved in civic or political life as I could or would like to be. - I would now be more interested in participating in student or local groups in the future, even simply on Columbia campus but hopefully beyond as well
- good
- More interested in learning about local civic issues! There is definitely more volunteering in my future.
- n/a
- The experience in the boot camp made me more engaged in learning about civic politics and in getting involved in the civic New York City community!
- The boot camp assignment definitely made me more interested in learning about local civic issues and becoming more engaged with the political process. One thing I realized through the assignment was how much civic engagement already exists in my daily life, even though I had never explicitly thought of myself as being super politically active. It helped me think differently about what civic engagement actually means, and I realized that civic participation can take many different forms beyond voting or formal political activity. For example, my role as a resident advisor has allowed me to organize floor events that push students to engage with one another, discuss current issues, and build awareness around social and civic topics. Before this assignment, I probably would not have viewed these small-scale activities as forms of political participation, but the boot camp helped me see how local engagement and community involvement contribute to civic life in important ways. Reflecting on these experiences through the boot camp made me recognize that education, discussion, and creating spaces for civic participation are themselves meaningful forms of political engagement. It also motivated me to continue pursuing similar forms of involvement and civic engagement in the future.