

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

UNIVERSITY CARLOS III OF MADRID

Seminar sessions–Fall 2024
Friday class

Instructor:	Jose Maycas	Group ED-118	Room 5.1.01 ^{BIS}	18.00-19.30
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Course Pages

1. [Aula Global](#)
2. [File of the course](#)

Office Hours: After class or by appointment. Additional information regarding availability for meetings can be found on Aula Global. All students are encouraged to contact the instructor at any point.

Description

This course allows participants to explore and scrutinize some of the key contemporary debates in comparative political science – or comparative politics. Seminars are classes designed to support the content of the lectures. In many of them, we will delve deeper into the weekly topic through research articles, which are meant to be read before class. In others, we will become familiar with the structure of these articles with the aim of learning how to draft a research proposal. We will learn how to handle variables for statistical use and visualization using the Stata software. While we will start working with a wide variety of datasets, we will learn how to use the main data sources in the field of Comparative Politics. These classes are intended to be more participatory than lectures, with the goal of fostering a small dialogue among all participants. In one session, we will coordinate a debate and try to organize small group activities. It is highly recommended to bring a laptop to complete the activities. Nevertheless, most classes will include slide presentations and the content to be discussed.

Tentative Course Outline

| Week 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics (13/09)

The introductory session will provide an overview of the main course requirements and introduce key topics that will be covered in future classes. Additionally, a comparison between two countries will be analyzed to familiarize participants with the methodology of Comparative Politics, based on the required reading listed below.

- Lapuente, V. & B. Rothstein. 2014. “Civil War Spain Versus Swedish Harmony: The Quality of Government Factor.” *Comparative Political Studies* 47(10): 1416-1441. **Required**

| Week 2: Research methods in Comparative Politics (20/09)

Students are introduced to what it means to study politics scientifically. Practical exercises will be done during the class.

Week 3: Research proposal (27/09)

The class will be fully dedicated to a detailed explanation of the final assignment for the seminar: the research proposal. Emphasis will be placed on the steps to be followed and the overall objective of the task. Time will be allocated for addressing queries and doubts. Groups (up to 3 students each) should be formed by this date and communicated to the instructor. The readings aim to guide the students in the elaboration of the research project to be presented at the end of the course. Additionally, examples of political science research will be covered during the class.

- Bol, D. et al. 2021. "The Effect of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Political Support: Some Good News for Democracy?" *European Journal of Political Research* 60(2): 497-505. **Required**
- King, G., Keohane, R.O. & S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 3-33.

Week 4: Introduction to data analysis (04/10)

Students are introduced to empirical data analysis, including the definition of a variable, the structure of a dataset, and methods for analysis. Throughout the course, the Quality of Government (QoG) dataset will be used. STATA software will be used in this session. Data downloads:

- Dahlberg, S., Holmberg, S., Rothstein, B., Alvarado Pachon, N. & R. Svensson. 2019. "The Quality of Government Dataset, version Jan19." University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute, [QoG: Click here](#)

Week 5: Democracies and dictatorships: Measurement (11/10)

Modern states are the primary unit of analysis in Comparative Politics. Scholars classify states into various political regimes and use these classifications to analyze the consequences of different regime types. This class will evaluate the three measures of democracy covered in the lecture, focusing on aspects such as conceptualization, validity, reliability, and replicability. The efficacy of each measure will be tested in relation to the nature of the research question.

- Cheibub, J.A., Gandhi, J. & J.R. Vreeland. 2010. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143: 67-101. **Required:** pages 67-79.
- Rama Caamaño, J. & F. Casal-Bértoa. 2020. "Are Anti-Political-Establishment Parties a Peril for European Democracy? A Longitudinal Study from 1950 till 2017." *Representation* 56(3): 387-410.

Week 6: Democratic and autocratic transitions (18/10)

In the past 50 years, transitions to democracy have become more frequent, leading comparativists to traditionally focus on changes in regime type. However, more recently, processes of democratic backsliding have been observed in several countries around the world. This session has two objectives. First, a comparison of the democratic transitions in Spain and Portugal during the 1970s will be conducted. Second, an examination of public opinion dynamics across established democracies will be undertaken to provide insights into potential processes of democratic backsliding today.

- Fishman, R. 2011. "Democratic Practice after the Revolution: The Case of Portugal and Beyond." *Politics & Society XX(X)*: 1-35.
- Foa, R.E. & Y. Mounk. 2016. "The Democratic Disconnect." *Journal of Democracy* 27(3): 5-17. **Required**

Week 7: Waves of democratization (25/10)

A few hundred years ago, nearly all countries in the world could be classified as autocracies. Today, the majority are democratic. This session will explore the spread of democracy, drawing on the introduction of one of the most influential Comparative Politics books in recent decades and examining it empirically. V-Dem will be used to create graphs and make country comparisons, also working with STATA.

- Huntington, S.P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press. Introduction, pp. 3-46. **Required**

The individual written assignment (10% of the final grade) will be introduced. The assignment will present a problem and a set of questions. Students will have 3 days to electronically submit the written assignment.

Week 8: No class (01/11)**Week 9: Presidential and parliamentary systems (08/11)**

Are parliamentary systems better than presidential systems? This can be a tricky question because comparing parliamentary vs. presidential democracies' performance can seem somehow biased as many of the most advanced democracies are parliamentary and located in Western Europe.

- Lijphart, A. 1992. *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction, pp. 1-27. **Required**
- Linz, J.J. 1990. "Presidents vs. Parliaments: The Virtues of Parliamentaryism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(4): 84-91. **Required**

Week 10: Making and breaking governments in parliamentary systems (15/11)

Real examples of government formation in parliamentary systems will be examined, with comparisons made between different forms of coalitions. Additionally, various methods of dissolving governments in fused power systems will be explored.

Week 11: Electoral systems: Proportional, majoritarian, mixed (22/11)

The final seminar before the presentations will focus on analyzing the proportionality of various electoral systems in relation to district magnitude and electoral formulas. Practical exercises will be conducted in class to facilitate understanding of how different electoral systems operate.

| Week 12: Group presentations (research project) (29/11)

Grading Policy: Participation (10%), Assignment (10%), Research project (30%)

The remaining 50% of the final grade will come from the Final Exam (50%)

Important Dates

Creation of groups for the Research project	....	Week 3
Communication of a tentative topic	.....	Week 6
Assignment submission	.....	Week 8
Draft submission	.....	Week 10
Presentations	.....	Week 12
Research project submission	.....	Week 13

Class Policy Regular attendance is expected, but the participation grade will reflect both attendance and active engagement. It is preferable to be absent than to disrupt the class. Absences can be offset by meaningful participation during other sessions.