

**Introduction to Comparative Politics: Writing Intensive**  
***Democracy and Its Challenges***  
**Political Science 21:790:203, Fall 2018**

Instructor: Dr. Janice Gallagher

Tel: (973) 353-5126

Email: [janice.gallagher@rutgers.edu](mailto:janice.gallagher@rutgers.edu)

Time: Mon 2:30-3:50; Wed: 1:00 – 2:20

Location: Conklin 302

21:790:203:Q2

TA: Jennifer Natoli; [jnn35@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:jnn35@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: Monday, 11:30 – 1:00 pm or by appointment (Hill Hall, Room 722)

Class website: Blackboard

### Course Description

- *How do we know when democracy is under attack?*
- *What are some of the most vital issues facing democracy today, and what are the approaches different countries have taken to solving them?*
- *What can experiences in the rest of the world teach us about the United States today?*

This course will answer these questions, and along the way introduce students to the study of Comparative Politics. What is comparative politics?

- Comparative Politics is one of the four subfields of Political Science., along with International Relations, Political Theory and American Politics. It has often been thought of as the study of the *internal politics of countries outside of the United States*. More recently, the United States has also been included as well.
- Comparative Politics is also “an approach to studying political behavior that focuses on comparing the impact of different features of government, society, and economy to allow us to make generalizations about how the political world operates.” We want to know how things like the *system of government, political parties, and the presence of social movements* matter for the lives of a country’s citizens.
- Comparative Politics seeks to come up with *generalizable causal explanations* for political outcomes. In other words, by studying political events in different countries, we hope to be able to answer questions like: What causes civil war? Can we predict genocide? How does inequality influence who wins the presidency?

In this course we will ask questions about key issues that the United States faces today, and seek to learn from and about other countries’ experiences. My goal is that students leave this course accustomed to asking good questions about politics, and answering these questions critically using evidence, constructing arguments, and unafraid to learn from other countries’ experiences.

During the first part of the semester we will focus on the experience of other countries with democratic backslide. We will ask what defines a democracy, explore whether the US is in a “democratic backslide,” and ask what we can learn from 4 other cases of democratic backsliding.

In the second half of the class, we will seek to answer some of the most pressing questions for the US and other democracies, and to answer them through analyzing what other countries’ experience have been and assessing how relevant their experiences are for the US.

For each of the countries & cases we study, we will cover the following aspects of their politics:

<p><b>Current Political Moment:</b> Who is in power? What are their key positions, and are they left or right on the political spectrum? Who supports this leader? Who opposes them?</p>	<p><b>System of Government:</b> Democracy vs. Authoritarian; Presidential vs. Parliamentary</p>	<p><b>Party System:</b> How many parties? Represent programmatic differences?</p>	<p><b>Social Movements:</b> What are the major social movements? What have been the most important causes they have advocated for?</p>
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We will also discuss their income level, inequality (Gini coefficient), Population, Other relevant information, and address whether they are more similar or different than the United States.

**Expectations**

Absences for legitimate reasons (ie illness, family emergency, religious holiday, etc.) will be excused; if the absence is foreseeable, please notify me by email in advance.

Tardiness is disruptive to the entire class; please arrive on time.

*Participation:* This is a relatively small class, and I expect each student to be actively engaged. Class participation accounts for 25% of your overall course grade. It is important to remember, however, that quality is to be preferred over quantity; insightful comments and thoughtful questions that further class discussion are the goal here. If you are shy or have problems speaking up in class, please feel free to come see me in my office hours to discuss how to be successful in this aspect of the course.

\*\*\* We live in a time in which differences of opinion often lead to personal attacks: we will not do this in this class. I am committed to respecting each student’s opinion and encouraging you to reflect on your previously held opinions and beliefs. I ask from each of you:

- 1) To be open to new perspectives to the extent you are able;
- 2) To think through how your comments might affect other students in class.

As a baseline, of course, do not employ discriminatory or offensive language in this class.

*Technology:* Using your phones or computers to engage with class material is of course ok! Texting/non-class related activities aren’t (please speak to me if there is an emergency which requires your attention).

**Being Prepared and Present:** Bring the assigned readings to class at all times and, whenever necessary, drafts of your writing. To do well in the course you need to do the readings, listen to the podcasts, and view the documentaries.

**Course Requirements and Grading Scheme**

	Length	Due Date	% of grade
<b>Participation / Attendance</b>			<b>25</b>
Paper 1: Is Democracy Under Attack?	2 pages	Mon, Sept 10 <sup>th</sup> <i>Mon, Sept 17</i> <i>Revision</i>	
<b>Research Paper</b>			
Draft 1: 3 Ideas for Final Project	5-7 pages	Mon, Oct 1st <i>Mon, Oct 8th</i> <i>Revision</i>	<b>35</b>
Draft 2: 1 Country/Issue: Background	6-7 pages	Mon, Nov 5th <i>Mon, Nov 12th</i> <i>Revision</i>	
Final Paper: Comparative Analysis: Your case + US	12-15 pages	Mon, Dec 3rd; <i>Mon, Dec. 17</i> <i>Revision</i>	
<i>Work in Progress Presentation</i>	Powerpoint	Wed 12/5; Mon 12/10; Wed 12/12	
<b>Applied Learning Reflections</b>	2 pages each	Self-Scheduled; 3 days after event	<b>10</b>
<b>Exams</b>			
Midterm: DEMOCRATIC ROLLBACK	5-7 pages	Mon, Oct 22nd	<b>30</b>
Final: PRESSING ISSUES	5-7 pages	Mon, Nov 26th	
<b>Total</b>			<b>100</b>

As a course focused on developing writing skills, reading assignments will be kept under 75 pages per week. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having done the required reading and completed all assigned writing tasks.

**All readings will be posted to blackboard – there is no assigned textbook for this class.**

**There are three types of writing assignments in this course:**

**Final Project: This has 3 parts**

**1) Three Ideas for Final Project: 5-7 Pages**

This paper asks you to identify three countries with an associated issue that is of interest to you, and which you think is especially instructive for the United States.

The issue can be:

- Democratic rollback
- Any of the issues covered in the second half of the course: Immigration, Policing and Incarceration; Drug Prohibition; Internet & Freedom of Speech; Climate Change; Taxation; Human Rights Violations
- With permission of the instructor, another key world issue which has important lessons for the US (I prefer a democracy here; but am open to non-democracies as well).

In this paper, you will briefly summarize and relate the relevant information pertaining to the issue that interests you in each country. Such information might include (among other things): What are the signs of democratic rollback? How is the country confronting the relevant issues? What are the challenges and what are the successes? What are the positions of political parties and social movements regarding the issue at hand? You will later be selecting one of these three countries to analyze more closely.

**2) Draft 2: 1 Country/Issue: Background: 7-10 Pages**

In this paper, you will choose one of the countries and issues you wrote about in Draft 1, and focus on assembling factual information about that country (see top of Page 2 of syllabus)

The Central Question you should be answering is: What are the important contextual political factors that need to be understood in order to analyze: what caused democratic rollback? How and why the country is addressing a pressing issue?

**3) Final Paper & Works in Progress (WIP) Presentation:**

**Comparative Analysis: Your case + US: 12-15 Pages**

Building on Draft 2, present your case/country, and draw out its lessons for the United States.

- Use the comparative case methodology: is your case most similar or different from the United States? Why?
- Given this, what should the United States learn from your selected case?

This paper will need to include ONLY the KEY information about the United States which is relevant to this comparison. Your WIP presentation will be your opportunity to present your work to your classmates. You will prepare a Powerpoint presentation.

## Applied Learning Reflections: 2 during the semester

Attend an event which addresses any of the course's 3 central questions; any of the countries we are studying; or any of the Issues we are studying in the second half of the course.

- *How do we know when democracy is under attack?*
- *What are some of the most vital issues facing democracy today, and what are the approaches different countries have taken to solving them?*
- *What can experiences in the rest of the world teach us about the United States today?*
- **Choose something that interests you!!** And stay for at least 1.5 hours.
- You must talk with at least 4 people who are participating in the event OR you must arrange to speak with an event organizer for at least 15 minutes.
  - For participants: Ask them questions about why they are there; what they understand the event is for.
  - For organizers: Ask them why they thought organizing the event was important, and engage them in a discussion of what can be learned from understanding this issue.
  - Complete a 2 page written response

## Take-Home Exams: Midterm/Final: 5-7 Pages

The midterm and final papers will be your opportunity to summarize what you have learned from our in-class discussions and from the reading. Here is a draft of the exam questions:

### *Midterm Exam: DEMOCRATIC ROLLBACK*

What is democratic rollback? Is the US experiencing this? What characterizes the democratic rollback in other countries we studied? How does the US compare to these cases, and what do they suggest in terms of how political institutions, political parties, social movements, and economic factors can lead to democratic breakdown?

### *Final Exam: PRESSING ISSUES*

What are 3-4 of the most pressing issues facing democracies, and what can the US learn from looking at how other countries are facing these issues?

**Writing and formatting.** All assignments should be double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman. You must provide citations (footnotes or parenthetical) in the text, accompanied by a full bibliography. Please refer to the APA Style in the Rutgers Libraries citation guide (<http://libguides.rutgers.edu/writing/citations#s-lg-box-wrapper-8116779>). The clarity of your writing matters greatly. Please copy-edit all work. For writing assistance, contact Rutgers Newark's Writing Center: <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>

**Academic integrity.** All students are expected to know and comply with the university's policies on academic integrity. Your work must be fully your own. It is necessary to acknowledge the work and ideas of others with proper citations. Plagiarism is a serious offence, and no forms of borrowing without acknowledgement are acceptable. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the academic code. See: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

*Public Domain:* All work produced in this class may be read by your peers and instructor.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Student and Employee Accessibility Services by calling 401-863-9588 or online at <https://uhr.rutgers.edu/policies-resources/policies-procedures/policy-and-compliance-guidelines/disability-accommodations>

**THIS IS A DYNAMIC SYLLABUS AND WILL CHANGE!!**

**WHEN I CHANGE THE SYLLABUS I WILL POST  
AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO BLACKBOARD.**

**I expect you to keep current as this changes!**

## Course Schedule

### Introduction

**Wednesday, 9/5/18**

Introduction to the goals of the course and your colleagues. Preview of final project.

*Essay # 1:* Is American democracy is being rolled back? If so, what can citizens do about it? If not – what do you think all the hype is about?

- Refer to and cite the required 2 articles listed below.

**Due: Saturday, Sept 8<sup>th</sup> at 10am**

## Part I: Is Democracy Getting Weaker? If so, why? And why does it matter?

### Week 1: What is Democracy Anyway? And how do we study it?

**Mon, 9/10/18**

PAPER 1 DUE on Monday, Sept 10<sup>th</sup>: Bring 2 Printed Copies to Class.

#### Required Readings:

- (BB) Levitsky, S. & Ziblatt D. (2017, December 7). How a Democracy Dies. *The New Republic*. Retrieved from <https://newrepublic.com/article/145916/democracy-dies-donald-trump-contempt-for-american-political-institutions>
- (BB) About That Trump Trump ‘Autocracy’ [Editorial]. (2018, January 1). *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/about-that-trump-autocracy-1514839233>

#### Optional Reading:

- Friedman, U. (2018, January 13). How's Democracy Holding Up After Trump's First Year? It's not dying, but alarm bells are ringing. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/trump-democracy-ziblatt-levitsky/550340/>

**Wed, 9/12/18**

- Excerpts: Comparative Politics Reader: Democracy / Comparative Research Design

## **Week 2: Democratic Backslide 1: Venezuela**

*What has the democratic backslide in Venezuela consisted of? And why did it happen?*

- *If we look at Venezuela compared to the US, do we see similar signs of democratic backslide?*

Mon, 9/17/18

PAPER 1 REVISION DUE

Wed, 9/19/18

## **Week 3: Democratic Backslide 2: Russia**

*Putin has been in power in Russia since 2000 – can we really say that Russia is experiencing democratic backslide recently?*

- *Trump has been compared to Putin: what do you think are the similarities and differences?*

Mon, 9/24/18

Writing Instruction: Using and Citing Evidence

Wed, 9/26/18

## **Week 4: Democratic Backslide 3: Nicaragua**

*Nicaragua seemed to be a poor, but stable and relatively non-violent, democracy... until last year. What happened, and was it predictable?*

- *Could something like what happened in Nicaragua happen in the US?*

Mon, 10/1/18

DRAFT 1: 3 IDEAS FOR FINAL PAPER DUE; BRING 2 COPIES

Wed., 10/3/18

## **Week 5: Democratic Backslide 4: Turkey**

*Turkey's President has turned on academia and other sectors. Why has he done this? And what does it mean for democracy in Turkey?*

Mon., 10/8/18

DRAFT 1 REVISION DUE

Wed., 10/10/18



## Part II: Pressing World Issues: What critical issues are states confronting in 2018?

### Week 6: Immigration

*Why do countries pursue anti-immigrant policies?*

- *Possible Cases: UK & Brexit; Australia; Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana*

Mon, 10/15/18

Wed, 10/17/18

### Week 7: Policing and Incarceration

*What have other countries done about problems with the police? Have they been able to address systemic racism and human rights abuses both within the police and within their prison systems?*

- *Possible Cases: Sierra Leone; Norway*

Mon, 10/22/18

MIDTERM DUE: DEMOCRATIC ROLLBACK

Wed 10/24/18

### Week 8: Drug Prohibition

*What happens when countries decriminalize drugs? What do we think about drug decriminalization in the US?*

- *Possible Cases: Amsterdam; Uruguay, Portugal*

Mon, 10/29/18

Wed, 10/31/18

### Week 9: Internet & Free Speech

*How is the internet affecting democracy, and in particular free speech? How is it being regulated and controlled?*

- *Possible Cases: Egypt, China*

Mon, 11/5/18

DRAFT 2: COUNTRY/ISSUE BACKGROUND DUE

Wed, 11/7/18

**Week 10: How are other countries dealing with Climate Change? What can the US learn about how other countries are confronting climate change?**

*Possible cases: Germany, South Pacific*

*Mon, 11/12/17*

*DRAFT 2 REVISION DUE*

*Wed, 11/14/17*

**Week 11: How does taxation impact liberty and democracy?**

*Mon, 11/19/18*

*Rough Draft Essay 5 due in Class: Peer Editing*

***Wed, November 21<sup>st</sup>: No Class***

**Week 12: Democracies in the world:**

**How are democracies responding to gross human rights violations?**

- *Possible Case : Syria*

*Mon., 11/26/18*

*DEMOCRACY'S CHALLENGES EXAM DUE*

*Wed., 11/28/18*

**Week 13: In Conclusion....What's next for the US? Drawing lessons from international context?**

***Class presentations***

*Mon, 12/3/18*

*FINAL PAPER DUE*

*Wed, 12/5/18*

**Week 14: *Class presentations***

*Mon, 12/10/18*

*Wed, 12/12/18*

- Last Class! Discussion, Reflection, Evaluation

*MONDAY DECEMBER 17<sup>th</sup>: REVISION OF FINAL PAPER DUE*