Comparative Politics

Course prefix: INTA

Course number: 3203

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
22278

Instructor First Name: Jennifer

Instructor Last Name: Hamilton

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Comparative politics is a subfield of political science examining the distribution of power, its origins, and its implications within countries of study. This subfield includes the study of formal political institutions (e.g., legislatures) and informal political institutions (e.g., social norms). It also includes exploration of political attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors among both political elites and the general citizenry.

Course learning outcomes:

While this course serves as an introduction to comparative politics, there is more to learn than we could possibly cover in one term! With this in mind, the main course objectives include the following:

- **You will grow into informed, independent consumers of social science literature.** You will be able to identify, evaluate, and apply scientific studies to answer questions relevant to comparative politics. You will be able to explain how comparative politics functions as a science, but also to evaluate the limits of scientific studies.
- **You will grow into responsible global citizens.** You will be able to apply basic vocabulary to converse about politics, especially outside the United States. You will be able to analyze how institutional arrangements affect incentives, and therefore behavior, for various political stakeholders.

Required course materials:

You are not required to purchase any course materials for this class; the instructor will provide all texts via Canvas.

Grading policy:

Course assignments fall into four main categories:

1. Attendance
2. Participation
3. Unit reflections
4. Collaborative learning projects

Attendance (10%): You should plan to attend most class meetings (90%+). In case of absence, I do not need to know why you are missing class. I do, however, need to see evidence of substantive engagement with course material from the class you missed within one week of the absence if you expect to avoid penalties. The page for each course meeting will detail the requirements to demonstrate this engagement in case of absence.

Participation (6%): I want to hear from you during class, outside of collaborative learning projects. To make participation easier, the readings pages in Canvas indicate what you should focus on while reading to prepare for discussion. You need to participate at least six times over the course of the term outside of collaborative learning projects. You can participate either by responding to or posing a question. You will receive a preliminary grade around midterm and an updated grade at the end of the term. Students concerned about their ability to participate should speak with me as soon as possible. While I am happy to work with you to find the best ways for you to participate, I will not accommodate pleas or excuses raised only at the end of term.

Unit Reflections (24%): This course contains six substantive units, each of which addresses a central guiding question. For each unit, you must submit a reflection of 250-350 words integrating materials covered during that unit. The reflection should contain the following:

- at least four specific references to course material
- (where applicable) at least one reference from a reading assigned during that unit
- at least one reference to a study your group selected during the unit's collaborative learning project(s)
- at least one reference to a study or a presentation from another group during the unit's collaborative learning project(s)

A full rubric is available on reflection submission pages; this rubric considers response length, appropriate and meaningful references to course material, organization and clarity, and integration of empirical evidence. I will drop your lowest two grades, only one of which can be a zero. You may request an extension of up to three days using the extension form on each submission page; you must request the extension in advance of the deadline. Reflections received more than 24 hours after the deadline (including extended deadlines) will receive a maximum grade of 70%.

Collaborative Learning Projects (60%): Grades within this category encompass both product evaluation and process evaluation at both the individual and group level.

- **Individual Product Evaluation (20%):** For each collaborative project indicated in the syllabus, you will submit an individual contribution. A full rubric is available on submission pages; this rubric considers whether you have fully answered each question using appropriate and accurate information from the article you selected. While the syllabus specifies deadlines for these individual contributions, groups may choose to set earlier deadlines; students who fail to meet group deadlines will likely incur consequences during peer evaluations. Each student can miss one individual contribution during the course with prior permission from their group; groups must coordinate to approve these non-submissions because only one student in each group may skip an individual contribution for a given collaborative project. There are no extensions for individual contributions, as extensions will inhibit the group's ability to complete its collective product. Individual contributions received more than 24 hours after the syllabus-indicated deadline will receive a maximum grade of 70%; students can also expect such late submissions to adversely affect peer evaluations.

- **Group Product Evaluation (20%):** For each project, the group will give a presentation with slides submitted before class begins. A grading rubric for the presentations are available on slide submission pages; this rubric considers proficient use of slides/visual aids, organization, and content (accurate, relevant, and complete responses to questions posed for the group submission). You will receive feedback and grades for the first two group submissions (1A & 1B), but they will not contribute toward your final grade. This "learning period" allows groups to work through initial problems and build understanding of expectations prior to evaluation. For the third and subsequent projects (#2 onwards), presentation grades will contribute toward your final grade.

- **Process Evaluation (20%):** You will submit two group work evaluations during the course. The first evaluation, completed at approximately midterm, will be formative: this evaluation provides a preliminary assessment to let students track progress and identify areas for improvement, but it will not contribute to final grades. The second evaluation, completed at the end of term, will be summative; in other words, the data collected during this evaluation will form a component of your final grade. The percentage points for process evaluation are evenly split between peer evaluation (how your peers rate your efforts and contributions for collaborative projects in the final evaluation) and self evaluation (how you rate your own efforts and contributions for collaborative projects in the final evaluation). Out of the 20 percentage points for this component, I will deduct one points for each 24 hours that passes after the process evaluation submission deadlines (both midterm and final) without a complete submission. You will receive anonymized, aggregated feedback from other group members submitted during both the midterm and final evaluations. When completing these evaluations, you should be honest but constructive.

Grade Dispute Procedure: To dispute grades, you must submit a regrade request via email within the dispute window. The dispute window starts 24 hours after students receive the returned graded assignment and ends 72 hours after students receive the returned graded assignment. The regrade request must include a specific description of where and why I should have awarded additional points. I will not accept generalized requests to regrade assignments without this specific description. Upon regrading, I can either raise the grade, lower the grade, or keep it the same.

Final Grade: When evaluating final grades, I will round your weighted average to the nearest whole number and assign a letter grade based on this breakdown: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 0-59.

Attendance policy:

Attendance is worth 10% of the final grade. You should plan to attend most class meetings (90%+). In case of absence, I do not need to know why you are missing class. I do, however, need to see evidence of substantive engagement with course material from the class you missed within one week of the absence if you expect to avoid penalties. The page for each course meeting will detail the requirements to demonstrate this engagement in case of absence.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Per the Center for Teaching and Learning, "Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. For more information on the Honor Code, visit the OSI website." If you are uncertain what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please check with the instructor prior to submitting an assignment.

AI Usage Policy. You cannot use generative AI tools like ChatGPT or Gemini during this course for any purpose. Among other reasons, this policy arises from the belief that she who does the thinking does the learning – a proposition that recent research on student usage of generative AI supports. Students can use editing tools built into word processors to check subject-verb agreement, punctuation, spelling, etc. However, they cannot use Grammarly or other AI tools to write or rewrite entire sentences or paragraphs. Locating, understanding, and synthesizing information, as well as writing competently, are skills you must develop.

Peer consultation. You are welcome to brainstorm together for both the unit reflections and individual submission for groupwork. You must draft all submitted material independently, however. You may peer-review draft work or use university writing

resources to check completed drafts.

Previous coursework. You cannot recycle work from other courses, either past or ongoing, either in part or in full, without permission from the instructor. I will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis based on compatibility with learning objectives.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion