

POSC 120: Democracy and Dictatorship

Carleton College, Spring 2020



Professor Devashree Gupta

Office: The couch in my family room, sometimes the dining room table

How to communicate with me this term:

Email: dgupta@carleton.edu

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/6740942851>

Google phone: 507-291-5015

& by **Slack** (check Moodle for link to join)

Additional Support

Writing Assistant: Ishmael Maxwell

(maxwelli@carleton.edu)

Reference Librarian: Sean Leahy

(<https://gouldguides.carleton.edu/smleahy>)

Google appointment calendar via the link

“What do they know of England who only England know?”

Rudyard Kipling

“Every hundred feet the world changes.”

Roberto Bolaño

Course Overview

This class serves as an introduction to comparative politics, the area of political science that investigates the political dynamics of other countries. There are almost 200 independent states in the world, and within this group of countries, there is dazzling variety in institutional types, policies, political attitudes, levels of citizen participation, and economic performance. It is the starting premise of this class that no single model of political governance outperforms all others across the board. Instead, the beauty—and the complexity—of studying comparative politics involves grappling with how and why this diversity exists, and what the implications are for the people living in different societies.

To unravel some of these issues, the class will explore some of the “greatest hits” of comparative politics and use these theories to understand case studies and contemporary events from around the world. While we will focus on historical events that have resulted in a diversity of government forms and approaches, this term, we will also have a special focus on using the tools of comparative politics to try to understand the variety of global responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Course Materials

There are no textbooks for this class. All materials – online learning modules, readings, videos, and activities – will be available on Moodle, which will serve as our virtual “classroom” for the term. **You should make a point of trying to check Moodle and your Carleton email for updates and information regularly** (ideally, every day, if possible). Not everyone will be in a position to do so, and I recognize this. Do the best that you can!

The Online Learning Experience

To figure out this online learning adventure together, especially given the challenging circumstances in which it's happenings, **we all will need to be flexible, patient, and kind to each other**. We also need to set some ground rules and communicate openly and honestly with each other.

What to expect: this class is going to be largely asynchronous, meaning that you will have a lot of control and flexibility over when you do the assigned work. This approach makes it easier for everyone to participate, even if your internet access or personal circumstances make showing up for a specific class time difficult. These asynchronous activities will include things like:

- required readings
- working through online course modules
- self-tests and quizzes
- watching course videos
- discussion forums
- offline collaborative work

We will also have some opportunities to meet at the same time, though these meetings are **not required** and will be recorded for those of you who cannot attend in real time. The work will largely be flexible in terms of when you complete it, though there will still be due dates for key assignments. There will be more small-stakes assignments in this class than usual, and fewer

Communication is going to be key. I will have regular office hours for you to check in with me – both one-on-one office hours that you can schedule via my Google calendar page (see link in Moodle), and drop-in office hours, which are open to whomever wants to stop by for a chat (or just to listen). You can also reach me via the course Slack channel (good for informal and quick communication, as well as communication with others in the course).

Expectations for the term are slightly adjusted given that we won't be sharing a common physical classroom. Even though I won't be seeing you face-to-face this term, here is what I expect from you over the next several weeks:

- I expect you to actively engage with course materials and activities. While you will have more control over when you complete certain activities, you will still be responsible for doing the work in as timely a manner as possible and in accordance with Carleton's academic honesty policy.
- Attend, if possible, synchronous meetings with me and your peers. If you cannot make it to a synchronous meeting, you should make every effort to watch the recorded sessions after the fact.
- Engage thoughtfully and respectfully with your peers and me. When communicating online, this means using preferred pronouns and names, focusing disagreements on arguments and not people, refraining from any language that attacks or demeans others, and is not dismissive or rude. Please do not use all-caps for your communications or posts, as this is equivalent to shouting in the real world. If you see violations of these standards, please notify me immediately.
- Seek out help when you run into difficulty. Please let me know if you are really struggling in some way or if there are obstacles that are preventing you from being successful in this class. Despite the circumstances, I want everyone to succeed!

What you can expect from me: Here is what I am planning to do in terms of course preparation and responsiveness. I will:

- Encourage and support your learning this term, while remaining flexible and accommodating of your circumstances. No one knows what the term will bring, so as your circumstances change, please let me know and we will adjust accordingly.
- Organize online materials in the clearest way possible, and keep Moodle updated. Devise activities and learning experiences that help introduce you to the course material and give you a good grounding in comparative politics. I still intend to offer a stimulating and enriching term of content, despite the challenges!
- Be responsive to your questions and concerns. I will try to return all emails within 24 hours and respond to Slack questions as quickly as possible. I may not check email as regularly over the weekends and I generally will stop checking email and Slack after 10pm (CST).
- Provide timely feedback on assignments and activities so that you can practice your skills and improve your performance over the term.

Course Requirements

Because we will be doing everything at a distance, the requirements for this course will look very different from the usual in-person assignments. Your grade for the term will be based on the following six elements:

1. Participation in online forums and collaborative work	25% (5@ 5% each)
2. Reflection activities	25% (5@ 5% each)
3. Response paper	15%
4. Small assignments	10%
5. Final paper	25%

Participation in discussions/collaborative work (25%)

Each week, there will be activities that require you to engage with the ideas of your peers, including commenting on online discussion boards, doing a joint analysis on an article, or something similar. **None of these collaborative elements will require you to coordinate schedules to do the work.** The details of these activities will vary each week, but there will be detailed instructions on Moodle, along with assessment criteria. There will be eight of these activities throughout the term (one per week), but I will drop your lowest three scores for the purposes of calculating your overall grade.

Reflection activities (25%)

Each week, there will also be opportunities for you to do some reflection activities, which will help you pull together your thoughts on the week's material, think about their implications, and record your own thoughts about those ideas. Some of these assignments will have prompts; others will be more like free-writing or journaling exercises. There will be eight of these activities throughout the term (one per week), but I will drop your lowest three scores for the purposes of calculating your overall grade.

Response paper (15%)

In Week 2, I will post several prompts for your response paper. You will pick one and write a 3-4 page (double-spaced), thesis-driven paper that draws on the course reading for support. You will also have the opportunity to work on the paper in stages:

- You will first formulate a working thesis, which you will workshop with Ishmael, the Writing Assistant.
- After that, you will turn in a draft of the paper. You will get feedback from me *and* you will pick one page of your draft to workshop with Ishmael, this time focusing on transitions, coherence, and flow.
- With all of this feedback, you will revise and hand in a final draft of the paper.

The grade will be based on the final product (12%) with an additional 3% reflecting the effort you put into revision.

Small assignments (10%)

Throughout the term, there will be several opportunities to carry out short little assignments that are meant to be interactive and (hopefully!) fun, which will help you connect to the material in a more hands-on ways. Such assignments might include posting a short video of yourself talking informally about a given topic, a news “scavenger hunt,” doing an interview of a friend or family member and describing your findings, watching a political leader’s social media feed and evaluating it, etc. These small assignments are not meant to be particularly time intensive! The grade for this component reflects your **overall performance** on these small assignments; they will not be graded individually. There will be a variety of these throughout the term; while I encourage you to do as many of them as you can to maximize your learning and overall engagement with the class and your peers, I will base my assessment on any **five** small assignments that you select for evaluation (which you will decide at the end of the term).

Final paper (25%)

The final paper will be a 6-8 page comparative case study where you will have a chance to put some of the things you learned this term to work. I will guide you in picking a question, though you will get to choose two countries to pair up for the case study. As part of your research for this paper, you will be responsible for evaluating a source of data available online, submitting a short report about this exploration, and then incorporating data from that source into your final. The final project will be worth 15% for the final paper, with an additional 5% for the data assessment report and a final 5% for the quality of your peer review comments. You will also have a chance to workshop parts of the paper: (1) you will submit the thesis to me for comments; (2) you will pick any two pages of your draft to workshop with the writing assistant, with particular focus on incorporating evidence into your writing; and (3) you will have a chance to do some peer review on any four pages of your draft. Based on all this feedback, you will revise your paper and submit the final draft on the last day of the exam period.

Course Policies

Some of the policies governing this class (for example, policies on special needs and accommodation, academic integrity) will be consistent with what the in-person version of this class would be. However, other policies will need to be adjusted to recognize that this class is not happening in the standard way. Policies that are adjusted will include those covering attendance, late work, and computer/phone/tablet usage, as well as very important policies governing confidentiality and intellectual property rights. For more on all of these policies and how they will work this term, please check the course Moodle page.

The optional Friday group meetings will take place in two, 30-minute blocks. Half the class will attend the first block (9:40-10:10am) and the other half will attend the second block (10:10-10:40am). Here are the two groups:

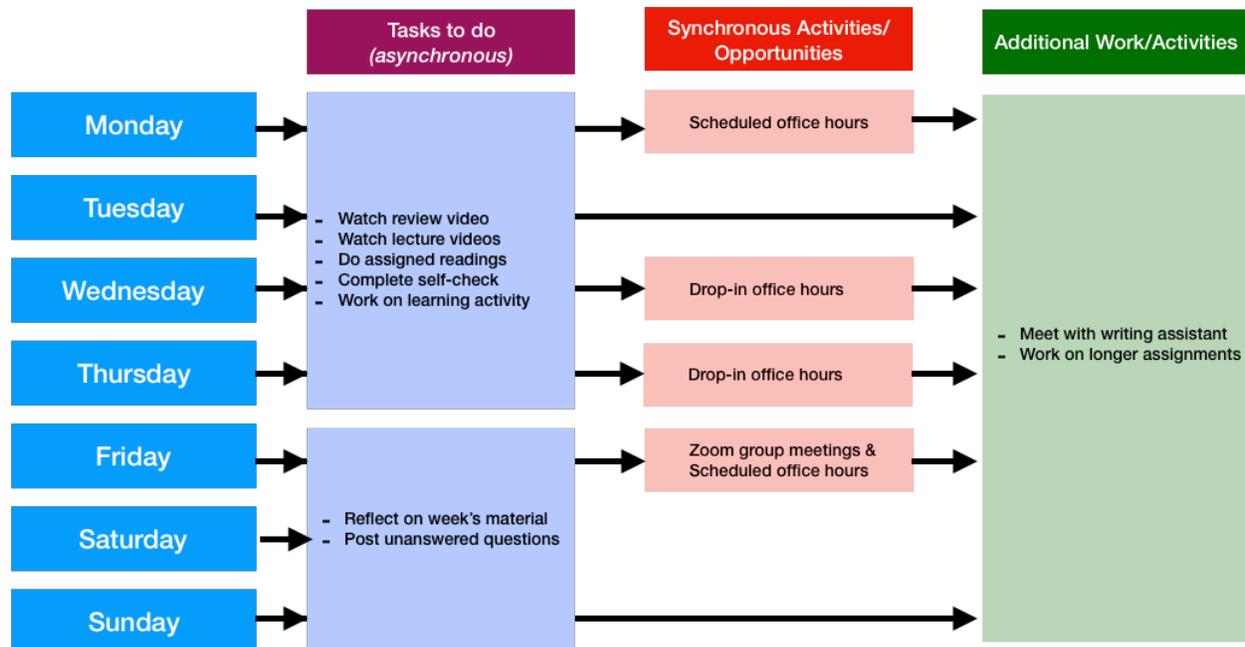
Block 1: 9:40-10:10am (CT)	Block 2: 10:10-10:40am (CT)
Blanchfield, Chen, Christen, Grayzel, Gwin, Hiken, Judge, Litton, Marvin, Schur, Shah, Theng, Tilley, Wang, Webster, Woods	Blair, Chu, Driver, Gloss, Irons, Johnson McKee, Johnston, Lyons, Min, Parr, Qin, Uyeki, Walsh, Wester-Ebbinghaus, Windley-Daoust, Zeng

Schedule of Topics and Class Activities

The following is a basic overview of the term's topics and deadlines by week. Specific readings, assignments, and activities, will be provided on Moodle week by week.

Week	Weekly Topics	Long-Term Assignments
1	Foundations of comparative politics	
2	States and nations	
3	Autocracies and democracies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis for response paper due • Workshop thesis with WA
4	Democratization and backsliding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of response paper due • Workshop coherence/flow with WA
5	Institutions and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised draft of response paper due
6	Democracy's discontents and populism	
7	Comparing regimes: peace and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data assessment due
8	Comparing regimes: economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop two pages of final paper with WA, focusing on incorporation of evidence • Upload working thesis for additional feedback.
9	Comparing regimes: state-society relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop four pages of final paper with peer reviewers • Final draft of paper due on last day of exam period

Each week, there will be a regular set of activities for you to complete in order to provide a predictable core for the class. A recurring set of activities for a week will look something like this:



Because there are more moving pieces for an online course (smaller items to track), I will post a checklist at the beginning of each week to help you stay organized and on top of the things that we will be doing that week. You will not turn in the checklist – it is only to help you, and it is your choice whether to use it or not.