

# Comparative Politics (BP-PPo-2202; BP-PPo-1603; BM-WPo-1603; BK-PO)

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## 1 Course Description and Goals

This module explores the origins and survival chances of democracy. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions: Why are some states democracies and others not? What is the difference between democracy and dictatorship? Do democracies perform better than dictatorships economically? What happens when a dictatorship fails? Why do some democracies fail, while others survive? What are risk factors for democracy? The module will introduce students to the measurement of regime types, common databases of political regimes, and theoretical ideas on the emergence and survival of democracy.

## 2 Expectations & Course Organization

This is an undergraduate/bachelor-level lecture. Students will be expected to read one journal article or textbook chapter as highlighted below. You find five copies of the textbook “Principles of Comparative Politics” by Clark, Golder & Golder in the university library. You can either read the chapters in the library or make copies of the chapters to read at home.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, I upload scientific articles that discuss each weekly topic on Moodle. Whether you read the textbook chapters or the articles is up to you.

Importantly, students should also watch the lecture videos provided on Moodle ahead of class. The videos will introduce key concepts and theories of comparative politics. The seminar sessions will focus on discussing these concepts and theories to better understand them, and to apply them to real-world problems.

In-class participation is encouraged and will likely improve the final grade. To pass this course, you will write a short individual and a longer group-based essay.

The seminar sessions take place on Monday from 16:00 until 17:30 in room U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002).

My office hours are on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 13:00 to 13:45. Please register for an appointment at <https://calendly.com/ncbormann/office-hours>.

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<sup>1</sup>In the past several textbooks have been stolen, which is why we do not allow students to take them home any more. Due to copyright restrictions I am only allowed to upload a couple of chapters to Moodle.

### 3 Evaluation and Assessment Criteria

In order to obtain the credits for this course you need to submit two pieces of work:

1. An individual 600-words essay due on Tuesday, May 26th 2026 at 23:59 Central European Time.
2. A group-based 4500 words case study due on Sunday, July 12th 2026 at 23:59 Central European Time.

Upload your work to moodle.

Each group can at most encompass three members. Detailed instructions for both assignments will be posted on Moodle.

### 4 Missing and Late Work

University rules apply.

### 5 Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

#### Week 1: How to study comparative politics

April 20th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012. Ch.3.

Alternative: William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N Golder. The british academy brian barry prize essay: An exit, voice and loyalty model of politics. *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(4):719–748, 2017.

#### Week 2: Democracy & Dictatorship

April 27th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012. Ch.5

#### Week 3: Democracy Measurements

May 4th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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Jose A. Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James R. Vreeland. Democracy and dictatorship revisited. *Public Choice*, 143(1):67–101, 2010 pp.67-76.

#### Week 4: The Emergence of Democracy

May 11th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012 Ch.6.

Alternative: Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. Endogenous democratization. *World Politics*, 55(4):517–549, 2003.

**Week 5: Democratic Transitions**

May 18th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012 Ch.9.

Alternative: Erica Chenoweth and Maria J Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 2011. pp.3-27.

Alternative: Elisabeth Jean Wood. *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in El Salvador and South Africa*. New York, NY, 2000. Ch.1

**Week 6: Public Holiday**

May 25th, 2026

**No Seminar Session****Week 7: Regime Performance**

June 1st, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012. Ch.9.

**Week 8: Types of Dictatorships**

June 8th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012 Ch.10

Alternative: Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski. Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(11):1279–1301, 2007.

**Week 9: Hybrid Regimes**

June 15th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2):51–65, 2002.

Susan D Hyde and Nikolay Marinov. Which elections can be lost? *Political Analysis*, 20(2):191–210, 2012. pp.191-198. Try to read the entire article.

Download the NELDA data here: [<https://nelda.co/>](<https://nelda.co/>)

**Week 10: Reading Week**

June 22nd, 2026

**No Seminar Session**

Revision and catch-up

**Week 11: Democratic Types & Democratic Stability**

June 29th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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Juan J Linz. The perils of presidentialism. *Journal of democracy*, 1(1):51–69, 1990.

**Week 12: Party Systems & Democratic Stability**

July 6th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2nd edition, 2012 Ch.14

Alternative : Giovanni Sartori. *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. ECPR press, Colchester, UK, 2005. First published in 1976 by Cambridge University Press pp.105–128 & 154-178.

Alternative : Nancy G Bermeo. *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Break-down of Democracy*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2003. Ch.2

**Week 13: Clientelism, Ethnicity & Democratic Stability**

July 13th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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Susan C Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco. *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2013. Ch.3.

Alternative: Kanchan Chandra. Ethnic parties and democratic stability. *Perspectives on Politics*, 3(2):235–252, 2005.

**Week 14: Elites, the People & Democratic Survival**

July 20th, 2026

U.002 - Seminarraum (NB-DUGU.002)

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Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. Crown, 2018. Ch.1-3.