

States, regimes and parties: Comparative government and politics in the 21st century

Course convenors: Dr Chris Bickerton & Dr Pieter van Houten

Seminar times: Thursdays 11-1pm

[Note: there is no session on Thu 24th Oct]

What explains the formation and development of states (the main 'units' of politics in recent centuries)? How are states governed, and what determines whether they are democratic or autocratic (or somewhere in between)? How do we account for movements from authoritarian to democratic regimes (or the other way around)? What explains the emergence of political parties, which are crucial actors – as the main vehicles to represent particular interests – in the politics of most states? What accounts for the nature of party systems and how parties function in different types of states, and how has this changed over time?

These are among the perennial questions addressed in the study of comparative politics. This course focuses on some 'classical' work (from the second half of the 20th century when comparative politics came into its own as a field of study in the study of politics) and various recent contributions that address these questions. The covered themes have generated large literatures, and this course does not aim to provide comprehensive overviews of these literatures. Instead, it gives an indication of possible answers to the questions indicated above by highlighting some of the key works in the field. The course readings focus on different parts of the world, and employ a wide range of methodological approaches and tools (esp. the readings in Part II of the course). After completing the course, students will have gained a good understanding of the empirical reality of and comparative politics scholarship on the formation and functioning of states, political regimes and political parties; and, more broadly, will have developed a deeper appreciation of the field of comparative politics and some of its main approaches and methods.

The course is broken down into three parts. The first part focuses on the state, the second on political regimes and the third on political parties. There are, of course, many other themes and topics covered in the field of comparative politics. However, the focus on these three key areas is intended to make the course manageable and to allow students to go into some depth. A number of sessions are focused on each of the three main themes. The sessions and the relevant readings are set out below.

Teaching Format

This class will be taught in the form of seminars organised around the critical discussion and analysis of assigned readings. Students are expected to actively participate in these seminars, and some seminars may have group exercises. Depending on the number of students taking the course and the seminar dynamics, students may be asked to prepare a short (10 minutes or so) introduction of the readings for one of the sessions, setting out in particular the key issues they would like the class discussion to address. Discussions will focus on both theoretical and empirical issues.

Assessment

Students are required to submit a 5,000-word essay, on a question taken from a provided list. For dates and the deadline for the provision of essay titles and the submission of the essays, see the MPhil course handbook.

Students are expected to write a 2,000-word practice essay earlier in the course, also on a question from a provided list (for submission dates for these practice essays, see the general MPhil course handbook). The course convenors will provide students with feedback on their practice essays.

Course Structure and Reading Lists

The entries below indicate the specific topics and required readings for each seminar. Students are required to do these readings before the seminar. All listed articles are available online (when connected to the university network) and many of the used books are available as e-books through Cambridge's library catalogue. The Politics Library (part of the Seeley Library) and the University Library will have some hard copies of the books. An attempt will be made to make some readings available through the course's Moodle site.

[Note: More suggested 'Further readings' may be added later for the various themes that the course covers, which will be useful for students when preparing their course essays.]

Background reading

If students want to do some background and preparatory reading for the course, we recommend the following books (most of these books are written for a broader audience, so their styles and approaches may differ from many of the required readings in the course, but they give good indications of the themes and questions covered in the course):

Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (Profile Books, 2011)

Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation of Democracy* (Profile Books, 2015)

Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies throughout the World* (Henry Holt, 2008)

Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing Out of Western Democracy* (Verso, 2013)

This is a graduate-level course (not an introductory course) in comparative politics. It is certainly open to students who have not taken comparative politics courses before, but these students may want to consider consulting a general comparative politics textbook before or during the course. There are many such textbooks; a good one is Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 10th ed. (published in the US as *Political Science: A Comparative Introduction*, 8th ed.) (Palgrave, 2016) [or an earlier edition].

PART I: The state: obstinate, obsolete or in transition?

Session 1: The ‘state of the art’ on the state (10th Oct) [Bickerton]

Where are we today in comparative research on the state? What are the main dynamics of state formation and transformation today? Have developments in the field of political economy made the state a redundant unit of analysis or one that is more relevant than ever?

Readings:

Desmond King and Patrick Le Galès, ‘The Three Constituencies of the State: Why the State Has Lost Unifying Energy’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, S1 (2017): 11-33.

Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (Penguin, 2018), Introduction (‘The First Crisis of a Global Age’).

Further readings:

Desmond King and Patrick Le Galès, ‘Conclusion: The Making of a Transnational, Capitalist Policy Member State’, in Patrick Le Galès and Desmond King (eds), *Reconfiguring European States in Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Patrick Le Galès, ‘States in Europe: Uncaging Societies and the Limits to Infrastructural Power’, *Socio-Economic Review* 12 (2014): 131-153.

Tuong Vu, ‘Studying the State through State Formation’, *World Politics* 62, 1 (2010): 148-175.

Session 2: State formation – comparing the classics (17th Oct) [Bickerton]

So central to the development of comparative politics, work on the state has often been approached in terms of competing theories of state formation. This session looks at three ‘classic’ authors (Tilly, Spruyt and Mann) and evaluates and compares their different treatment of the process of state formation.

Readings:

Charles Tilly, ‘War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime’, in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Hendrik Spruyt, ‘The Origins, Development and Possible Decline of the Modern State’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002): 127-149.

Michael Mann, ‘The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results’, *European Journal of Sociology* 25, 2 (1984): 185-213.

Session 3: State formation beyond Europe (31st Oct) [Bickerton]

Theories of state formation have often rested on cases drawn from European experience. Are there significant differences between this experiences and the experiences of non-European states? How do non-European processes of state formation challenge traditional theories?

Readings:

Tuong Vu, *Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China and Indonesia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 1.

Miguel Centeno et al (eds), *States in the Developing World* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 1 ('Unpacking States in the Developing World: Capacity, Performance, and Politics').

Miquel A. Centeno, 'Blood and Debt: War and Taxation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America', *American Journal of Sociology* 102, 6 (1997): 1565-1605.

Further reading:

Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, 'Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood', *World Politics* 35, 1 (1982): 1-24.

Session 4: State formation in the 21st century (7th Nov) [Bickerton]

What does state formation look like at the beginning of the 21st century? To answer this question, this session focuses on two sets of cases: secession attempts in Western European states and new state formation dynamics in the Middle East (focusing on ISIS and the Kurdish region). What can these examples tell us about the nature of contemporary statehood?

Readings:

Bridget Coggins, 'Friends in High Places: International Politics and the Emergence of States from Secessionism', *International Organization* 65 (2011): 433-467. [As background to the discussion of the specific cases]

Josep M. Colomer, 'The Venturous Bid for the Independence of Catalonia', *Nationalities Papers* 45, 5 (2017): 950-967.

Robert Liñeira and Daniel Cetrà, 'The Independence Case in Comparative Perspective', *Political Quarterly* 86, 2 (2015): 257-264.

Further readings:

Johannes Jüde, 'Contesting Borders: The Formation of Iraqi Kurdistan's De Facto State', *International Affairs* 93, 4 (2017): 847-863.

Brendan Simms and Montserrat Guibernau, 'The Catalan Cauldron', *New Statesman* (April 2016) (www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2016/04/catalan-cauldron)

Patrick Cockburn, 'End of times for the Caliphate?', *London Review of Books* (2016) (www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n05/patrick-cockburn/end-times-for-the-caliphate)

James Dobbins and Seth G. Jones, 'The End of a Caliphate', *Survival* 59, 3 (2017): 55-72.

PART II: Political regimes: democratisation and authoritarianism

Session 5: The development of political regimes – questions and ‘classical’ works (14th Nov) [Van Houten]

What are (some of) the main questions that the literature on political regimes (that is, on issues related to democratisation and to authoritarian and hybrid systems of government) tries to answer? Especially the literature on democratisation is enormous, and this session looks at some of the ‘classic’ comparative works on this issue.

Readings:

Larry Diamond, ‘Facing Up to the Democratic Recession’, *Journal of Democracy* 26, 1 (2015): 141-155.

Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 413-52).

Seymour Martin Lipset, ‘Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy’, *American Political Science Review* 53, 1 (1959): 69-105.

Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1986), Chapters 2-4 (pp. 6-47).

Session 6: Democratisation – examples of recent work (21st Nov) [Van Houten]

Until recently, the main focus in the comparative politics literature on regime dynamics has clearly been on democratisation. One prominent strand of explanations in this literature focuses on economic factors, although there are different views on which economic conditions are crucial. In this session, we look at some recent work on this, and also at criticisms of economic explanations and at other approaches to the study of democratisation (and how these relate to the ‘classical’ works discussed in session 5). More generally, what do we think of the attempt and ambition to develop general theories of the development of democracies and dictatorships?

Readings:

Ben W. Ansell and David J. Samuels, *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), Chapters 1 and 3.

Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, ‘Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule’, *American Political Science Review* 106, 3 (2012): 495-516.

Scott Mainwaring and Anibal Perez-Linan, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival and Fall* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), Chapter 6 (on El Salvador).

John T. Sidel, ‘Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Revisited: Colonial State and Chinese Immigrant in the Making of Modern Southeast Asia’, *Comparative Politics* 40, 2 (2008): 127-147.

Further reading:

Michael Albertus and Victor Menaldo, *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), Introduction (and other chapters if interested)

Session 7: Authoritarian regimes – their workings and (lack of) stability (28th Nov) [Van Houten]

Until relatively recently, the majority of the literature on regime dynamics focuses on democratisation, and much of this literature (implicitly or explicitly) assumes that most countries exhibit a general development towards more democratic regimes. However, authoritarian states still exist (and may be growing in number again) and many of them appear to be relatively stable. This has generated more attention in comparative politics to the workings of authoritarian regimes and the factors and strategies that sustain them. This session looks at some of this work.

Readings:

Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz, *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), Chapter 5 ('Dictatorial survival strategies in challenging conditions: factionalized armed supporters and party creation'). [It is also worth looking at the Introduction of this book as further background reading.]

Eva Bellin, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism: Lessons of the Arab Spring', *Comparative Politics* 44, 2 (2012): 127-149.

Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret E. Roberts, 'How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument', *American Political Science Review* 111, 3 (2017): 484-501.

Wonjun Song and Joseph Wright, 'The North Korean Autocracy in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18 (2018): 157-180.

Session 8: The breakdown of democratic regimes – a re-emerging concern? (5th Dec) [Van Houten]

Concerns about the prospects of developed democracies have clearly grown in recent years. Are existing (including long-standing) democracies in crisis, or even in danger of breaking down? In this session we look at some recent literature that has started to investigate this question.

Readings:

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die: What History Reveals about Our Future* (London: Penguin, 2018), Introduction and Chs 1 and 4.

David Runciman, *How Democracy Ends* (London: Profile Books, 2018), Introduction and Ch 1.

Adam Przeworski, *Crisis of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), Introduction.

Further reading:

'A Discussion of Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die*', *Perspectives on Politics* 16, 4 (2018): 1092-1104.

Yascha Mounk, *The People vs Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save it* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

Session 9: Hybrid regimes – an increasingly prominent phenomenon? (16th Jan) [Van Houten]

It has become increasingly clear that the political systems of some states combine democratic and autocratic features. This has given rise to a focus on 'hybrid' states. How should we conceptualise and think about such states? Are they simply temporary arrangements (and if so, what determines whether they move towards 'fuller' democracy or autocracy), or can they be stable over longer periods of time? This session focuses on these questions, with cases taken from different parts of the world.

Readings:

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapters 1 and 2, and read one of the empirical chapters (chapters 3-7).

Maxwell A. Cameron, 'Making Sense of Competitive Authoritarianism: Lessons from the Andes', *Latin American Politics and Society* 60, 2 (2018): 1-22.

Florian Bieber, 'Patterns of Competitive Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans', *East European Politics* 34, 3 (2018): 337-354.

Further readings:

Henry E. Hale, 'Formal Constitutions in Informal Politics: Institutions and Democratization in Post-Soviet Eurasia', *World Politics* 63, 4 (2011): 581-617.

Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, 'Defeating Dictators: Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes', *World Politics* 62, 1 (2010): 43-86.

PART III: Political parties: past, present and future

Session 10: Political parties and the theory and practice of societal cleavages (23th Jan) [Bickerton]

How successfully do parties translate social conflicts into competing party programmes? How have they done this in the past and is the content of party competition changing under the pressures of globalization and regional integration? The main focus in this session, as in the majority of the political party literature, is on Western Europe.

Readings:

Peter Mair (ed), *The West European Party System* (Oxford University Press, 1990), Chapters 9, 12 and 15 (pp. 91-138, 185-194, 218-231) [pieces by Lipset & Rokkan, Rose & Urwin, and Wolinetz].

Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 6.

Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe, 2016, 'Europe's Crises and Political Contestation' (www.euengage.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Hooghe-Marks-Europes-Crises-and-Political-Contestation.pdf)

Further reading:

Hans-Peter Kriesi et al, *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapters 1 and 2.

Session 11: Parties and changing party systems (30th Jan) [Van Houten]

Except in one-party states, political parties are part of a 'system' in which parties compete and cooperate. Analysing the nature and dynamics of 'party systems' has been a long-standing concern in comparative politics. This session looks at some of the newer work on this (focusing on various parts of the world), and how social and institutional factors combine in shaping competitive party systems.

Readings:

Carles Boix, 'The Emergence of Parties and Party Systems', in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 21 (pp. 499-521).

Karen E. Ferree, G. Bingham Powell and Ethan Scheiner, 'Context, Electoral Rules, and Party Systems', *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014): 421-439.

Heather Stoll, *Changing Societies, Changing Party Systems* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter 7 ('The United States: New Parties for New Groups?'; pp. 198-234).

Lenka Bustikova and Cristina Corduneanu-Huci, 'Patronage, Trust and State Capacity: The Historical Trajectories of Clientelism', *World Politics* 69, 2 (2017): 277-326.

Further readings:

Herbert Kitschelt and Daniel M. Kselman, 'Economic Development, Democratic Experience, and Political Parties' Linkage Strategies', *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 11 (2013): 1453-1484.

Jennifer Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 4 (pp. 79-112).

Session 12: Rebels, guerrillas and bureaucrats – the political party in an African context (6th Feb) [Bickerton]

Political parties have become an almost universal vehicle for the capturing and exercise of power. However, what we mean by a party differs greatly depending on the part of the world that we are talking about. How do legacies of colonialism affect party formation? What do we mean by the political party in one party states? What about independence and liberation movements that have transformed themselves into hegemonic political parties? This session focuses on the political party in African politics as a case of thinking through the origins and functions of political parties outside of the traditional empirical terrain of Western Europe and North America. Students are encouraged to read around other countries and regions of interest to them, e.g. Latin America or Asia.

Readings:

Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner, *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton University Press, 2015/1966), Chapter 10.

Nicolas Van de Walle and Kimberly Smiddy Butler, 'Political parties and Party Systems in Africa's Illiberal Democracies', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 13, 1 (1999): 14-28.

Adrienne LeBas, *From Protest to Parties: Party Building and Democratization in Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapters 1 and 2.

Session 13: Populism and the crisis of party democracy (13th Feb) [Bickerton]

Populism has in recent years become a key concept in comparative politics. From the United States through to Western and Eastern Europe, South East Asia and Latin America, work on populism has multiplied. What does populism mean and how useful a concept is it for understanding the challenges facing advanced democracies and the rest of the developing world? Should we welcome populism as an antidote to the problems faced by representative democracy (and 'traditional' political parties) or is populism itself the problem? And can populism be studied in isolation from other trends that are reshaping democratic politics across the globe?

Readings:

Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39, 4 (2004): 542-563.

Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press/Penguin, 2016), Chapters 1 and 2.

Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, 'Populism and Technocracy', in Kaltwasser et al (eds), *The Oxford Handbook on Populism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 17.

Further readings:

Peter Mair, 'Representative versus Responsible Government', MpIfG Working Paper 09/8 (Cologne: MPifG, 2009). [Is also reprinted as chapter 25 in Peter Mair, *On Parties, Party Systems and Democracy* (ECPR Press, 2014).]

Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul A. Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy (eds), *The Oxford Handbook on Populism* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Conclusion

Session 14: The nature of comparative politics research and its future (20th Feb) [Van Houten]

This session serves as conclusion to the course, and will reflect on the nature of comparative politics as exemplified by the topics and readings covered in the course (different approaches, differences and similarities between 'classical' and recent work, etc.). It is also an opportunity to tie up loose ends from the earlier sessions.

Readings:

David Laitin, 'Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline', in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds), *Political Science: State of the Discipline III* (Norton, 2002).

Andrew Roberts, 'Consensus and Dissensus in Comparative Politics: Do Comparativists Agree on the Goals, Methods, and Results of the Field?', forthcoming in *International Political Science Review* (already available online)

'Symposium: Big, Unanswered Questions in Comparative Politics', *APSA-CP Newsletter* 19, 1 (2008): 6-16.