

Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley

Spring 2025

Political Science 136B

MW 6:30-8:00, 166 Social Sciences Bldg, plus discussion section

Prof. Steven Fish

Office hours: W 2:30-5:30 and Th 5:30-7:30 (all times open, but W 2:30-4:00 reserved for students in 136B), 744 Social Sciences Bldg

GSI: Grant Durow (grant_durow@berkeley.edu); office hours M 5:00-6:30 or by appointment, 715 Social Sciences Bldg

ADVANCED COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Welcome to Advanced Comparative Politics! This course provides a deep dive into comparative political science. It takes the form of a “great books” course that focuses on outstanding, recently published texts. We will investigate how the authors formulated their research questions, conducted their field research, developed their causal explanations, dealt with methodological challenges, and found the inspiration to persevere. We will also delve into the substantive issues that the books tackle, which include some of the most urgent issues in global politics. Each book we will study is an exemplary work, and taken together the texts cover a vast range of substantive topics and geographical regions.

We will typically devote three course sessions and one discussion section to each of the books. One of the sessions will focus on lecture, the second on student presentations, and the third on discussion with the author of the book we are studying. Our authors make up a who’s who of leading scholars of comparative political science, and we will use our meetings with them to learn how to conduct research.

Requirements consist of three exams, quizzes on the readings, student presentations, attendance at lectures and discussion sections, and participation in course discussions. As noted in the appropriate week on the syllabus, the preliminary exams will be held on February 24 and April 7. The final exam will be held at the assigned time during finals week. Students are expected to have read each book in its entirety by the date of the quiz on the book noted on the syllabus. The seven top quiz grades (and only the seven top grades) out of the 9 quizzes will count toward the course grade. All quizzes must be taken in class; they may not be taken remotely, and no quizzes may be made up for any reason.

Grades will be determined on a 100-point scale. Each of the preliminary exams counts for 15 points; the final exam for 30 points; the quizzes for 14 points (2 points per quiz); student presentations for 6 points; and attendance and participation for 20 points. The third and final exam will be cumulative in coverage of course material.

All email correspondence about course matters should be conducted with your GSI. If you wish to discuss anything with the professor, please drop by his office hours and he’ll be delighted to meet with you.

Use of ChatGPT or any other AI source for any assignment is and will be treated like plagiarism. It is strictly forbidden and will result in a failing grade for the course.

Use of electronic or internet devices, including laptops and cellphones, is not allowed during class. Each infraction will automatically result in a 10-point reduction in the final course grade.

All course readings are posted on the bcourses site.

Our readings for the course are:

Javier Corrales, *Autocracy Rising: How Venezuela Transitioned to Authoritarianism* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2022).

Ritika Goel, *Narrative Capture and Status Politics: How Right-Wing Populists Hold onto Power* (book manuscript in progress, 2025).

Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Nations under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Aram Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty: How National Stories Shape Democracy in Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship: The Violent Origins of Durable Authoritarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022).

Bryn Rosenfeld, *The Autocratic Middle Class: How State Dependency Reduces the Demand for Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Michael L. Ross, *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Perna Singh, *How Solidarity Works for Welfare: Subnationalism and Social Development in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Syllabus

Week 1 (Jan 22): Course Introduction

Wed Jan 22: introduction to course

Th Jan 23: discussion section (introduction to course and administrative matters)

Week 2 (Jan 27 & 29): How Does Religion Influence Politics?

Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Nations under God*

Mon Jan 27: quiz on chs. 1-3 and lecture (*Nations under God*)

Wed Jan 29: quiz on chs. 4, 5, and conclusion and meeting with Prof. Grzymala-Busse
(*Nations under God*)

Th Jan 30: discussion section (*Nations under God*)

Week 3 (Feb 3 & 5): How Does the Cohesiveness of the Political Community Affect Social Welfare?

Perna Singh, *How Solidarity Works for Welfare*

Mon Feb 3: lecture (*How Solidarity Works for Welfare*)

Wed Feb 5: quiz and student presentations (*How Solidarity Works for Welfare*)

Th Feb 6: discussion section (*How Solidarity Works for Welfare*)

Week 4 (Feb 10 & 12): How Does the Cohesiveness of the Political Community Affect Social Welfare? (cont.); and How Does the State Affect Political Mobilization?

Perna Singh, *How Solidarity Works for Welfare* (cont.)

Mon Feb 10: meeting with Prof. Singh (*How Solidarity Works for Welfare*)

Bryn Rosenfeld, *The Autocratic Middle Class*

Wed Feb 12: lecture and student presentations (*The Autocratic Middle Class*)

Th Feb 13: discussion section (*The Autocratic Middle Class*)

Week 5 (Feb 19): How Does the State Affect Political Mobilization? (cont.)

Bryn Rosenfeld, *The Autocratic Middle Class* (cont.)

Wed Feb 19: quiz and meeting with Prof. Rosenfeld (*The Autocratic Middle Class*)

Th Feb 20: discussion section (open)

Week 6 (Feb 24 & 26): How Does Oil Wealth Shape Politics and the Economy?

Michael L. Ross, *The Oil Curse*

Mon Feb 24: first preliminary exam (covers material weeks 1-5)

Wed Feb 26: lecture (*The Oil Curse*)

Th Feb 27: discussion section (*The Oil Curse*)

Week 7 (Mar 3 & 5): How Does Oil Wealth Shape Politics and the Economy? (cont.)

Michael L. Ross, *The Oil Curse* (cont.)

Mon Mar 3: quiz and student presentations (*The Oil Curse*)

Wed Mar 5: meeting with Prof. Ross (*The Oil Curse*)

Th Mar 6: discussion section (open)

Week 8 (Mar 10 & 12): What Determines Whether Regimes Autocratize?

Javier Corrales, *Autocracy Rising*

Mon Mar 10: lecture (*Autocracy Rising*)

Wed Mar 12: quiz and student presentations (*Autocracy Rising*)

Th Mar 13: discussion section (*Autocracy Rising*)

Week 9 (Mar 17 and 19): What Determines Whether Regimes Autocratize? (cont.); and What Are National Narratives and How Do They Affect Democracy?

Javier Corrales, *Autocracy Rising*: (cont.)

Mon Mar 17: meeting with Prof. Corrales (*Autocracy Rising*)

Aram Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty*

Wed March 19: lecture (*Narratives of Civic Duty*)

Th March 20: discussion section (*Narratives of Civic Duty*)

Week 10 (Mar 31 & Ap 2): What Are National Narratives and How Do They Affect Democracy? (cont.)

Aram Hur, *Narratives of Civic Duty* (cont.)

NOTE: This week our meeting with the author precedes student presentations

Mon Mar 31: quiz and meeting with Prof. Hur (*Narratives of Civic Duty*)

Wed Ap 2: student presentations (*Narratives of Civic Duty*)

Th Ap 3: discussion section (open)

Week 11 (Ap 7 & 9): Why Do Some Authoritarian Regimes Endure?

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship*

Mon Ap 7: second preliminary exam (covers material weeks 6-10)

Wed Ap 9: lecture (*Revolution and Dictatorship*)

Th Ap 10: discussion section (*Revolution and Dictatorship*)

Week 12 (Ap 14 & 16) Why Do Some Authoritarian Regimes Endure? (cont.)

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship* (cont.)

Mon Ap 14: quiz and student presentations (*Revolution and Dictatorship*)

Wed Ap 16: meeting with Profs. Levitsky and Way (*Revolution and Dictatorship*)

Th Ap 17: discussion section open (open)

Week 13 (Ap 21 & 23): How Do Authoritarian Populists Hold Power?

Ritika Goel, *Narrative Capture and Status Politics*

Mon Ap 21: lecture (*Narrative Capture and Status Politics*)

Wed Ap 23: quiz and student presentations (*Narrative Capture and Status Politics*)

Thu Ap 24: discussion section (*Narrative Capture and Status Politics*)

Week 14 (Ap 28 & 30): How Do Authoritarian Populists Hold Power? (cont.)

Ritika Goel, *Narrative Capture and Status Politics* (cont.)

Mon Ap 28: meeting with Ms. Goel (*Narrative Capture and Status Politics*)

Wed Ap 30: course conclusion

Th May 1: discussion section (open)