

Comparative Politics of the Developing World

Politics 60 • 10383 • Fall 2026
University of California, Santa Cruz

Instructor of Record: Professor **Benjamin L. Read** (bread@ucsc.edu), 157 Merrill Faculty Annex
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Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:10p – 8:45p, Kresge College Academic Center 3201

Course web site: <https://canvas.ucsc.edu>

Professor Read's web site: <https://benread.net>

Professor Read's office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2:00p to 3:00p, on Zoom.

Sign-up and Zoom link at <https://tinyurl.com/benreadofficehours>

I will also be available to chat in person after lectures, and you may also email me to schedule alternative office hour times.

Teaching assistants each have two office hours per week, which they will communicate to students in their sections.

Date of this syllabus: September 27, 2026.

The syllabus is subject to change. The latest version will always be on Canvas (under "Files") and benread.net.

Overview:

This course provides an introduction to Comparative Politics as a subfield of political science. Rather than privilege the advanced industrial democracies of the Global North, the course purposefully focuses on countries in the Global South, also frequently referred to (though not without controversy) as the developing world. The first third of the course (weeks 1–3) is devoted to understanding concepts that are foundational to comparative political analysis, including such terms as the state, the nation, regime types, federalism, colonialism, political parties, and electoral systems. Having grasped these concepts in the abstract, students then spend the remainder of the course (weeks 4–10) applying them to a set of four of the largest and most important countries of the developing world: Nigeria, India, Indonesia, and Brazil.

How do the state agencies and political systems of such countries work, or fail to work? To what extent are they democratic, and what are the problems and contributions of democracy in such settings? How is governance in such places affected by legacies of colonialism and other historical forces, domestic and international economic currents, non-governmental organizations, ethnic strife, and the actions of other states? How does the study of politics help us to understand issues like poverty, disease, and instability? We examine these and other questions over the quarter. We meet in person for lectures and sections except as noted or announced.

Thus, in terms of **learning outcomes**, you — a student in this class — will: 1) learn to define and employ essential political concepts and apply them to specific countries; 2) evaluate and create claims about the relationships among such concepts; 3) deepen your understanding of the Global South; 4) enhance your skills at acquiring information from texts, visualizations, and presentations; making sense of such information and reasoning about it; as well as communicating in spoken and written forms.

Readings:

Quite a few required readings are assigned, all available on Canvas. Your teaching assistant will give you guidance on when you must complete each reading to keep pace with discussion sections.

Assignments, Ground Rules, and Notices:

- Read this syllabus all the way through.
- By the end of the first full week of class, please send an email to Prof. Read and to your teaching assistant, telling us about yourself. Most importantly, please tell us about your interests and things you care about — what makes you *you* — and anything that you would like us to know. We recommend that you also include the following information: the name you would like to be called, your year in school (first, second, etc.), your declared or prospective major if you have one, a phone number at which we could contact you if that were to become urgently necessary for some reason, where you grew up, what factors made you decide to take the course, what foreign languages you have studied (if any) and for how long, and what foreign countries you have visited or lived in (if any) and for how long.
- Attendance at lectures and discussion sections is a firm requirement of this course. Attendance will be taken in

lectures and at every section meeting. The instructors are understanding about family emergencies, illness or other serious exigencies, and will treat them as excused absences. Unexcused absences will lower your grade. More than two unexcused absences from lecture will result in a failing lecture grade. More than two unexcused absences from section will result in a failing section grade. Perfect or near-perfect attendance will yield a bonus.

- Our collective ability to focus is critical to the success of the class.
 - "No Digital Media" policy: Please keep your laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc. in your bag at all times and be sure they stay silent.
 - We recommend jotting down notes by hand in a notebook or on loose leaf paper. Slides and class recordings will be posted after class on Canvas.
 - If you urgently need to use the bathroom during class you may, but it is best if students stay seated throughout.
- Complete the readings, and prepare answers to the discussion questions, before each week's section.
 - Discussion questions will be posted on Canvas and will also be circulated via announcements in Canvas (which go out via email).
 - We expect you to read the full readings yourself rather than attempt to rely on summaries written by other people or by AI. Sharpening your ability to process serious texts is a big part of the point of this class. A summary will not give you a very thorough or solid understanding and may miss a lot that is relevant.
- Students' grades for the quarter will be determined as follows:
 - Lecture attendance and participation (10 percent of the quarter grade)
 - Section attendance and participation (20 percent of the quarter grade)
 - Midterm examination (30 percent): In lecture on Wednesday, October 28, 2026
 - Final examination (40 percent): Monday, December 7, 2026, 7:30pm-10:30pm
- The percentages above are subject to adjustment. All grades are given on a 0-100 scale, where 92-98 is an A, 90-92 is an A-, 88-90 is a B+, 82-88 is a B, etc. A-range grades are reserved for work of exceptionally high quality. B-range grades are for good work. C or C+ grades are for work that is not very good but still acceptable.

Some Things to Bear in Mind

- Your curiosity and participation are very important to the success of this class.
- There is no such thing as a stupid question. Ask anything!
- You must use and check your UCSC email while you are taking this course.
- Email is also an excellent way to reach us. Often, questions submitted by email will be useful to the rest of the class and the answer will be forwarded accordingly (without the sender's name.)
- Students are encouraged to attend Prof. Read's office hours as well as those of their assigned teaching assistant, and to visit Prof. Read's personal web page for a few pieces of general advice to students, such as a short essay on "How to Read in College."

Time Commitment

The UCSC Academic Senate reminds us: "Systemwide Senate Regulation 760 specifies that one academic credit corresponds to three hours of work per week for students during a 10-week quarter. This means that the average workload for a 5-credit course is 150 hours or 15 hours per week." With this in mind, expect to spend each week, on average:

- Lectures: 3 hours and 10 minutes
- Section: 1 hour and 5 minutes
- Reading, note-taking, review for the exams: 10 hours and 45 minutes

Academic Integrity

All members of the UCSC community benefit from an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. You are expected to present your own work and acknowledge the work of others in order to preserve the integrity of scholarship.

Academic integrity includes:

- Following exam rules
- Using only permitted materials during an exam
- Submitting your own original work

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Disclosing exam content during or after you have taken an exam
- Accessing exam materials without permission
- Copying/purchasing any material from another student, or from another source, that is submitted for grading as your own
- Plagiarism, including use of Internet material without proper citation
- Using cell phones or other electronics to obtain outside information during an exam without explicit permission from the instructor

Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript. For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the [Academic Misconduct](#) page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

Electronic resources and databases

Sometimes we compare countries to one another using social, economic, or political indicators that are measured in quantitative ways. You may be interested in exploring some of the following databases.

- Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org>
- World Bank World Development Indicators: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>
- World Bank Governance Indicators: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators>
- The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project has graphing tools: <https://www.v-dem.net/graphing/graphing-tools/>
- The Berggruen Governance Index at UCLA: <https://governance.luskin.ucla.edu>
- Gapminder: <https://www.gapminder.org>
- Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org>

In addition, you can explore data and trends for our countries (and any other you are curious about) at these websites:

- Human rights concerns at Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/publications>
- International IDEA: <https://www.idea.int>
- Constitutions and their chronology: <https://comparativeconstitutionsproject.org>
- Key issues around elections at the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network <https://aceproject.org>
- Keep updated about elections around the world at International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) <http://www.electionguide.org/>
- Cultural values at World Value Survey: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>
- More cultural attitudes at Pew Global Surveys. See how citizens in our countries of analysis stand on premarital sex, surveillance, and more: <https://www.pewresearch.org>
- Explore the Fragile States rankings and map <https://fragilestatesindex.org>

Disability Accommodation

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please affiliate with the DRC. Make sure that you have requested Academic Access Letters if you intend to use accommodations. You can also request to meet privately with me during my office hours or by appointment, as soon as possible. I would like us to discuss how we can implement your accommodations in this course to ensure your access and full engagement in this course.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments:

PART 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION AND KEY CONCEPTS

Week 1

Monday, September 28 Lecture: Introduction / overview of the course
Wednesday, September 30 Lecture

- Baker, Andy, *Shaping the Developing World*, 2nd edition (Sage 2021), "Underdevelopment and Diversity in the Global South," pp. 3–27.
- Poggi, Gianfranco, first nine pages of "The Nation State" in *Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniele Caramani (Oxford 2014), pp. 64–76. You may stop reading after the "key points" summary on page 71. The core topics in this chapter are ones that feature in next week's lectures but it's a good idea to start reading about them.

Optional further reading:

- The "Human Development Reports" of the United Nations Development Program provide lively annual overviews of current trends and current thinking about the Global South and human well-being everywhere. See "Reports and Publications" at <https://hdr.undp.org>

Week 2

Monday, October 5 Lecture
Wednesday, October 7 Prof. Read is away giving a talk; lecture will be pre-recorded and available on Yuja in Canvas, rather than held in classroom. Sections are held as usual.

- Baker, Andy, *Shaping the Developing World*, 2nd edition (Sage 2021), "Slavery and Colonialism" and "Globalization and Neocolonialism," pp. 85–138.
- Samuels, David, "Political Identity" in *Comparative Politics* (Pearson 2013), pp. 148–172.

Optional further reading:

- David B. Abernethy, "Legacies," chapter 16 of *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 363–386

Week 3

Monday, October 12 Lecture
Wednesday, October 14 Lecture

- Mair, Peter, first ten pages of "Democracies," in *Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniele Caramani (Oxford 2014), pp. 80–93. You may stop reading after the "key points" summary on page 89.
- Samuels, David, "Democratic Political Regimes" in *Comparative Politics* (Pearson 2013), pp. 58–88.
- Katz, Peter, "Political Parties" in *Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniele Caramani (Oxford 2014), pp. 199–213.

PART 2: NIGERIA AND MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Weeks 4–5

Monday, October 19 Lecture
Wednesday, October 21 Lecture
Monday, October 26 Lecture
Wednesday, October 28 **In-class midterm on Part 1 and Part 2**

- Scacco, Alexandra, "Nigeria," in *Case Studies in Comparative Politics* by David J. Samuels (Pearson 2012), pp. 320–64.
- Suberu, Rotimi, and Larry Diamond, "Institutional Design, Ethnic Conflict Management, and Democracy in Nigeria," in Reynolds, ed., *The Architecture of Democracy* (2002), pp. 400–28.
- Campbell, John, "The 'Election-Like Event' of 2007," in *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 97–113.
- Igiebor, God'stime Osariyekemwen, "Political Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Economic Development in the Fourth Republic," *Journal of Developing Societies* 35:4 (2019), pp. 493–513.

Optional further reading:

- Obe, Ayo, "Nigeria's Emerging Two-Party System?" *Journal of Democracy* 30:3 (July 2019), pp. 109–123.

- Cheeseman, Nic, et al., "Social Media Disruption: Nigeria's WhatsApp Politics," 31:3 (2020), pp. 145–159.

PART 3: INDIA

Weeks 6–7

Monday, November 2	Lecture
Wednesday, November 4	Lecture
Monday, November 9	Lecture
Wednesday, November 11	Veterans Day; no class

- Sil, Rudra, "India," in *Comparative Politics* by Jeffrey Kopstein et al. (Cambridge 2014), pp. 339–89.
- Boo, Katherine, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (New York: Random House, 2012), pp. 3–12, 17–30, 104–112, 221–232.
- Vaishnav, Milan and Jamie Hinton, "The Dawn of India's Fourth Party System," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace working paper (2019), pp. 1–42
- Varshney, Ashutosh, "How India's Ruling Party Erodes Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 33:4 (October 2022), pp. 104–118

Optional further material:

- "The Story of India," 6-part BBC documentary (2007), first episode here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5lpx2T7VIQ>
- "India Reborn," 2009 TV series, first episode here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG5BJIXUd6g>

PART 4: INDONESIA

Weeks 8–9

Monday, November 16	Lecture
Wednesday, November 18	Lecture
Monday, November 23	Lecture

- Part of Liddle, R. William, "Indonesia: A Muslim-Majority Democracy," 2007. Specifically, pages 157–174, going by the white page numbers printed on black dots on the pages themselves. This is three consecutive sections of this textbook chapter: those on "Political Culture," "Bases of Conflict," and "Political Organizations."
- Aspinall, Edward, "Indonesia: Redistributing Power," in *Politics of the Developing World*, ed. Peter Burnell et al. (Oxford 2014), pp. 314–23.
- Mietzner, Marcus, "Indonesia's Decentralization: The Rise of Local Identities and the Survival of the Nation State," in *Regional Dynamics in a Decentralized Indonesia*, Hal Hill, ed. (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2014), pp. 45–67.
- Slater, Dan, "Indonesia's High-Stakes Handover," *Journal of Democracy* 35:2 (April 2024), pp. 40–51.

Optional further material:

- Williams, Mark, "Yudhoyono's Third Way: Muslim Democracy, National Stability, and Economic Development in Indonesia," in *Indonesia's Ascent*, C. Roberts et al. eds. (Palgrave 2015) Ch. 4, pp. 69–87.
- Aspinall, Edward, Meredith Weiss et al., *Mobilizing for Elections: Patronage and Political Machines in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, 2022)
- Mujani, Saiful, and R. William Liddle, "Indonesia: Jokowi Sidelines Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 32:4 (October 2021), pp. 72–86.

PART 5: BRAZIL

Weeks 9–10

Wednesday, November 25	This is the night before Thanksgiving. A pre-recorded lecture will be available on Yuja
Monday, November 30	Lecture
Wednesday, December 2	Lecture

- Montero, Alfred, "Brazil," in *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, Kesselman et al., 7th Edition (Wadsworth, 2015), pp. 357–400.
- Htun, Mala, "Racial Quotas for a 'Racial Democracy,'" *NACLA Report on the Americas* Vol. 38, #4 (2005), pp. 20–25.
- Sugiyama, Natasha Borges, and Wendy Hunter, "Whither Clientelism? Good Governance and Brazil's Bolsa Família

Program," *Comparative Politics* Vol. 46, #1 (2013), pp. 43–62.

- Hunter, Wendy and Timothy J Power, "Bolsonaro and Brazil's Illiberal Backlash," *Journal of Democracy* 30:1 (January 2019), pp. 68–82
- Shannon Sims, "Is Brazil's Underdog Era Coming to an End?" *The New Yorker*, July 30, 2025
- Don't forget the four-page case study of Brazil at the end of Chapter 5 of Andy Baker's book, assigned in Part 1.

Optional further material:

- Ames, Barry, Andy Baker, and Lucio R. Rennó, "The Quality of Elections in Brazil: Policy, Performance, Pageantry, or Pork?," in Peter R. Kingstone and Timothy J. Power, *Democratic Brazil Revisited* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), pp. 107–133

Final exam: Monday, December 7, 2026, 7:30pm–10:30pm, in our usual lecture room