**POLS 201**

**Introduction to**

# **Comparative Politics**

**Tony Spanakos**

**spanakost@mail.montclair.edu**

**www.spanakos.com**

Why are countries poor?

Maybe colonial experience…

How do we prove this?

…we might

contrast countries with recent colonial experience (Angola and Uganda)

with countries without colonial experience (Thailand and Russia)

Or we could

contrast different colonial experiences

comparing the effects of

Spanish (Dominican Republic)

French (Haiti),

and English (Jamaica)

colonialism on economic development

Then, after analyzing these cases,

we would have some evidence to support a general argument, like:

colonial rule had *X* effect on development

OR

Spanish rule was more *Y* than British and French rule

Political science systematically studies the actors, structures, processes, and outcomes that are involved in politics. In comparative politics, we propose and test hypotheses—statements that identify causal relationships between two or more phenomena. Comparing evidence from different contexts allows us to try to generalize our findings to support or challenge existing hypotheses and sometimes present our own alternative explanations.

Building hypthotheses helps make sense of the world and it may provide real world answers. There is no empirical evidence of any democracy suffering famine. But does democratic government truly prevent famine? Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen assumed this was not accidental, that the lack of famines could be explained through some hypothesized relationship between the characteristics of democracy and the outbreak of famine. Is he correct? If he is millions of lives could be saved if non-democratic governments became democratic.

 Comparative politics is not so much about answering these questions as it is about trying to address them. In the process, more questions will appear, and these questions may suggest partial answers which may then raise other questions. In short, comparative politics—like political science more generally—is really about learning how to ask and address good questions. Doing that contributes to our understanding of politics through the paths toward, and detours from, addressing these questions.

 I want you to *learn* comparative politics. My goal is not only for you to learn *about* comparative politics but for you to understand how we approach the subject and how to actually *do* comparative politics. This course is designed to help you get there.

***Who am I?***

My name is Tony Spanakos. I have been teaching political science since 1999. I received a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Princeton University in 1995 and a Master’s and Doctorate in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 1998 and 2000 respectively. I have taught at Tufts University, Manhattanville College, the University of Brasilia, Touro College, New York University, and Montclair State University among other places. I am the co-editor of *Reforming Brazil* (2004) and co-editor of a book series *Conceptualising Comparative Politics*. I have published research in *Comparative Political Studies, Latin American Politics and Society,* and *Latin American Perspectives,* among other journals. My research has been in comparative politics and political economy, specifically focusing on the dilemmas facing new democracies in Latin America and other developing countries.

I have been a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil (2002) and Venezuela (2008). My most recent research looks at elections and credit markets, assessing credibility in economic policy, the democraticness of civil society and social movements, as well as how to improve quality of democracy in new democracies. I have also been working on essays directed towards more general audiences using popular culture as a teaching tool, looking at issues of political philosophy in *Batman, Spider-man, Watchmen, Avatar, Iron Man,* and *The Avengers*, among other topics.

***When do we meet?***

We meet as a class Mondays Wednesdays 11:30am-12:45 pm in Dickson 275 or Mondays 2:30-5pm in Dickson 276.

Participation is fundamental to your learning process as well as mine and those of your fellow students. So please do not think of how many classes you are allowed to miss. Rather think of what you will miss by not learning from the discussion and analysis of the questions and issues we cover in class. This is not the sort of thing you can make up by cramming some emergency textbook reading before writing one of the essay assignments for the course. Rather, the discussions that we have in the classroom are meant as a way to train you to be able to make and sustain better the arguments you will need for those assignments.

***Do we Only meet then?***

Hopefully not. We will also meet in my office hours (Dickson 209) on Mondays and Wednesdays between 8:30 and 10 am. Come by whenever you want to chat, ask questions about the course, or give me some ideas about some things that are going on in the world of politics that you think are interesting. You can also reach me by emailing me at spanakost@mail.montclair.edu. If you have questions, and especially if you cannot make my office hours and want to try to figure out when we can talk, please send me an email.

You should also be meeting with the other people in class outside of class. The more you engage with each other and talk about the class, the easier it will be for you to learn. Even if you just talk about movies, Snooki, or the Knicks, if you do so using the analytical techniques that we develop in class, you will be learning. As you will see in this course, analyzing pop culture can actually help us understand some of the most important ideas and debates in comparative politics.

***What do we need to read?***

I chose the readings and topics to challenge you with things that are both familiar and foreign. Some of the readings are more difficult and others are more fun. All of them should encourage you to muse about the relationships between people, institutions, conditions, and events that are part of the authors’ arguments. The truth is that it takes two to tango and essays cannot be thought-provoking unless the reader reads them deeply, carefully, in a thoughtful manner.

Most of the readings will be from three books:

Lim, Timothy. *Doing Comparative Politics*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. 2006.

O’Neil, Patrick H., Karl Fields, Don Share. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. Second Edition. W.W. Norton. 2006.

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen.* DC Comics.

But I highly recommend that you keep up with the news as well. Being familiar with what is going on in world politics will make you feel more comfortable in class discussions. So, try to browse the websites of the New York Times, CNN, or BBC. If you want more in-depth analysis check out the Economist or OpenDemocracy.net. Also, when you are doing research for your essays or in preparation for classroom discussions, you should search peer-reviewed academic journals either in the library or online. If you do not know how to do that yet or do not feel comfortable using the online databases, do not worry. We will have one session in the library where we will introduce these databases and you will get a chance to practice.

***How are you going to assess our learning?***

Good question. My concern is that you learn how to identify, pose, and address interesting hypotheses. This means understanding some of the debates and theories in the field of comparative politics, how to use case studies to make an argument, and it means developing a sense of how to form and defend hypotheses.

Each week you will respond to questions that I ask about the readings for that week. These responses should be four hundred to five hundred words in length. Roughly half of these weekly papers will be given directly to me for grading. You will either go to the writing center or to your peers (see below for more instructions) to get comments for the other half. The following week you will hand me the original copy of your weekly paper with comments from your peer/the writing center along with the paper due for that week.

Learning involves individual and group work. At the beginning of the semester, I will form groups of 4-5 students who will be your ‘peer partners.’ You will send these partners and others a copy of a draft of the research paper before the 10th class (2 weeks before it is due) so that you can get comments to help you produce a stronger final version which you will turn in to me and, during that week, you will write critiques to improve your partner’s papers. Try to give them constructive criticism identifying what they did well and where they can improve. Obviously you will have the best results if your comments are not just written but if you interact and meet you will be able to give and get better feedback. Use their comments to strengthen your paper so that you give me the best possible paper. The final version of the research paper is due for class #14. It must be between two thousand and twenty-two hundred words.

**Please NOTE**: In order to cut down on paper (but still preserve my eyesight), I listed above the number of words expected for each assignment (rather than pages). Please print your papers in 14 point Times New Roman font, print ‘two sheets to a page,’ and print on both sides of the page. This will allow something that looks like book format (so you should have two columns of text on each side of the paper).

 The final paper will be an in class essay which will be chosen from a list of topics given to students in Week 11. Between then and the final, students are expected to meet with their peer partners and discuss the paper topics. The final grade will come from participation (twenty percent), the response essays (twenty percent), the research paper (forty percent) and the final exam (twenty percent).

Below is an outline for the questions that we will address in each class along with the reading assignment associated with that class.

One: Intro

Week One

Response Questions:

*Which of the three purposes of comparing that Lim discusses seems best and why?*

*What is the political climate in Watchmen?*

*How should case studies be done?*

*Which of Gerring and Seawright’s approaches seems most convincing?*

Two: Whodunnit and How?

*Law & Order* and hypotheses

Lim Chapter one

Watchmen

Three: How do we compare things?

Making Cases into Evidence

types of case studies

Lim Chapter Two

Jason Seawright and John Gerring. “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.” *Political Research Quarterly*. 2008. 61.

http://people.bu.edu/jgerring/documents/CaseSelection.pdf

Week Two:

*Does economic development drive social and political values and behavior?*

*Make your argument by using one of the countries we have examined as a case.*

*Why did so many countries become democratic in the 1980s and 1990s?*

*What caused Mexico or Brazil’s transition to democracy?*

*(bring your paper to the writing center for comments and record the comments and suggestions that you received on a separate sheet of paper*)

Four: Democracy and Modernization

Lipset, Inglehart, et al

Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel. “[How Development Leads to Democracy](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=1652714771&SrchMode=2&sid=12&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241196289&clientId=8606).” *Foreign Affairs.* New York: Mar/Apr 2009. Vol. 88.

Ronald Inglehart, Wayne E Baker. “[Modernization's challenge to traditional values: Who's afraid of Ronald McDonald?](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=7&did=68976098&SrchMode=2&sid=12&Fmt=4&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241196289&clientId=8606).” *The Futurist.* Washington: Mar/Apr 2001. Vol. 35, Iss. 2;

Five: Becoming Democracies

Lim Chapter 6

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapters 10, 11 (Mexico and Brazil)

Shin, D.C. “On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research.” *World Politics* 47. October 1994. p. 135-170.

Week Three:

*Why isn’t Singapore a Democracy?*

*Why is India a Democracy?*

*What is civil society? Does civil society explain difference in the quality of democracy?*

*Turn in draft of research paper to peer partners*

Six: Deviant Cases and Democracy

*India and Singapore*

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 8

Aseema Sinha. “Economic Growth and Political Accommodation.” *Journal of Democracy.* Baltimore: Apr 2007. Vol. 18, Iss. 2;

Soek-Fang Sim. “[Hegemonic Authoritarianism and Singapore: Economics, Ideology and the Asian Economic Crisis1](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=8&did=1041600351&SrchMode=2&sid=18&Fmt=4&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241197084&clientId=8606)” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. 2006. Vol. 36, Iss. 2; p. 143

Seven: Best Friends Forever?

Aristotle, Putnam, Berman

Putnam, Robert D. [Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=18&did=9116190&SrchMode=2&sid=21&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241197443&clientId=8606). *PS, Political Science & Politics*. Washington: Dec 1995. Vol. 28, Iss. 4;

Berman, Sheri. “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic.” *World Politics.*49 (3). 1997.

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/world_politics/v049/49.3berman.html>

Week Four:

*Find a peer-reviewed article about either the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, People Power, or Hitler Youth and try to evaluate the possible effects of civil society on democracy.*

*The various protestors in the street who proclaim ‘the end is near’ in Watchmen are important. Why?*

*Analyze two of the following groups in civil society (the Other Russia; the MST; and COSATU) in terms of their influence on politics.*

*(give this assignment to a peer in the class and ask him or her, on a separate paper, to respond to the following questions: How did the author address the question posed? What did the author do effectively? How could the argument be improved?)*

Eight: Civil Society

Diversity of Cases

*Watchmen*

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 11 (Brazil)

Nine: What other effects does civil society have?

Lim Chapter 8

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapters 7, 12, 13 (Russia, Brazil, South Africa)

Week Five:

*Why is hockey more violent in the US than in Europe?*

*What is ‘wrong’ with presidentialism?*

*Is Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez the inevitable product of a hyper-presidential system?*

Ten: Hockey and Violence

*Draft version of paper due to peer partners*

in the US but not in Europe?

Presidentialism, Institutionalism, Linz et al

Arturo Valenzuela. “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted.” *Journal of Democracy*. Baltimore: Oct 2004. Vol. 15, Iss. 4

Francis Fukuyama, Björn Dressel, Boo-Seung Chang. “Facing the Perils of Presidentialism?” *Journal of Democracy.* Baltimore: Apr 2005. Vol. 16, Iss. 2;

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapters 6, 10, 11, 12 (Russia, Mexico, Brazil)

Eleven: Hugo Chávez and Presidentialism

Javier Corrales, Michael Penfold. “Venezuela: Crowding Out the Opposition.” *Journal of Democracy*. Baltimore: Apr 2007. Vol. 18, Iss. 2;

Javier Corrales. “Hugo Boss.” *Foreign Policy*. Washington: Jan/Feb 2006. p. 32

Week Six:

*What does Wiarda think about the effect of Macridis’s book?*

*Which of Lim’s three theories seem best to explain comparative politics?*

*Write two paragraphs on the same subject but write one descriptively and one analytically.*

*(give this assignment to a peer in the class and ask him or her, on a separate paper, to respond to the following questions: How did the author address the question posed? What did the author do effectively? How could the argument be improved?)*

Twelve: Using Theory- Scholarly Arguments

Lim Chapter Three

Howard J Wiarda. “[The death of the great international systems debate? Reconceptualizing comparative politics in the post-Cold War era](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=76&did=39650667&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241186676&clientId=8606).” *World Affairs.* Washington: Spring 1999. Vol. 161, Iss. 4; p. 211

Thirteen: Writing Political Science

Handout on writing

Week Seven:

*Final version of paper due*

*Put together a 10-12 day itinerary for a trip to Japan. Include all expenses in US dollars and say where you found the prices. Explain why you choose the itinerary that you did and what is so special about the places that you will see.*

*O’Neil et al approach comparative politics differently than Lim.*

*Who is more convincing?*

Fourteen: Trip to Japan

Search the Japanese National Tourism Agency Website http://www.jnto.go.jp/

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 5 (Japan)

Fifteen: Why is $150,000 a lot, a little, or just right for a college education?

Goldilocks and Pizza Hut,

Typologies, Aristotle, Dahl, Finer, Linz

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 1

Week Eight:

*What makes the US and UK successful, ‘model’ democracies?*

 *Distinguish between elements in Iran’s political system which are democratic and non-democratic.*

*(give this assignment to a peer in the class and ask him or her, on a separate paper, to respond to the following questions: How did the author address the question posed? What did the author do effectively? How could the argument be improved?)*

 Sixteen: Eight: The US, UK, Democracy?

most similar case analysis

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapters 2 &3 (UK and US)

Seventeen: Is an Islamic Republic Possible?

Has the Left risen in Latin America?

Iran, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 9 (Iran)

Abbas Milani. “A Historical Perspective.” *Journal of Democracy.* Baltimore: Oct 2005. Vol. 16, Iss. 4;

Ivan Krastev. “Democracy’s ‘Doubles.’” *Journal of Democracy.* Baltimore: Apr 2006. Vol. 17, Iss. 2

Week Nine:

*Which of the list that Fallows lists seems most important*

*in understanding contemporary China?*

*What is the most pressing challenge to public order in China?*

*How does the use of pirates as a case affect the strength of Leeson’s argument?*

*What governs the behavior of the Watchmen?*

Eighteen: Why are there not more car accidents in Shanghai?

Governance, Huntington, others

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 7 (China)

James Fallows. “[Postcards From Tomorrow Square](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=23&did=1178689371&SrchMode=2&sid=3&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241186862&clientId=8606).” *The Atlantic Monthly*. Boston: Dec 2006. Vol. 298, Iss. 5; p. 100

 Nineteen: Is there honor among

thieves?

Governance among pirates

Peter T. Leeson. An-*arrgh*-chy: The Law and Economics of Pirate Organization.” *Journal of Political Economy,* 2007, vol. 115, no. 6.

http://www.peterleeson.com/An-arrgh-chy.pdf

*Watchmen*

Week Ten:

*What is state failure? Is there a functioning state in Somalia?*

*What has led to a weakening/strengthening of the state in either Russia or Nigeria?*

 *(give this assignment to a peer in the class and ask him or her, on a separate paper, to respond to the following questions: How did the author address the question posed? What did the author do effectively? How could the argument be improved?)*

Twenty: What Happens to a State Deferred?

Black Hawk Down, Hotel Rwanda, State Capacity

Jeffrey Gettleman. “[The Most Dangerous Place in The World](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=1664744761&SrchMode=2&sid=50&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241200822&clientId=8606) Foreign Policy.” Washington: Mar/Apr 2009. p. 61.

Twenty-One: Why do states fail/resuscitate?

Somalia, Rwanda, Russia

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapters 6, 13 (Russia, Nigeria)

Week Eleven:

*Which explanation in the Lim book is most credible?*

*In light of the Gerring et al article, what would you add to Lim’s arguments?*

*Pick one of the East Asian states that developed quickly. Compare it to another country that is not included in the Lim chapter.*

Twenty-Two: Why are Countries Poor?

Lim Chapter 4

John Gerring, Philip Bond, William T Barndt and Carola Moreno. “Democracy, Economic Growth: A Historical Perspective.” *World Poltiics*. 57, 3. pp 323-364.

Twenty-Three: How to develop an Economy

China

Lim Chapter 5

Week Twelve:

*Is oil a political and/or economic curse?*

*Could Omar Bongo have been so successful without oil?*

*(give this assignment to a peer in the class and ask him or her, on a separate paper, to respond to the following questions: How did the author address the question posed? What did the author do effectively? How could the argument be improved?)*

Twenty-Four: Why Do the Gifted Fail?

*Receive Possible Final Exam Questions*

Child Stars, the Resource Curse

O’Neil, Field, Share Chapter 13

Friedman, Thomas. “[The First Law of Petropolitics](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=1029406421&SrchMode=2&sid=39&Fmt=4&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241199701&clientId=8606).”*Foreign Policy*. Washington: May/Jun 2006.

Mehlum, Halvor, Karl Moene and Ragnar Torvik. “Cursed by Resources of Institutions?” *The World Economy.* 2006. pp. 1117-1131.

Di John, Jonathan. “Oil abundance and violent political conflict: A critical assessment.” *Journal of Development Studies*. 43 (6). August 2007. 961-986.

Twenty-Five: Who was Omar Bongo?

Extreme case, Gabon

William Tordoff, Ralph A Young. “[The presidential election in Gabon](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=5&did=44756446&SrchMode=2&sid=41&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241199810&clientId=8606).” *Review of African Political Economy.* Jun 1999. Vol. 26, Iss. 80;

Week Thirteen:

*How does globalization change violence?*

*How are the drawings and the color used in the Watchmen to evoke the message of the novel?*

Twenty-Six: What do terrorists want?

Lim Chapter 7

Huntington, Samuel P. “[The clash of civilizations?](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=52&did=414785&SrchMode=1&sid=43&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1241200123&clientId=8606).” *Foreign Affairs*. New York: Summer 1993. Vol. 72, Iss. 3.

Twenty-Seven: How to Read Comparative Politics?

*Watchmen, Pulp Fiction,* Ortega y Gasset

Watchmen

Week Fourteen:

*Which of the three theoretical approaches seems most credible?*

Twenty-Eight: How would you do in the situation room?

Twenty-Nine: Final in-class Exam