

## **PL 103: Introduction to Comparative and International Politics**

**Credits: 3**

Dates of course: January 23, 2024-April 30, 2024

Time: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:10-11:05 am

Location: Ladd 307

Instructor: Dr. Charmaine N. Willis

Office hours: Mondays, 1-2 pm and by appointment in Ladd 308

Contact: [cnwillis@skidmore.edu](mailto:cnwillis@skidmore.edu)

Email hours: You will generally receive a reply from me within a few hours, but any e-mail correspondence after 7:00 pm may not receive a response until the next day.



A survey of the key concepts and principles of comparative politics and international relations. Issues covered include state building and state failure; the functioning of democratic and non-democratic regimes and the ideologies that support them; the changing nature of the international system; the causes of war and search for peace; and problems of national and transnational security, such as terrorism, globalization, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental challenges. (Fulfills Social Sciences requirement; fulfills Global Cultural Perspectives requirement.)

### **Learning Objectives**

This course endeavors not only to help students learn about comparative politics and international relations, but also skills critical to success in college. To that end, the learning objectives for this course include:

- **Grasp key concepts and theories in the fields of comparative politics and international relations and be able to relay them to others.**
- **Apply these key concepts and theories to real world cases.**
- **Distill key ideas from academic articles and discuss them with others.**
- **Produce an original piece of persuasive writing (an op-ed) with supporting evidence.**

## University Resources and Policy Information

- **Accommodating Students with Disabilities:** Skidmore College is committed to supporting the learning needs of all students in our diverse community. If you have a documented barrier to learning or think you may have a disability, please consult with Meg Hegener, Associate Director of SAS and Coordinator of Student Access Services ([mhegener@skidmore.edu](mailto:mhegener@skidmore.edu)). Accommodations are approved by the coordinator following a review of students' documentation. If you are approved for academic accommodations, please provide your letter of accommodations to me early in the semester or as soon as you are approved so that we can proactively coordinate implementation. Academic accommodations based on disability cannot be granted by individual faculty. For further information, please call (518) 580-8150 to contact Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.
- **Conscientious Religious Observance Policy:** Skidmore College acknowledges that our community is one of many faiths with a diverse range of practices and observances important to each tradition. In order to fulfill our mission to educate a diverse population of talented students and our commitment to inclusion regardless of religious and spiritual tradition, we seek to practice an equitable and consistent approach in providing religious accommodations. If religious observance requires absence from class or you anticipate a conflict with assignments or due dates, please notify your instructor **prior** to the absence or conflict so that accommodations can be arranged. Although not required, please provide notification about a pending religious holiday at the start of the semester or at least one week before the holiday. As an option, you may use the form available at [www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar.php) [or [here](#)].

Accommodations for your absence should not reduce the overall expectations of a course nor unduly burden you for requesting accommodation. Students shall not suffer academic, athletic, or employment penalties because of the conscientious observance of any religious day or days. Faculty must permit students to take a makeup examination without any penalty if they have to miss an examination due to religious observances. Similarly, faculty must permit students to submit missed assignments by an agreed upon due date, without penalty.

If a student, supervisor, coach, or faculty member feels the policy is being violated, they should contact the Dean of Faculty Office at 518-580-5705 (Palamountain 416), the Dean of Students Office at 518-580-5760 (Case Center 313), or Human Resources at 518-580-5800 (Barrett Center first floor). The full policy can be found at [www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/religious-life/calendar.php).

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Skidmore College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community in which members develop their abilities to live in a complex and interconnected world. Consistent with our educational mission, we recognize ourselves as a community that respects individual identities based on varying sociocultural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, religious and spiritual tradition, age, ability, socioeconomic status and learning style. We strive to create a socially just world that honors the dignity and worth of each individual, and we seek to build a community centered on mutual respect and openness to ideas—one in which individuals value cultural and intellectual

diversity and share the responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment. We recognize that our community is most inclusive when all members participate to their full capacity in the spirited and sometimes challenging conversations that are at the center of the college's educational mission.

- **Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct: Title IX Statement:** Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal and state regulations. Skidmore College faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and options for reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, the Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates (anonymous) are all options available.

More information can be found at the Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct [website](#) or by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, Joel Aure ([jaure@skidmore.edu](mailto:jaure@skidmore.edu)), 580-5708.

- **Academic integrity and conduct:** The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. Skidmore's Academic Honor Code states that: "*I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the college regulations.*" A serious violation of academic integrity is plagiarism, the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. **If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me before submitting graded assignments. Please note that Skidmore College requires faculty to report all violations of the Academic Honor Code.** For more information about the university's academic integrity policies, please see the Student Handbook and the following resource: [https://www.skidmore.edu/osaa/integrity/new\\_integrity\\_docs/Definitions\\_and\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.skidmore.edu/osaa/integrity/new_integrity_docs/Definitions_and_Guidelines.pdf)
- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tool Usage<sup>1</sup>:** You may use AI programs e.g., ChatGPT to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. **You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material**

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Holly Fernandez-Lyn, University of Pennsylvania.

**generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor).**

- **General Health and COVID-19:** The College expects all members of the community to adhere to the College's COVID-19 health and safety guidelines at all times. Please be aware of [the guidelines posted on the College's website](#).

If you think you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, please follow Health Services' [recommendations regarding testing](#) and when to safely return to class and public spaces. As with any health-related illness, we ask that you contact Health Services as soon as you can.

When mask wearing is required, you must wear a mask covering your mouth and nose fully at all times in the classroom. If your mask is not providing sufficient protection because it has slipped in some way, you are responsible for adjusting the fit. If I ask you to wear your mask properly, you must comply or you can choose to leave the classroom.

Skidmore College is committed to the health and safety of all members of our community and has implemented protocols based on recommendations from the CDC, New York State Department of Health, and Saratoga County Department of Health. The College is not requiring vaccinated individuals to wear a mask indoors; however, if anyone would like to ask that we all wear a mask at all times in our classroom, please speak with me outside of class, or contact me via email.

## Course Policies

- **Discussion Etiquette:** Some of the topics that we will cover in class are controversial (which is the nature of politics). Learning from and attempting to understand other opinions is a crucial part of the learning experience. I expect there to be varying opinions and great debates. However, I also expect civility and respectfulness in our discussions. This means no personal attacks or obscene language.
- **Late Penalties and Missed Assignments:** It is imperative that you do not fall behind on assignments. Assignments should be submitted by 11:59 pm the day that they are due via theSpring. After that, 10% will be deducted from the maximum possible score for each day that the assignment is late (including weekends). Missed assignments will receive '0' points.
- **Grade Appeals:** Students who feel that their assignments have been graded incorrectly should follow a three-step procedure. First, the student carefully reads the assignment and identifies the precise problem(s) with the grading. Second, the student sends a written appeal via email explaining why their answer was appropriate to the instructor; you must wait **24 hours** after receiving your grade to submit an appeal. Third, the instructor will regrade the assignment, taking the appeal into account. Note that the instructor may assign a higher or lower grade following such an appeal.
- **Questions?** There is a section on theSpring under "Discussion" entitled "Questions"; please feel free to ask anything related to the course here,

especially as your classmates may have similar questions. Additionally, please do not hesitate to contact me at [cnwillis@skidmore.edu](mailto:cnwillis@skidmore.edu) with any questions or concerns.

## Course materials, grading, course structure, and assignments

- **Texts:** All texts for this course can be found on theSpring and/or linked in the syllabus.
- **Recommended:** I recommend that you follow a major news source for international events such as Al-Jazeera, BBC, New York Times, or Washington Post,
- **Grading:** the course will be graded on a 1000-point scale. Each assignment and portion of the course is worth a set number of points and will be graded accordingly. At the end of the class your final grade will be based on your total number of points earned throughout the class.
  - **Rubric:**
    - 930- 1000 points: A
    - 900- 920 points: A-
    - 870- 890 points: B+
    - 830- 860 points: B
    - 800- 820 points: B-
    - 770- 790 points: C+
    - 730- 760 points: C
    - 700- 720 points: C-
    - 670- 690 points: D+
    - 630- 660 points: D
    - 600- 620 points: D-
    - 590 points and below: F
- **Structure:** The course will be divided into essentially four units across two sections. In our first section, we will focus on comparative politics. Our first unit will focus on countries (known as “states” in comparative politics in international relations) and the second unit will focus on society, culminating with a simulation. The second section of the course will focus on international relations (IR), with the third unit focused on IR theories and the fourth covering various issues in IR.
- **Assignments:** This course is reading and writing intensive. You are expected to complete all the reading assignments prior to each class session and be prepared to discuss those readings with your classmates and me. **All writing assignments should be in a 12-pt standard font (ex. Times New Roman, Calibri, Garamond) with normal (1”) margins. Writing assignments should have proper citations as necessary using a recognized citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago).**

The primary course learning activities will be reading the required readings for each week, actively participating in discussions about those readings, writing two short papers at the culmination of two units, participating in a simulation, a final

exam, and writing an op-ed. Summaries of these activities are listed below, but further information will be posted to theSpring.

- **Attendance and participation (250 points (25%)):** For everyone's benefit, I expect you to attend each class session and to participate actively in class. We will be regularly working together in class to practice the skills outlined in the learning objectives. Missing class will result in a missed opportunity for practice and feedback and should be avoided. Additionally, missing class means that you cannot participate in class discussion that day and we will lose out on your potential contributions. Therefore, missing class should be avoided as much as possible. However, I understand that many things can happen over the course of a semester and an absence may be necessary. **Students are permitted five unexcused absences throughout the semester, no questions asked. Students with more than three unexcused absences will lose 30 points from their overall course grade for each additional unexcused absence.**
- **Short papers (300 points total, 150 points each (30%)):** to conclude Units 1 and 2, you will write a short paper (800-1,000 words or approximately 3.5-4 pages, double-spaced) that will apply the concepts and theories that we learned in the course to real-world cases. I will provide you with guiding questions for the papers and some background readings about the cases; no extensive additional research will be necessary. The paper due dates are as follows: **Unit 1 paper is due February 26 and Unit 2 paper is due April 1. All papers are due by 11:59 pm that day on the Spring.** The rubric, an example paper, and case-specific readings for the first paper will be available during the second week of the course.
- **Ancaram Simulation (150 points total: 50 points for position paper, 50 points for participation, 50 points for debriefing paper (15%)):** In this course, you will participate in a class-wide simulation that draws upon what we learned about comparative politics. The class will be split up into teams and assigned specific roles. Each person is responsible for writing one short paper at the beginning (the position paper) and end of the simulation as well as actively participating in the simulation. **The position paper is due March 4 by 10 am and the debriefing paper is due March 29 by 11:59 pm on the Spring.**
- **Op-Ed and Pitch (200 points total: 50 points for submission of pitch, 150 points for op-ed (20%)):** an important skill in political science is making an argument with supporting evidence. To that end, you are asked to write an op-ed ("opposite the editorial page") on any topic related to comparative politics of your choosing. This assignment is broken into two parts. At the beginning of Week 13, you will submit a 2-3 sentence "pitch" describing the topic you will write about; you will receive 50 points for submitting the pitch by **April 8 at 11:59 pm.** The final be 700-800 words long (about 3 pages, double spaced) and submitted **May 8 by 11:59 pm.**
- **Final Exam (200 points (20%)):** At the end of the semester, you will take a final exam that will focus on our units on international relations.

More information about the exam will be available at the end of March.  
**The exam will take place on May 6 from 9 am to 12 pm in 202 Palamountain Hall.**

### Schedule:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments Due for Class</b>
Week 1	January 24		Course Introduction	
	January 26		What is Comparative Politics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lim (2002): Getting into Comparative Politics</li> </ul>
Week 2	January 29	<b>Unit 1: States</b>	States and State-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoover Green (2013): How to Read Political Science</li> <li>• Tilly (1985): War Making and State Making as Organized Crime</li> </ul>
	January 31		Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">A Brief Guide to Modernization Theory</a></li> <li>• Chase-Dunn and Grell-Brisk (2019): World-System Theory</li> </ul>
	February 2		State Capacity and Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dincecco and Wang (2022): State Capacity in Historical Political Economy</li> <li>• <a href="#">Incentivizing Peace only Leads to More War in Sudan</a></li> </ul>
	February 5		Democracy and Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedler (2002): The Menu of Manipulation</li> </ul>
Week 3 <i>February 6: Drop/Grade</i>				

<i>Option (S/U) Deadline</i>	February 7		Democracy and Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">What Civil Society Can Do to Develop Democracy</a></li> </ul>
	February 9		Democracy and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linz (1990): The Perils of Presidentialism</li> </ul>
Week 4	February 12		Democratization and Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schmitter (2010): Twenty-Five Years, Fifteen Findings</li> </ul>
	February 14		Democratic Backsliding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weiss (2022): Is Malaysian democracy backsliding, or merely staying put?</li> </ul>
	February 16		Authoritarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truex (2017): Consultative Authoritarianism and Its Limits</li> </ul>
Week 5	February 19	<b>Unit 2: Society</b>	Wrapping up democracy and regime types	
	February 21		Nations and Nation Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barrington (1997): "Nation" and "Nationalism"</li> <li>• Kaufman (2013): The limits of nation-building in the Philippines</li> </ul>
	February 23		Populism and Nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017): What is Populism?</li> </ul>



Week 6	February 26		Protests and Social Movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unit 1 Paper Due</b></li><li>• Snow et al. (2019): Mapping and Opening the Terrain (p. 1-10)</li><li>• Willis (2020): <a href="#">Revealing Hidden Injustices</a></li></ul>
	February 28		State Repression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Davenport (2007): State Repression and Political Order</li></ul>
	March 1		Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Young and Findley (2011): Promise and Pitfalls of Terrorism Research</li><li>• Gladstone (2018): Attacks in Canada and Belgium Reflect Fuzzy Definition of Terrorism</li></ul>
Week 7	March 4		Ancaram Simulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ancaram Simulation Position Paper Due by 10 am</b></li><li>• Ancaram Simulation Packet</li></ul>
	March 6		Ancaram Simulation	
	March 8		Ancaram Simulation	
March 9-17: Spring Vacation				
Week 8	March 18		Ancaram Simulation	

	March 20	<b>Unit 3: International Relations Theories</b>	Intro to International Relations (IR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ackerly and Carella (2020): What is International Relations? (p. 214-226)</li> <li>Zvobgo and Loken (2020): Why Race Matters in International Relations</li> </ul>
	March 22		Realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mearsheimer (2021): Structural Realism</li> <li>Walt (2022): An International Relations Theory Guide to the Ukraine War</li> </ul>
	March 25		<b><i>Class Cancelled</i></b>	
Week 9	March 27		Perception and Misperception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jervis and Rapp-Hooper (2018): "Perception and Misperception on the Korean Peninsula"</li> </ul>
	March 29		Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Ancaram Simulation Debriefing Paper Due</i></b></li> <li>Stein (2008): Neoliberal Institutionalism</li> <li>Samet (2021): ASEAN Won't Save Myanmar</li> </ul>
Week 10	April 1	<b>No Class- Professor at Conference <i>Unit 2 Paper Due April 1</i></b>		
	April 3			
	April 5			

Week 11 <i>April 11: Course Withdrawal Deadline</i>	April 8		Constructivism and Feminism in IR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Op-Ed Pitch Due</i></b></li> <li>• <a href="#">23 Years of Nonuse</a></li> <li>• Harel-Shalev (2019): Feminist International Relations (IR) Theory</li> <li>• The Human Costs and Gendered Impact of Sanctions on North Korea (p. iv-2, 4-12, 21-28)</li> </ul>
	April 10		Marxism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devetak et al. (2011): Marxism and Critical Theory</li> <li>• <a href="#">The global north-south carbon divide</a></li> </ul>
	April 12		Review: The Twitter Game	
Week 12	April 15	<b>Unit 4: Issues in IR</b>	War and Militarization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immerwahr (2019): Baselandia</li> <li>• Faizal and Poast (2019): War is Not Over</li> </ul>
	April 17		Nuclear Weapons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sagan et al. (2007): A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?</li> </ul>
	April 19		Economic Sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haass (1997): Sanctioning Madness</li> <li>• <a href="#">3 years on from coup, economic sanctions look unlikely to push</a></li> </ul>

				<a href="#">Myanmar back to democracy</a>
Week 13	April 22		Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keohane and Victor (2016): Cooperation and discord in global climate policy</li> <li>• <a href="#">Don't applaud the COP28 climate summit's loss and damage fund deal just yet – here's what's missing</a></li> </ul>
	April 24 <i>Guest Lecturer: Prof. Melissa Breger, UAlbany Law School</i>		Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)</li> <li>• <a href="#">School spankings are banned just about everywhere around the world except in US</a></li> </ul>
	April 26		Course Wrap-Up	
Week 14	April 29		Final Exam Review	
<b>Final Exam May 6 at 9:00 am</b>				
<b>Op-Ed Due May 8 by 11:59 pm</b>				