

# PS 119 Nation-States and Democracy

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann

Course Times: Wednesdays and Fridays 10:45-12:15

Office Hours: By appointment

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## Course Description

Why and how do political systems differ from one another? Which processes have led to the formation of distinct political regimes? And how do these historical variations affect politics today? In addressing these questions in a wide set of contexts, this course provides an introduction to key theoretical approaches and concepts in the comparative study of politics. The focus will be on core topics in political development such as state and nation-building, the role of the state in the economy, its relationship to civil society and processes of democratization. We will also look at different types of political regimes, electoral and party systems—and the ways in which they affect the structure, functioning, and social role of political institutions. We explore these topics from a comparative perspective in combining theoretical texts with case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand important topics in domestic politics, grasp the diversity of political systems and regimes, and analyze current political developments.

## Requirements

### Reading material

- Class Reader (available at the library)

### Class preparation

In preparation for class, read the texts thoughtfully and engage with their core argument. Take notes while reading and try to identify questions in advance: Why do the authors argue as they do? How do they raise and substantiate their claims? How does their line of argumentation relate to earlier readings and discussions in class?

### Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Every unexcused additional absence from a 90-min session lowers the participation grade by one step (i.e., from B+ to B).

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

## Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

### Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2\*15%)** **30%** (of total grade)

This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This includes a persistent reflection on current events related to the course's core themes. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leader if you feel that this is not the case.

- **Case Study Presentations** **20%** (4\*5%)

Each individual student will present their case studies (a comparison of which are also in the focus of the final paper) and line of argumentation in short professional presentations. These presentations will have different focus points (indicated below and to be elucidated in class) throughout the semester. They will be *no longer than 5 minutes* (time is strictly limited) and will focus on the puzzle, research question, and main line of argumentation/potential conclusions respectively.

### Written

*All assignments must be submitted per email attachment before the respective session, please use Times New Roman pt 12, 1.5-spaced. Make sure to use Chicago citation style for your bibliography and in-text citation ([Chicago Style](#))!*

- **Abstract (500 words, due March 17)** **5%**

Consider this to be your elevator pitch—or your book cover blurb. What is your case and the main puzzle? What is the main question you seek to address in your research? What are the hypotheses (and potential lines of argumentation)?

- **Extended Introduction (1,000 words, due April 14)** **15%**

The introduction frames the puzzle and research question in more depth. It embeds them in existing literature and presents the (tentative) main line of argumentation in broad strokes. What have other authors argued about your theme? What are your hypotheses? Which material will you look at to make your case?

- **Final Essay (3,500 words, due May 12)** **30%**

The final essay is due on May 12. It will consist of an introduction, main body (that develops and substantiates your argument), and a conclusion (as well as a bibliography). Use paragraphs and subheadings to clearly structure your text (see handout 'final paper' for more details).

## Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

**Late submission will not be accepted.**

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

## Schedule

Week  
Beginning

Wednesday

Friday

### I. Introduction

1  
Jan 30

#### Preliminaries

Calhoun, Dictionary of the Social Sciences  
Kakutani, The End of Normal

#### Comparative Politics

Hague, Theoretical Approaches  
Ryan, The Comparative Method

→ select two cases in class!

[Handout 'Final Paper' & 'On Grading']

### II. Actors, Institutions and Processes

#### STATE FORMATION AND PERSISTENCE

2  
Feb 6

#### The State: Concept and Origins

Held, Central Perspectives on the Modern  
State

#### States and Markets

Please watch Munger on [Division of Labor](#)

3  
Feb 13

#### Rise of the Inter-State System

Wallerstein, The Rise of the States System

#### Waves of State Formation

Kelly and Mahoney, The Emergence of the  
New World States

Lange, State Formation and

Transformation in Africa and Asia

4  
Feb 20

#### State Variation and Persistence

Dicken, The State Really Does Matter

#### Case Study Presentations

"Finding a Puzzle"

#### NATIONS AND NATIONALISM: DEFINING THE DEMOS

5  
Feb 27

#### Civic vs Ethnic Nationalism

Renan, What is a Nation?  
Smith, The Origins of Nations

#### Nationalism by Necessity

Gellner, Nations and Nationalism

6  
Mar 6

#### Identity as a Political Instrument

Hobsbawm, The Invention of Tradition  
Watch [Aleida Assmann on Memory](#)

#### The Role of Gender and Race

McClintock, No longer in a future haven  
Watch [Benedict Anderson on Nationalism](#)

7  
Mar 13

#### Why Nations (Still) Matter

Calhoun, Nations Matter

#### Case Study Presentations

"Stating a Research Question"

Submit 500-word abstract (including  
research question)

DEMOCRACIES IN COMPARISON

8 Mar 20	<b>Democracy in Theory</b> Dahl, On Democracy	<b>Separation of Powers</b> Newton & Van Deth, Constitutions/ Presidential and Parliamentary Govt.
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9 Mar 27	<b>Parties and Electoral Systems</b> Gallagher, Elections and referendums	<b>Federalism and Regionalization</b> Keating, Re-Thinking Sovereignty Graefe, Pol. Econ. of Min. Nationalism
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\*\*\*Spring Break\*\*\*  
(Apr. 3-7)

10 Apr 10	<b>Democratization and Autocratization</b> Huntington, Democracy's Third Wave Brooker, Authoritarian Regimes	<b>Case Study Presentations</b> "Hypotheses and thesis" Submit extended introduction
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THE END OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY?

11 Apr 17	<b>Patterns and Waves</b> Ziblatt, How Democracies Die Boese et al., Waves of Democratization and Autocratization
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**Populism**  
Müller, What is Populism?

12 Apr 24	<b>The Limits of the Nation</b> Plattner, Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right Scruton, The Open Society from a Conservative Perspective
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**A Neoliberal Backlash?**  
Guiberneau, Belonging, The New Radical  
Right, Ch. 4  
Brown, In the Ruins of Neoliberalism, Ch. 1

13 May 1	<b>The End of Liberalism?</b> Please watch Calhoun, <a href="#">The Religious and Secular sources of Democracy and Nationalism</a>
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**Case Study Presentations**  
"Making an Argument"

III. Outlook

14 May 8	<b>Saving Democracy?</b> Levitsky and Ziblatt, How Democracies Die, Intro & Chapter 9
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**Conclusions**  
\*\*\*FINAL ESSAY DUE\*\*\*  
Submit 3,500-word essay