Class Description:
This is an introductory course for all students with an interest in comparative politics.

There are no prerequisites to enroll in the course.

We study politics in a comparative context, not just to find out about other countries, but to broaden and deepen our understanding of important and general political processes. We do this by making systematic comparisons among political systems that are similar in many respects, but nonetheless differ in important ways. This allows us to analyze the effect of these differences in a careful and rigorous way, enriching our understanding of how politics works.

The philosophy of this course is thus to concentrate on a group of countries that are similar in many important respects, seeking to analyze core features of representative democracy by making systematic comparisons among countries. Toward the end of the course a brief comparison is also made with other (non-democratic or transitional) systems (other courses in Comparative politics offered by the department have a focus on those countries).

The course has a seminar format: lectures introduce topics and the main questions they raise and are followed by a class discussion. The course has a strong discussion centered structure. Students are expected to read the assigned materials timely and thoughtfully and be ready to discuss the content in class.

Formal discussion leadership: At the beginning of each class, one student presents a piece of politics news that is relevant for the course and conducts a class discussion on it.

Instructor Details:
Name: Nicolò Conti
NYUGlobal Home Email Address: conti@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays at 5.45pm in Villa Ulivi (upon appointment)
Desired Outcomes:
On completion of this course, students should:

☐ have improved their ability to think critically, engage in complex reasoning and express their thoughts clearly through their written work;
☐ have improved their understanding of the comparative method for the study of politics;
☐ master how to research basic questions in the field of Comparative politics;
☐ recognize works by the principal protagonists of the field and understand why they are significant.

Assessment Components

☐ Class participation: 10%
☐ Formal discussion leadership (with oral presentation of 15 minute length): 10%
☐ Midterm exam (essay questions, minimum 5 pages): 20%
☐ Final paper (minimum 10 pages, due by November 30): 30%
☐ Final exam (essay questions, minimum 5 pages): 30%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations:

Grade A: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays/exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading. The student contributes very actively to class discussion

Grade B: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problems and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions

Grade C: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problems. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement

Grade D: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research
Grade F: The work shows that the research problems are not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible

**Grading Guidelines**

A=94-100  
A minus =90-93  
B plus =87-89  
B=84-86  
B minus =80-83  
C plus =77-79  
C=74-76  
C minus =70-73  
D plus =67-69  
D=65-66  
F=below 65

**Grading Policy:**
Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work

**Academic Accommodations:**
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the Moses Center for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.
Attendance Policy:
Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to the number of class times over a single week.

Excused Absences:
In case of absence, regardless of the reason, the student is responsible for completing missed assignments, getting notes and making up missed work in a timely manner based upon a schedule that is mutually agreed upon between the faculty member and the student. The only excused absences are those approved by the Office of Academic Support; they are as follows:

**Absence Due to Illness**
- If you are sick, please see a doctor. Contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
- For absences that last for two or more consecutive days, a doctor’s certificate, “certificato medico” is required. The doctor will indicate in writing the number of days of bed rest required. Please note these certificates can only be obtained on the day you see the doctor and cannot be written for you afterwards.
- Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported WITHIN 48 HRS of your return to class via the online NYU Florence Absence Form
- OAS will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness
- OAS will only notify faculty of absences REPORTED on the ABSENCE FORM
- The Office of Student Life, when assisting you in cases of severe or extended illness, will coordinate with the Office of Academic Support to properly record your absences

**Due to Religious Observance**
- Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday
- Information regarding absences due to religious observance must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online NYU Florence Absence Form
• Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

**Due to a class conflict with a program sponsored lecture, event, or activity**

• All students are entitled to miss one class period without any penalty to their grade in order to attend a lecture, event or activity that is sponsored by La Pietra Dialogues, Acton Miscellany or the Graduate Lecture series.

• Information regarding absences due to a class conflict must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#).

• Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

_Students with questions or needing clarification about this policy are instructed to contact a member of the Office of Academic Support located in Villa Ulivi or to email florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu_

**Late Submission of Work**

• All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.

• To request an extension on a deadline for an assignment, students must speak to the professor one week prior to the due date.

• To receive an incomplete for a course at the end of the semester, two weeks before final exams, both the student and the faculty member must meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs to review the request and if granted, they must both sign an Incomplete Contract detailing the terms for completing missing coursework.

**Plagiarism Policy**

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM:

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

In the event of suspected or confirmed cases of plagiarism, the faculty member will consult first with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as definitions and procedures vary from school to school.
Writing Center:
The Writing Center, located in Villa Ulivi, offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for a consultation at the Writing Center's website and submit your working draft or ideas at least six hours in advance to NYU Florence Writing Center. You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority. Please also note that the Writing Center does not correct or “fix” your writing but prompts you to think and work. The aim is to create stronger writers in the long term, not necessarily perfect papers in the short term.

Required Text(s):
Copies of the textbook are available for consultation and short term loans in the Villa Ulivi Library. Extra copies of some textbooks are also available for semester long loans. More information on Books and Course Materials.

- Textbook:

  This book has been ordered with La Feltrinelli where students can purchase their copy. This textbook is necessary for the students to prepare the two written exams and for an active class participation.

  International bookshop - La Feltrinelli

  Via de' Cerretani 40r - 50123 Firenze

  Tel: 055 2382652

  Fax: 055 288482

  firenze.international@lafeltrinelli.it

  Additionally, these other texts taken from the following two volumes have to be read before class, they are necessary to prepare the two written exams and for class participation. They are available in the Villa Ulivi Library or can be downloaded through the University library system:


**Supplemental Texts(s):**
The other journal articles in the reading list are useful sources to prepare the two written exams and for class participation but are not compulsory readings.

**Internet Research Guidelines:**
The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

**Class Assignments and Topics:**

**Session 1 - September 3**
*Introduction to the course*

**Readings:**

**Session 2 - September 10**
*Separation or fusion of powers?*

**Readings:**
RGME, chapter 2.
Lijphart, Arend (2012), Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-six Countries, Yale University Press, chapters 1, 2, 3.

**Session 3 - September 17**
*Legislatures and parliaments*

**Readings:**
RGME, chapter 3.

**Session 4 - September 24**
*Political Parties*

**Readings:**
RGME, chapters 7-8
Session 5 - October 1
The Evolving EU Government System

Readings:
RGME, chapter 5.

Session 6 - October 1
Required Lecture Attendance: The EU and the Migration Challenge

Leila Hadj-Abdou (European University Institute)

Readings:
Are Europeans turning against asylum seekers and refugees?

Session 7 - October 8
Mid-term exam (two hours)

How to write a research paper (30 minutes)

Session 8 - October 15
Electoral systems

Readings:
RGME, chapter 11

Session 9 - October 22
Voters, social cleavages and political competition

Readings:
RGME, chapter 9

Session 10 - November 5
Making and breaking governments
Readings:
RGME, chapter 12.

Session 11 - November 12
Does representative government make a difference?

Readings:
RGME, chapter 14.

Session 12 - November 19
What democracy is and is not

Readings:

Session 13 - November 26
Class presentation and discussion of research papers

Session 14 - December 3
Class review (in view of the final exam)

Readings:
Revise all assigned materials for sessions 8-12.

Session 15 - December 10
Final exam
Classroom Etiquette

- Eating is not permitted in the classrooms. Bottled water is permitted.
- Cell phones should be turned off during class time.
- The use of personal laptops and other electronic handheld devices are prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified by the professor.
- We recycle! So keep it green! Please dispose of trash in the clearly marked recycle bins located throughout the on campus buildings.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to attend the *EU in focus series* that is offered on campus during September-October (including the NYU sponsored trip to the EU institutions in Brussels during Fall break)

Other suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.

Your Instructor

**Nicolò Conti** is Professor of Political Science at the Unitelma Sapienza University of Rome. He has taught in international programmes at the University of Siena, Georgetown University Florence Centre, FIT State University of New York Florence Campus.

His main research focus is on parties, elites, cabinets and the EU.