

PS128 Introduction to Comparative Politics

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Course Times: Mon & Wed 14:00-15:30
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

The course is designed to provide an introduction to comparative politics, a discipline of political science dealing with internal political structures, actors and processes and their interactions. We will focus on understanding the approaches of comparative politics as an (empirical) subfield, its epistemology and evolution (briefly in the first part of the course); as well as on covering some of the main topics in comparative politics (in the second part of the course). These will include conceptualizing the state and the processes of state- and nation-building (including questions of legitimacy and identity); different types of political regimes; democratization and the process of transition (its underlying drivers, stabilizers and backsliding tendencies, including actors - such as media - who can assist or hinder the process); different electoral and party systems; as well as processes beyond the state, such as globalization, which pose both an opportunity and a challenge to the contemporary political systems.

Learning outcomes

This is an introductory course. The aim is to open up a lot of questions and provide the tools to try to approach those questions in a scholarly manner, utilizing the concepts developed through the comparative politics scholarship.

By the end of the course, the students will:

- Become familiar with the central topics, theories and concepts in comparative politics: we will cover the basics of what comparative politics is (both in terms of method and the dominant meta-theoretical approaches), go through some of the key topics in comparative politics, as well as discuss the two aspects of all of these topics - the *what* (what are some of the key focuses of comparative politics) and the *how* (how do the concepts and methods used affect what we know about the phenomena we study).
- Be able to use the concepts covered to analyze current political developments, as well as critically engage with the literature in the subfield: we will engage in dialogue with the literature (both in class and through written assignments) as well as use the knowledge we gained to debate a question of interest in a formal class debate.

Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is expected, as is active participation in class discussions and activities. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on

the missed material. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Late arrival counts as an absence. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Readings

The required reading for this course is **Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). Comparative Politics (4th edition). Oxford University Press.** You are advised to purchase a copy of the book prior to class.

We will be supplementing the textbook with other mandatory readings, which will be available on Google Classroom – with the exception of selected magazine/newspaper articles, available through links given in the syllabus (marked with*). Please make sure you know what readings you need to cover for each course session. Copies of optional readings will be available upon request (you are also advised to look them up in the library). There is a possibility of some changes to the scheduled class readings. You will be notified of any changes made in class, and updated readings will be posted on Google Classroom.

All mandatory readings are to be completed before class, as they will be the base for the class discussions.

Use of Laptops and Other Electronic Devices in Class

Use of laptops for taking notes in class is allowed, and we will occasionally rely on technology to assist us in class. However, mobile phones are not allowed, and the use of other electronic devices (laptop, tablet) for purposes unrelated to the coursework will result in a 0-points participation grade for that particular session.

Assessment

Class participation – 20%

Class participation consists of two components: active participation in **class discussions** (10%) and **preparing questions for discussion** (10%). You are expected to **do your readings and actively contribute to class discussions**, as well as groupwork with your peers. You are also expected to **prepare one (1) question concerning the readings for every class session**. You are required to **submit your question through the Google Docs form (that will be made available to you) by 23:59 PM on the evening before each class** (Sunday before the Monday session, Tuesday before the Wednesday session).

In the classroom, you are invited to bring examples from the everyday, or to engage your peers (and the seminar leader) in discussion by sharing an article. The classroom is a space where you can safely raise your arguments and debate ideas, and we should all strive to make it so.

Position papers (10 papers, 500 words each) - 50%

In the course of the semester, each student expected to submit **10 short position papers** on the class topics of their choice (max. 500 words, 1,5 spaced, Times New Roman 12). **Each paper is due on 23:59 PM on the evening before the class** (Sunday before the Monday session, Tuesday before the Wednesday session), **and is to be submitted to the seminar leader via Google Classroom**. The papers should include a brief summary of the points of that week's readings, and engage in a debate with the texts: comment on the main idea, offer criticism or expansion, and connect the text to the wider

material covered in class or offer an application of the author's ideas to a real-world example or situation. If a video or a podcast is assigned as the week's mandatory material, the paper can also reflect on those materials.

If you are having trouble with expressing your ideas in writing coherently, please consult the Writing Center prior to submission.

Class debate – 30%

During the last week of class, we will have a structured debate on a topic related to the course, which we will agree on together in Week 8, based on the course topics and the interests of the class (all students will also be assigned a group/side and a role in the debate, depending on the size of the class). We will also have a special preparatory session for the debate in Week 11 (Monday, November 18). Detailed instructions on the rules for conducting the debate will be circulated in a separate document. Each student will have three graded responsibilities with regard to the debate, each constituting 1/3 of the total grade:

- Everyone is expected to **submit one piece of reading on the agreed topic of the debate**. This can be a journal article, a book chapter, a report, or a quality piece of journalism – which helps shape your position on the debate topic. It may also be a podcast or video material - but consult me first before you make the submission. You are expected to **share this material with your colleagues** via Google Classroom **by 23:59 PM on Thursday, November 15**. Everyone is also expected to **read two (2) pieces** sent by their peers as weekly readings for the **Monday, November 18 course session** (there will be no other course readings assigned for that day), in preparation for the session. You may select which two texts you want to read, but it has to be two articles sent by someone else (meaning your own contribution does not count as a read text), and you need to **notify the instructor of your choice by 23:59 on November 17, via e-mail**.
- Both groups are expected to provide a **1000-word summary of their positions and key arguments** to be used in the debate. The summary is to be submitted by **23:59 PM on Sunday, December 1** via Google Classroom. This is a groupwork document, so please keep in mind that everyone's grade will depend on the effort you all put into it, and the document should be prepared with joined forces.
- Participation in the debate – in assigned roles – will also be graded.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

From the student handbook: "Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment."

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (including readings-related questions) – 20%

Class debate (including assigned article, written materials, debate participation) – 30%

Position papers – 50%

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and intellectual engagements in their academic work. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Schedule

Please note that changes to the schedule are possible (and will be announced in class).

Week 1: Introduction

Monday, September 2

Introduction to the course – What is (comparative) politics?

- Zakaria, F. (2002). Asian Values. *Foreign Policy*, 133, 38–39.
- Hague, R., Harrop, M., & McCormick, J. (2016). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (10th editi). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 1

Wednesday, September 4

The comparative method

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 3
- [OPTIONAL READING] Landman, T. (2008). *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (Second edition). London and New York: Routledge. Chapter 1

Week 2: Meta-approaches in comparative politics

Monday, September 9

Functionalism and institutionalism(s)

- Almond, G. A. & J. C. Coleman (1960). *The Politics of Developing Areas*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 3-25 (but feel free to read the whole of Chapter 1, available through Jstor)
- Hall, P. A., & Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*, XLIV (3), 936–957. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2015.1030958>
- [OPTIONAL READING] Thelen, K. (1999). Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 2, 369–404. - An extensive overview of a particular approach in comparative politics.

Wednesday, September 11

Rational choice theory

- Munck, G. L. (2001). Game Theory and Comparative Politics: New Perspectives and Old Concerns. *World Politics*, 53(2), 173–204.

Week 3: State, nation, nationalism (basic terms)

Monday, September 16

What is the state – and how do we research it?

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 4, The nation-state
- Tilly, C. (1985). War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. In P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (Eds.), *Bringing the State Back In* (pp. 169–187). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wednesday, September 18

Nations, nationalism(s) and state-nation reinforcement

- Calhoun, C. (1993). Nationalism and Ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 211–239.
 - Pawlowski, L. (2018). Nations are our creation. An interview with Craig Calhoun*. Retrieved July 27, 2019, from <https://liberalculture.org/craig-calhoun-interview-nations-nationalism/>
 - [OPTIONAL READING] Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso.
 - [OPTIONAL READING] Renan, E. (1882). What is a Nation? Retrieved from http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf
 - [OPTIONAL READING] Smith, A. D. (2010). The Origins of Nations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12(3), 340–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1989.9993639>
- Segments from three classic works in the nations/nationalism debate, presenting different understandings of the origin and the function of nation(alism).

Week 4: Regimes (I): Democracy

Monday, September 23

What is democracy (and what isn't)?

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 5
- Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M. E., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (1996). Classifying Political Regimes. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 31(2), 3–36.
- [OPTIONAL READING] Schmitter, P. C., & Karl, T. L. (1991). What Democracy Is... And Is Not. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(3), 75–88. – A short read on conceptualizing democracy in comparative politics.

Wednesday, September 25

Democratization (is it a matter of modernization, economy, culture, or something else?)

- Geddes, B. (2007). What causes democratization? In C. Boix & S. C. Stokes (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (pp. 319–341). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carothers, T. (2002). The End of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0003>
- [OPTIONAL READING] Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12–34. – The short introduction into Huntington's often-referenced work on democratization.
- [OPTIONAL READING] Landman, T. (2008). *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (Second edition). London and New York: Routledge. Chapter 6 and 9 - An excellent overview of how to study democratization.

Week 5: Regimes (II)

Monday, September 30

The dilemmas of promoting democracy

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 25
- De Mesquita, B. B., & Downs, G. W. (2006). Intervention and democracy. *International Organization*, 60(3), 627–649. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818306060206>
- [OPTIONAL READING] Halperin, M. H., Siegle, J. T., & Weinstein, M. M. (2005). *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace*. New York and London: Routledge. - A provocative read taking us back to the "chicken and egg" democracy/development debate.

Wednesday, October 2

Varieties of non-democratic regimes

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 6
- Esen, B., & Gumuscu, S. (2016). Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(9), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1135732>
- [OPTIONAL READING] Levitsky, S., & Way, L. (2002). Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 51–65. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0026> - If you would like to know more about the conceptualization of competitive authoritarianism.

Week 6: Structures and institutions (I)

Monday, October 7

Constitutions and judicial review

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 9
- Elster, J. (1995). Forces and Mechanisms in the Constitution-Making Process. *Duke Law Journal*, 45(2), 364–396. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1372906>
- Muller, J.-W. (2011). Hungary heads in undemocratic direction*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/25/fidesz-hungarian-constitution>

Wednesday, October 9

Electoral systems and electoral outcomes + referendums

- Norris, P. (1997). Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems. *International Political Science Review*, 18(3), 297–312.
- Scheiner, E. (2008). Does Electoral System Reform Work? Electoral System Lessons from Reforms of the 1990s. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11(1), 161–181. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060106.183415>
- Mudde, C. (2016). The Case Against Referendums (Not Just the Uncomfortable Ones)*. Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-case-against-referendums-not-just-the-uncomfortable_b_57822a52e4b05b4c02fccf7b

Week 7: Structures and institutions (II): Legislatures and executives

Monday, October 14

Legislatures

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 7
- Hix, S., & Noury, A. (2016). Government-Opposition or Left-Right? The Institutional Determinants of Voting in Legislatures. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 4(2), 249–273. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.9>

Wednesday, October 16

Executives and bureaucracies

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 8
- Martin, L. W., & Vanberg, G. (2014). Parties and Policymaking in Multiparty Governments: The Legislative Median, Ministerial Autonomy, and the Coalition Compromise. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4), 979–996. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps>.
- Christiano, T. (2005). Review: Democracy and Bureaucracy. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 71(1), 211–217. - skim through for Christiano's position (it is a very short, non-comparative text)
- [OPTIONAL READING] Elgie, R. (2005). From Linz to Tsebelis: Three waves of presidential/parliamentary studies? *Democratization*, 12(1), 106–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1351034042000317989>

Week 8: Actors and processes

Monday, October 21

Parties and party systems

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapters 12 (Political parties) and 13 (Party systems)
- Laver, M., & Benoit, K. (2003). The Evolution of Party Systems between Elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(2), 215–233.
- Rosenfeld, S. (2017). Two Cheers for Polarization*. *Boston Review*. Available from: <http://bostonreview.net/politics/sam-rosenfeld-two-cheers-polarization>

Wednesday, October 23

Interest groups and social movements

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapters 14 and 16
- Williamson, V., Skocpol, T., & Coggin, J. (2011). The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(1), 25–43.

Class decision on the debate question + assigning debate groups/roles.

FALL BREAK (October 28 – November 03) – No class

Week 9: Political communication - and political disappointment?

Monday, November 4

Political communication

- Curran, J., Iyengar, S., Brink Lund, A., & Salovaara-Moring, I. (2009). Media system, public

knowledge and democracy: A comparative study. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 5–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323108098943>

- Diamond, L. (2010). Liberation Technology. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(3), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0190>
- Caroll Cadwalladr's TED talk on Facebook's role in Brexit: https://www.ted.com/talks/carole_cadwalladr_facebook_s_role_in_brexit_and_the_threat_to_democracy?language=en

Wednesday, November 6

Why (young) people (don't) vote?

- Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2017-0024>. Chapter 1
- Cammaerts, B., Bruter, M., Banaji, S., Harrison, S., & Anstead, N. (2014). The Myth of Youth Apathy: Young Europeans' Critical Attitudes Toward Democratic Life. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(5), 645–664. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515992>

Week 10: Politics above and below the state-level

Monday, November 11

Federal and local governments

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 11
- Brancati, D. (2006). Decentralization: Fueling the fire or dampening the flames of ethnic conflict and secessionism? *International Organization*, 60(3), 651–685. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830606019X>

Wednesday, November 13

Politics beyond the (nation) state - the political system of the EU

- Caramani, D. (Ed.). (2017). *Comparative Politics* (4th edition). Oxford University Press. Chapter 23
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1), 109–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279> - to get you thinking about the EU-nation-states interplay.

Student-suggested readings on the debate topic to be circulated by 23:59 PM on Thursday, November 15.

Week 11: Policy-making

Monday, November 18

Class debate preparation session.

- Student-assigned readings (everyone selects two).

Wednesday, November 20

Policy-making and political corruption

Readings to be announced. Guest lecture by Dr. Gorana Mišić (CEU).

Week 12: (New) challenges to (democratic) politics (II)

Monday, November 25

Populism

- Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 542–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>
- Talking Politics podcast with Jan-Werner Müller on populism: <https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com/blog/2017/68-jan-werner-mller-on-populism>

Prior to class, take the populism quiz on:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/nov/21/how-populist-are-you-quiz>.

Consider both your score and the project methodology – what do you think about this way of conceptualizing and measuring populism? How useful is it in understanding the phenomenon?

There is a short accompanying video by one of the project members, Dr. Levente Littvay, which you can see here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxJ5NyFvs1U&fbclid=IwAR3Xuuh2yd8DrvpSrGQtonFwc2rk8D5iQ9FGJLTqfQUITWvJCtmK3908D6Q>

- [OPTIONAL READING] Müller, J.-W. (2016). *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. – An elaboration of Müller's understanding of populism discussed in the podcast, if you would like to know more.

Wednesday, November 27

(Invisible) influence in politics

- Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2019). *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States - and the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction, pp. 1-20
- [OPTIONAL] The Good Fight podcast with Alex Hertel-Fernandez (to expand on the reading): <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/05/have-special-interests-managed-to-capture-the-state.html>

1000-word debate arguments to be submitted by 23:59 PM on Sunday, December 1.

Week 13: (New) challenges to (democratic) politics (III)

Monday, December 02

Globalization

- O'Neil, P. H. (2009). *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (Third Edit). New York, London: W.W. Norton & company. Chapter 11
- Rodrik, D. (1997). Sense and Nonsense in the Globalization Debate. *Foreign Policy*, 107, 19–37.

Wednesday, December 04

Are democracies unwinding - and how can we tell (and how bad is it, really?)

- Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2017). The Signs of Deconsolidation. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(1), 5–15.
- Lührmann, A., Mechkova, V., Dahlum, S., Maxwell, L., Olin, M., Petrarca, C. S., ... Lindberg, S. I. (2018). State of the world 2017: autocratization and exclusion? *Democratization*, 25(8), 1321–1340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1479693>
- Brown, W. (2018). Neoliberalism's Frankenstein: Authoritarian Freedom in Twenty-First Century "Democracies." *Critical Times: Interventions in Global Critical Theory*, 1(1), 60–79. Available from <https://ctjournal.org/index.php/criticaltimes/article/view/12>

Week 14: What did we learn?

Monday, December 9

Class debate. No assigned readings.

Wednesday, December 11

Course recap: what does comparative politics teach us?

- Ivan Krastev's TED talk on democracy:
https://www.ted.com/talks/ivan_krastev_can_democracy_exist_without_trust
- Mudde, C. (2018). Don't blame democracy's decline on ignorance. The problem lies deeper.*
Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/15/democracy-authoritarianism-media-spotlight-viktor-orban>

COMPLETION WEEK (December 16 – December 20) – no class