

Introduction to Comparative Politics: CPO 6091

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Note: this is a generic syllabus which gives a broad idea of the texts used when I teach this class. Most of the readings listed here are required. The precise dates during which we cover these readings varies depending upon the semester in which the course is being taught.

The Purpose of the Course

This course is the principal introductory course for the subfield of Comparative Politics. The class is also known as the “Comparative Core.” Comparative Politics is currently the largest and fastest growing subfield in all of Political Science. Its size, diversity and vitality make it one of the most interesting fields of all. These readings will help you get to know comparative politics. This class is required of all doctoral students who choose to major or minor in comparative politics.

Comparative politics is the study of politics in one setting in comparison with politics in one or more other settings. It is not a method. It is a way of thinking. Insofar as any study of politics anywhere has relied upon comparison for understanding, then all of political science is part of comparative politics. More specifically, comparative politics today primarily involves the study of different countries in comparison with each other. Increasingly the work of some comparativists involves comparisons with the United States.

This course introduces you to comparative politics as a part of political science and as a possible field of specialization as a future scholar. The course lays out for you the path followed by comparative politics over the past 40 years or more, with all the contributions and deficiencies therein. In the course of this semester you will study the diverse approaches to comparative politics that have proven fruitful in past generations of scholarship. You will see ways in which scholars have compared history, leadership, institutions, economics, culture and people in their effort to understand differences between countries. The topics covered include social movements, institutions, social capital, comparative history, values, leadership, revolution, political economy and culture. Although the reading list is long, it is still only an introductory window into all of these specializations. Other courses in the field of comparative politics will delve more deeply into many of these topics. This course is only an introduction.

The Conduct of the Course

Although the ease of modern travel and communication have made the scholarly study of comparative politics logistically possible, the value of cross-national comparisons was readily understood long before the existence of the airplane and the telephone, much less the computer and email. We begin this course in Part I with a brief look at famous early examples of comparative research. While these lack the methodological and theoretical sophistication of modern comparative studies, they underscore the value of a comparative basis in early studies of politics.

In Part II we study one of the most important philosophical questions underlying all of modern political science, including comparative politics: is politics driven by economics or by

ideas? Part III begins our comparative study of difference. We explore a variety of classic efforts to understand politics through comparison. These works draw upon history, leadership, institutions, economics and culture to make comparisons and to understand differences. There is no sense in which the classic works in comparative politics fit neatly into different boxes. They all have distinct emphases but they blend into an ongoing conversation in which works often fit different descriptions. Yet each makes a major theoretical and intellectual contribution which, of course, is ultimately more important than their categorization.

The works in Part III provide a detailed study of a small number of cases and very well-known comparative studies. In the interest of building your own scholarly library, you may want to own as many of these books as you can. All will be available at stores in town, are available through the publishers and can be found through Amazon. I will also place these books on reserve at Library West and articles can be found on line through the UF library system.

The work requirements for this course are several: class participation, an oral presentation, a critical paper, and a written, take-home exam. Throughout the course you are required to come to class having read and considered all the reading for that week. During class you must participate in class discussion and you will be graded on that participation. Please rest assured that I am not trying to teach you to think according to one paradigm or one approach. I am simply asking you to think for yourself across all of these works. If you disagree with me there will no penalty to your grade in doing so. In addition, during one week of the course you will be asked to teach the material for that week. After that presentation you will turn in a critical paper on the readings for the week you taught. Grading will include class participation (15%), the presentation (20%), and the exam (45%). In this course work hard, do all the reading, get your assignments in on time, never ask for an extension, always come to class and always participate in the discussion. But most of all, please try to enjoy the intellectual caliber of these works and of comparative politics as a field. It is a very exciting field.

Class date topic and readings

first class pass out syllabus

Part I: The Desire to Make Comparisons: Early Studies in Comparative Politics

week 1 Aristotle: *Classifications of Constitutions*, # 94 in Aristotle, *Selections*, ed. by W.D. Ross, Charles Scribner, NY, 1927, 1938
Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens*
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Part II: Foundations in Theory

week 2 *Economics, classes, conflict*: Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*
Values, ideas, religion: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Part III: Contemporary Explorations of Comparative Difference: History, Institutions, Social Capital, Culture, Citizen engagement, Individual motivation and more

- week 3 *History explains democratic development:* Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
- week 4 *Democracy and the role of institutions:* Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies
Charles Tilly, “Does Modernization Breed Revolution?” a reply to Huntington in Comparative Politics, Vol 5, # 3, April, 1973, pp 425-48
- week 5 *Domestic politics and the international context:* Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions
- week 6 *Citizens, leaders, and democracy:* Robert Dahl, Polyarchy
Terry Karl, “Petroleum and Political Pacts: The Transition to Democracy in Venezuela,” Latin American Research Review, 22(1), 1987
- week 7 *Social capital:* Robert Putnam, Making Democracy Work
Leslie Anderson, Social Capital in Developing Democracies
- week 8 Amaney Jamal, Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World
- week 9 *Comparative citizen electoral engagement:* Morris Fiorina, Retrospective Voting in American National Elections
Paul Sniderman et al, Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology
- week 10 Leslie Anderson and Lawrence Dodd, Learning Democracy
- week 11 *Culture:* Ronald Inglehart, The Silent Revolution
- week 12 *Institutional structure:* Valerie Bunce, Subversive Institutions
- week 13 *Individual motivation:* Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action
Albert Hirschman, Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action
- week 14 Kristen Renwick Monroe, The Heart of Altruism
- week 15 *Race:* Anthony Marx, Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa and Brazil
- week 16 *Democratization:* Nancy Bermeo, Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times

Final exam: At the end of this class we will have a take-home final. The final is intended to be a small practice run for the comprehensive exams which are ahead of you in your studies. We will choose a 24 hours period that works for everyone and answer one question during that time. We will choose the date of the final together.