



Academic Year 2021-2022

Syllabus

Comparative Politics: Theory and Concepts

CFU 6

Prof. Gerald Easter

**Course Description:** The class serves as an Introduction to the Political Science subfield of Comparative Politics. After a review of the main components of Comparative Politics research, the class provides a survey of the major theoretical literatures in the field. We show how Comparative Politics attempts to explain the big macro-historical trends that have shaped the different ways in which political power is organized and contested in our world. The learning goals of the class is to build the analytical skill to engage theoretical propositions, evaluate research findings, and design a research project.

**Teaching Method:** The course is based on lectures introducing students to the major theoretical literatures and in Comparative Politics. The weekly format follows: (1) introduction to the main concept and theoretical debates; (2) illustration of well-known case studies from recent history; (3) discussion of the causes and challenges in today's world. Students actively collaborate and cooperate in their learning through discussions and presentations. The topics to be covered are listed below, but students may suggest particular topics of interest, which the class will try to accommodate.

### Schedule of Topics:

<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>Comparative Politics: Research and Methods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Competing Theoretical Traditions;</li><li>-- Concepts and Typologies;</li><li>-- Variable Analysis and Research Design</li></ul>
<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>The Modern State</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Concept/Theory: Rise of the Modern State;</li><li>-- Case Studies: Classic State Building, Post-Colonial, Post-Communist;</li><li>-- Contemporary Challenges: Failed States</li></ul>
<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>Nations and Nationalism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Concept/Theory: Where do Nations Come From?</li><li>-- Case Studies: Civic and Ethnic Nationalisms;</li><li>-- Contemporary Challenges: Sources of Ethnic Conflict</li></ul>
<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>Democracy and Democratization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Concept/Theory: Who Gets Democracy?</li><li>-- Case Studies: Third Wave of Democratization;</li><li>-- Contemporary Challenges: How Democracy Dies</li></ul>
<b>Topic 5</b>	<b>Dictatorship and Authoritarianism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Concept/Theory: Explaining the Persistence of Authoritarianism;</li><li>-- Case Studies: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictatorships – Class, Race, Religion;</li><li>-- Contemporary Challenges: Hybrid Regimes – Competitive Authoritarianism</li></ul>
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>Social Movements and Contentious Politics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-- Concept/Theory: Movement Politics – Protests, Riots, Revolution;</li><li>-- Case Studies: When Does Protest Politics Succeed?</li><li>-- Contemporary Challenges: Policing Protest Politics</li></ul>

**Weekly Reading/Viewing Materials:** The weekly readings include: (1) Theory and Concepts - short articles that familiarize students with some of the best-known authors and arguments in Comparative Politics; (2) Case Studies - short assigned readings and longer recommended books that highlight the weekly theme; (3) Contemporary Challenges – one or two video links that summarize an issue or conflict that is relevant in today’s world. There is no textbook required for you to buy. All reading materials and video links will be made available through electronic files provided by the professor and sent to the students via email attachments in advance of the weekly assignments.

**Requirements and Grading:** The class requirements include: in-class discussion, in-class presentation, and take-home writing assignments. (1) Attendance and Participation: Once we move into the main Comparative Politics themes, beginning in Week 2, students are expected to prepare questions or comments about the theory and concepts discussed. Each week every student will be given the opportunity to share their opinions in class discussion. (2) In-class Presentation: Each student will be responsible to deliver a short in-class presentation on the ‘contemporary challenges’. The presentation will require a 10-15 minutes report, which may also include some slides or visual material. Presentations may also require doing some additional reading or research than the weekly syllabus assignment; (3) The class also requires a final paper. (3) Comparative Research Design: Finally, the class requires a ‘research design’ project. This is NOT a fully completed project, but a research proposal. It should ask a question about a real political problem in the world, and construct a Comparative Politics design, which would help to provide an answer to the big question. It can take the form of a written paper (10-pages; 2500 words); or a video presentation (20minutes), with supporting materials in a power point. You may choose your own question, or several examples will be provided. The exercise will encourage you to use the think about the tools of comparative research. The breakdown for grading is as follows: (1) Attendance and Participation – 33 percent; (2) In-class Presentation – 33 percent; (3) Comparative Research Design – 34 percent.

**Professor Contact Info:** The best way to make contact is email: [easterg@bc.edu](mailto:easterg@bc.edu)  
Please write with any questions or problems regarding the weekly assignments and themes; and also to organize individual zoom meetings for discussion.

**NOTE:** Erasmus or non Global Governance students who would like to attend one or more courses and take one or more exams need to contact the Secretariat of Global Governance by e-mail [global.governance@uniroma2.it](mailto:global.governance@uniroma2.it) for registration and inform the Professor of the course. They are required to sign a code of conduct like all Global Governance students, accepting all values and rules. Please read it carefully before enrolling.

Notice that attendance is required from the very first lesson and you need to attend at least 80% of the course to be considered an attending student.

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