Preliminary syllabus

Comparative Politics

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Teaching assistant: Gábor Filippov
MA course, 4 credits, Fall 2017. Nádor u. 13. #307/A
Tuesday and Thursday, 11 am – 12.40 pm
Office: Vigyázó F. u. 2. #202. Office hours: Mon 1-3 pm, Tue 2-4 pm

Course description

The aim of the course is to make students familiar with some important issues and approaches in comparative politics by presenting research problems and enterprises. By the end of the course students are expected to have a better understanding in different trends in comparative politics, to be able to evaluate the merits of political science publications, to recognize what intellectual tradition they belong to, and to design your own research strategy. The readings and the lectures describe and exemplify the development of the discipline, which has resulted in methodological pluralism.

Beyond introductory methodological issues the course will cover issues in social and political change, structural vs agency-oriented explanations, dynamics of democratization and de-democratization and non-democratic regimes in comparative perspective.

By the end of the semester, each student will be expected to write research proposal on a selected topic. The selection of the topic will be up to the student, but decision should be made by early November so that each will have adequate time to both read and “digest” the issue and its literature.

In the proposal, students should address the following: What is the problem, issue, puzzle, event, outcome, process, trend, controversy that you intend to explain, and why do you choose it? What are your assumptions? How do you conceptualize your selected issue and how do you come up with the way of looking at it? How do you address the issues of validity and reliability? What is the unit (are the units) included in your analysis and why they were selected? Is agency located at the level of individuals or at the level of structures? What, if any, method of comparison do you intend to apply and how? Are the observed empirical phenomena equivalent across countries?

Requirements

Students must participate in all classes and inform the professor in advance if they cannot attend a class. They should read the mandatory readings before the meetings. Students are expected to participate actively in the discussions, and will also be asked to present one or more readings during the semester. The final paper (research proposal) should be about 3000-word long. It should be both handed in print-out form and e-mailed by the last meeting of the semester.

Grading: in-class activities, presentations (30%)
written assignments (30%)
final paper (40%)
Written assignments due to:
   - October 3.
   - October 24.
   - November 2.

Consulting some of the following books, listed below, would certainly be useful:


Topics and readings
WEEK 1.  September 19, 21.  Science, politics, and social science

Mandatory readings


Further readings
WEEK 2.  September 26, 28.  Research design

Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 3. October 3. Concept formation, conceptual stretching, area studies and global comparisons.


FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: The Karl/Schmitter vs Bunce debate (October 3.)


Further readings
WEEK 3. October 5. Case study research and process tracing

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Mandatory readings


Further readings
WEEK 4. October 10, 12. Structural explanations: Functionalism, modernization and development

Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 5-6. October 17, 19. Agency-based explanations: Democratization research and the Rustow – Lijphart model

Mandatory readings


Further readings

www.democracybarometer.org; Freedom House Index; Human Development Index
Jan Teorell, 2010. Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the
WEEK 6.   October 24, 26.    Actors vs structures in comparative historical analysis: The case of revolution

Mandatory readings


SECOND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: The Goldstone vs Keddie debate (October 24.)


Further readings
Theda Skocpol, 1979. States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Theda Skocpol, 1994. “Reflections on Recent Scholarship about Social Revolutions and


WEEK 7. October 31. November 2. Consolidation and deconsolidation of democracy

*Mandatory readings*


*THIRD WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: Schmitter/Karl, Carothers (November 2.)*


*Further readings*


WEEK 8. November 7. (9.) ‘Illiberal Democracy’ and Other Forms of Hybrid Regimes

*Mandatory readings*


*Further readings*


WEEK 9. November 14, 16. Political Parties and the Case of Far Right

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Mandatory readings

Further readings


Mandatory readings


Further readings


**WEEK 10.** November 23. Student presentations

**WEEK 11.** November 28, 30. Student presentations

**WEEK 12.** December 5, 7. Student presentations, concluding discussion

*Further reading*