Comparative Politics
MA course, Fall, 2014.
Tuesday & Thursday, 11 am – 12.40 pm

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The aim of the course is to make students familiar with the basic rules of research in comparative politics. By the end of the course you are expected 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 a genuine methodological pluralism. The course will balance between presenting concrete research enterprises and focusing on such general issues such as how political scientists build theories, prove their hypotheses, design concepts and so on.

By the end of the semester, each student will be expected to write a maximum 8 pages long (one-and-half-spaced) research proposal on a selected topic. The selection of the topic will be up to the individual, but it should be made by the half of the semester so that each will have adequate time to both read and “digest” the issue and its literature. You should bear in mind asking about the identification of the research problem, the framework of comparison, the method of comparison, the unit and level of analysis, the identification and control of variables. This should be handed at the last meeting of the semester (both electronically and in print-out version).

In the proposal, you should address the following problems:
1. 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?
2. 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 causality, validity and reliability? To what extent is the data-selection theory driven?
3. 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?
4. What, if any, method of comparison do you intend to apply and how? Are the observed empirical phenomena equivalent across countries?
5. What school, if any, do you wish to belong to?
6. You should keep an eye open for alternative reasons of choice, ways of doing research, and different possible forms and generalizations.

Grading
active participation, presentation (30%)
position papers (30%)
final paper (40%)
Consulting some of the following books, listed below, would certainly be useful.


Topics and readings


Further readings
Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein, 2010. “Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World

WEEK 2. September 30, October 2. Research Design


Further readings
WEEK 3. October 7, 9. Concept Formation and Interpretation


Further readings
WEEK 4. October 14, 16  Causality, Case Study, Process Tracing

lecturer: Vujo Ilic (TA)


Further readings


WEEK 5. October 21. *Theories of Functionalism, Modernization & Development*

October 23. National holiday (no class)


Further readings


Samuel P. Huntington, 2007. “Order and Conflict in Global Perspective” in Gerardo L.

**WEEK 6. October 28, 30. Comparative Research on Democracy**


**Further readings**

[www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org); Freedom House Index; Human Development Index


WEEK 7. November 4. Comparative Research on Central European media

Guest lecturer: Prof. Péter Bajomi-Lázár


Further readings

WEEK 7-8. November 6, 11, 13. Actors or Structures? Historical Approaches, Path-Dependence and Revolution

Theda Skocpol, 1979. “Explaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories” in Skocpol: States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1. 3-43.

Further readings


*Further readings*

**WEEK 10. November 25. Comparing Nondemocratic & Hybrid Regimes**


*Further readings*
WEEK 11-12.  November 27. , December 2, 4, 9.    Student Presentations
December 11.   Concluding Discussion, Handing Final Papers


Further reading


