National Research University – Higher School of Economics
Department of Social Sciences
School of Political Science
Comparative Politics – Course Syllabus
2016-2017

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1. Abstract and Learning Objectives

Comparative politics is the study of comparing different countries and units in a
systematic manner. It encompasses broad and diverse issues such as political regimes,
institutions, degrees of democracy and democratization, political economy, social
movements, and political violence. Besides providing useful comparisons across seemingly
different political units, this subfield can also inform debates about designing new political
orders. As such, it is a rich and varied field that cannot be accurately characterized on the
basis of just one dimension or topic. That is why this course should be seen as a sampling of
the field rather than an exhaustive review.

This course is intended to introduce students to the basic concepts, ideas, and issues in
modern comparative politics. It also aims to give students the training to read academic texts
critically and understand the basic arguments. Assigned readings are intended to provide
students with the broadest possible coverage of both classical and contemporary research in
the sub-field. The list of recommended readings on each topic points students toward other
pertinent literature.

The working language of the course is English.

2. Forms of Control

Students will receive the final grade for this class at the end of Module 3. The grade is
made up of one written assignment, mini-tests, participation and final exam. *Late work will
NOT be accepted, so please respect the deadlines and plan accordingly.*

The formula for calculating the final grade is the following:

\[ G_{final} = 0.65 \times G_{cumulative} + 0.35 \times G_{exam} \]

\[ G_{cumulative} = 0.31 \times G_{assignment} + 0.23 \times G_{mini-tests} + 0.15 \times G_{presentation} + 0.31 \times G_{seminars} \]

a. Written assignment (20%): There will be a written assignment at the end of Module 2.
b. Mini-tests (15%): These tests aim to examine the degree of understanding and ability to
use the content from lectures and seminars.
b. Final exam (35%): The final exam will take place at the end of Module 3. It will be
cumulative and evaluated according to the completeness and correctness of the answers
provided.
c. **Class attendance and participation (30%)**: Students’ participation in class discussions is assessed according to the “intensity” of their participation, ability to understand and analyze basic concepts and show relevance of their ideas in presentations.

3. **Course Plan**
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**MODULE 3. TOPICS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

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4. Course Contents
There are three mandatory textbooks that we will use in this class and they are listed below:


The readings that are shown with an asterisk (*) sign can be found in the *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*. The other texts are accessible online through the library e-resources.

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**MODULE 1**

**THEME 1. WHAT IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS?**

**Lectures 1 and 2: September 13th (4 hours) : What is comparative politics? An introduction**

- What is politics? Ontology and epistemology of politics
- What is political science? History of the discipline and subfields
- The scientific study of politics: Variables, operationalization, hypotheses, theories, causation

**Lectures 3 and 4: September 20th (4 hours): Main approaches in the subfield**

- Rational choice theory
- Institutionalism

**Seminar 1: (September 26th)**

- Introduction.
- Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method (Lijphart, Arend. Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method)

**Assigned Readings for Theme 1**

- *Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, Research Traditions and Theory in Comparative Politics: An Introduction from Comparative Politics.*
- *Larry M. Bartels, Some Unfulfilled Promises of Quantitative Imperialism.*
- *Ronald Rogowski, How Inference in the Social (But Not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly.*
THEME 2. STATES

Lectures 5 and 6: September 27th (4 hours): Defining the state
- Defining the state
- The origins of political organization and the rise of the modern state

Seminar 2: (October 3rd)
- Mini quiz: What is comparative politics?
- Nation-State: what it is and what it is not (Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990—1992. Parts 1, 3)

Lectures 7 and 8: October 4th (4 hours): Comparing state power
- Comparing state power: legitimacy, centralization, capacity, autonomy

Seminar 3: (October 10th)
- Nation-State: failure or rebirth? (Robert I. Rotberg, The New Nature of Nation-State Failure)
- Student presentations:
  2) J. Herbst, “War and the State in Africa”

Assigned Readings for Theme 2
- *Francis Fukuyama, The Necessity of Politics, from The Origins of Political Order
- *Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation
- *Jeffrey Herbst, War and the State in Africa
- *Stephen D. Krasner, Sovereignty

THEME 3. NATIONS AND SOCIETY

Lectures 9 and 10: October 11th (4 hours)
- Ethnic identity
- National identity and citizenship

Seminar 4: October 17th
- Mini quiz: States, nations and society
- States and nations (Philip G. Roeder, Where Nation-States Come, from «Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism»)
- Student presentations:

  1) Eric Hobsbawm, Nationalism

Lectures 11 and 12: October 18th (4 hours)

- Political attitudes, ideology, and religion
- Political culture and values

Assigned Readings for Theme 3

- *Eric Hobsbawm, Nationalism*
- *Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, Ethnic Diversity and Economic Performance*

MODULE 2

THEME 4. DEMOCRATIC REGIMES AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Seminar 5 (October 31st):

- States and nations (Philip G. Roeder, Where Nation-States Come, from «Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism»)
- Student presentations:

  1) A. Alesina, E. La Ferrara, Ethnic Diversity and Economic Performance (2 cases)

Lecture 13: November 1st (2 hours)

- Defining democracy

Seminar 6 (November 7th):

- Democratization: waves and actors (Daniel Ziblatt, How Did Europe Democratize?)
- Student presentations:

  1) Democratization: success stories (2 cases)
  2) F. Zakaria “A Brief History of Human Liberty” from “The Future of Freedom”

Seminar 7 (November 14th):
- Consociationalism: how democracy really works? (Arend Lijphart, Constitutional Choices for New Democracies)
- Student presentations:


**Lectures 14 and 15: November 15th (4 hours)**

- Determinants of democracy
- Institutions of the democratic state

**Seminar 8 (November 21st):**

- Mini quiz
- Political institutions in democracies: legislature (M. Steven Fish Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies)
- Student presentations:

1) Uslaner E., Zittel T. “Legislative behavior”

**Lecture 16: November 22nd (2 hours): Democratic regimes and democratization**

- Electoral systems
- Political parties

**Assigned Readings for Theme 4**

- *Fareed Zakaria, A Brief History of Human Liberty, from The Future of Freedom*
- *Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, What Democracy Is … and Is Not*
- *Arend Lijphart, Constitutional Choices for New Democracies*
- *Robert D. Putnam, Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America*
- *Maurice Duverger, The Number of Parties, from Political Parties*

**THEME 5. AUTOCRATIC REGIMES AND HYBRID VARIANTS**
Lecture 17: November 29th (2 hours)

- Defining autocratic rule
- Origins and sources of autocratic rule

Seminar 9 (December 5th):

- Hybrid regimes (L. Morlino, Hybrid Regimes or Regimes in Transition?)
- Student presentations:
  1) Joseph Wright “Do Authoritarian Institutions Constrain?”
  2) Nathan M. Jensen, Edmund Malesky and Stephen Weymouth “Unbundling the Relationship between Authoritarian Legislatures and Political Risk”

Lecture 18: December 6th (2 hours)

- Authoritarian regimes and political control

Seminar 10 (December 12th):

- Autocratic regimes (Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz “New Data on Autocratic Regimes”)
- Student presentations:
  1) Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Modern Nondemocratic Regimes, from Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation”
  2) Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism

Lecture 19: December 13th (2 hours)

- Types of authoritarianism

Seminar 11 (December 19th):

- Mini quiz
- Game (Bueno de Mesquita, B. Smith A. The Dictator’s Handbook: Why Bad Behaviour is Almost Always Good Politics)

Lecture 20: December 20th (2 hours)

- Hybrid regimes: definitions and debates in the discipline

Assigned Readings for Theme 5

- *Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, Modern Nondemocratic Regimes, from Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation
- *Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism

**MODULE 3**

**THEME 6. POLITICAL ECONOMY**

**Lectures 21 and 22: January 17th (2 hours)**
- The components of political economy
- Comparing economic outcomes

**Seminar 12 (January 23rd)**
Political economy: theory of benevolent dictator

**Lecture 23: January 24th (2 hours)**
- Economic systems

**Seminar 13 (January 30th)**
Political economy: institutions (Douglass C. North, Institutions; Daron Acemoglu, Root Causes: A Historical Approach to Assessing the Role of Institutions in Economic Development)

**Assigned Readings for Theme 6**
- *Douglass C. North, Institutions
- *Daron Acemoglu, Root Causes: A Historical Approach to Assessing the Role of Institutions in Economic Development
- *N. Gregory Mankiw, The Trilemma of International Finance

**THEME 7. POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

**Lecture 24: January 24th (2 hours)**
- Explanations of political violence

**Lecture 25: January 31st (2 hours)**
- Types of political violence: revolutions

**Seminar 14 (February 6th)**  
Political violence: revolutions (Theda Skocpol, France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions; Jack Goldstone, Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies)

**Lecture 26: February 7th (2 hours)**  
- Types of political violence: terrorism

**Seminar 15 (February 13th)**  
- Mini quiz  
- Political violence: terrorism

**Assigned Readings for Theme 7**  
- *Theda Skocpol, France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions*  
- *Martha Crenshaw, The Causes of Terrorism*  
- *Timur Kuran, Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989*  
- *Jack Goldstone, Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies*  
- *Max Abrahms, What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy*  

**THEME 8. PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

**Lecture 27: February 7th (2 hours)**  
- Colonialism and the institutions of imperialism

**Lectures 28 and 29: February 14th (4 hours)**  
- The challenges of post-imperialism  
- Puzzles and prospects for democracy and development

**Seminar 16 (February 20th)**  
Problems of developing countries: creating growth:  
- Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson, Disease and Development: The Effect of Life Expectancy on Economic Growth  
- Krugman, The Myth of Asia’s Miracle  
- Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?

**Seminar 17 (February 27th)**
Problems of developing countries: colonial legacy
- Austin, African economic development and colonial legacies
- Touval, Africa’s frontiers

Assigned Readings for Theme 8
- *William Easterly, To Help the Poor, from The Elusive Quest for Growth
- *Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning, Why Has Africa Grown Slowly?
- *Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson, Disease and Development: The Effect of Life Expectancy on Economic Growth
- *Krugman, The Myth of Asia’s Miracle

THEME 9. PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Lectures 30 and 31: February 21st (4 hours)
- Immigration and refugee crisis
- New identities, old ideologies: the rise of the extreme right
- Maintaining the welfare state

Seminar 18 (March 6th)
Problems of developed countries:
- Fukuyama F. Decay of American Political Institutions
- Margarita Estévez-Abé, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State

Lecture 32: March 7th (2 hours)
- Institutions in transition: European integration (and disintegration?)

Assigned Readings for Theme 9
- *Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared, Income and Democracy
- *Adam Przeworski, Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions
**THEME 10. GLOBALIZATION**

**Lecture 33: March 7\textsuperscript{th} (2 hours)**

- What is globalization?

**Seminar 19 (March 13\textsuperscript{th})**

- Mini quiz: Globalization

**Lectures 34 and 35: March 14\textsuperscript{th} (4 hours)**

- Economic, political and social globalization
- Taking stock of globalization

**Assigned Readings for Theme 10**


**Seminar 20 (March 20\textsuperscript{th})**

Pre-exam consultation

**Final exam - March 27\textsuperscript{th}**