

Title of the course:	Comparative Politics		
Course ID:	VE-NPT007		
Level of education:	Regular & Erasmus	Academic semester:	Fall
Professor's name:	Gergely Ablaka	Academic title:	
Hours per semester:	30	Credits:	4
Exam:		Pre-requisites:	

Aims of the course

The purpose of this course (Comparative Politics) is to serve as an introduction to concepts, theories and methods in comparative politics, and a basic worldview of the different political systems and governmental structures. In the first step the course focuses on the schools of comparative thought, after that on the models of comparative government, then on the comparison of the party, election, and interest group systems, and finally on the reviews of comparative politics. We will discuss every subject with specific examples, like country studies. This course is designed to introduce students to key and important characteristics of some of the world's major and significant political systems. At the end the students will come not only by the basics of the comparative idea, but the employment of comparative research models and thoughts.

The topics of the course will be explored both by lectures and seminars discussing the mandatory readings of the week. We will combine readings, lectures and class conversations. Students' active participation in the course is a requirement. The lectures will touch on the readings, but they will not always use the reading materials. In order to facilitate a dynamic classroom, students should have finished the reading prior the class. During the weeks the students will have lectures and conversations about the topics below:

Course outline

1. **Introduction:** Method of comparative research or comparative political science? The Purpose, the subject, and the basic concepts of comparative politics? How we compare countries? What are the positive and negative aspects of the comparative method?
2. **Schools of Comparative Thought I:** The classical theories: the form of the state and the power sharing structures: the constitutionalism, the system theory, the structuralist-functionalist approach, the behaviouralism school, and the old and new institutionalism.
3. **Schools of Comparative Thought II:** The modern theories: the political dynamics and the context: the political dependency and development school, the political economy studies, the marxist approach, the social class comparison, and the theory of political culture.
4. **Schools of Comparative Thought III:** The contemporary theories: democratization's fourth wave, democratization and other transitions (transition studies), social comparison studies, nationalism and traditionalism in comparative perspective, etc. The state of the discipline.
5. **Comparative Governments I:** Comparison of the governmental forms via the dichotomy of democracy and dictatorship: What are the requirements of democracy and dictatorship? The forms of democracy (plurality and proportional) and dictatorship (authoritarian and totalitarian).
6. **Comparative Governments II:** Comparison of the governmental forms via the legislation and the execution power: the presidential model (United States & Egypt), the semi-presidential model (France & Russia) and the parliamentary model (United Kingdom & Germany).
7. **Comparative Governments III:** Comparison of the governmental forms via the territorial power sharing concepts (centralization & decentralization): the unitary model (United Kingdom & Hungary) the federal systems (United States & Germany) and the regionalist states (Italy & France).
8. **Comparative Electoral Systems:** A quick snapshot of the world's electoral systems. How people vote, and what does it mean (Theories of voting)? The three main electoral model: plurality, proportional, and mixed (via country studies). The effects of the voting system on party system?
- 9.

Comparative Party Systems: Differences between the world's party systems: the number of the parties, the organization of the parties, and the function of the parties? Typology of party systems. The party models and ideologies: What kind of parties are on the palette?

10.

Comparative Political Culture: Comparison of the political cultures: the levels (system, process, and decision), and the nature (the number of the fault lines in the society) of the political culture; the places of socialization (types of society)? The importance of traditional values in the globalization era?

11.

Comparative Political Dynamics: The typology of interest groups and policies. The articulation and aggregation strategies: the pluralist model in the United States and the corporatist model in Germany. The decision making process and the functions of the structures.

12.

Comparative Governmental Policies: Theories about the governmental activities (distribution, regulation, and symbolism). Comparison of public policies (education, health care, information, etc.). The world's foreign policies in comparative perspective.

Requirements and assessment

The students are expected to be actively present at all lectures (Maximum three time absence!), and to reflect critically on the mandatory readings. The central consideration in evaluating the students' contributions to the class will be the quality, and not length or frequency. Questions stimulating interaction and debate during the lectures will be positively evaluated as well.

Each student has to do one 15 minutes presentation on the assigned mandatory readings or timely essays. Each presentation needs to be accompanied by a one-page handout. The essays will be hand out through Internet or copy, and will be discussed at the first class.

The students during the course have to do a research in a personally elected topic or issue. The students should outline a prototypical study on a topic of choice using the insights on methods and theories commonly used in comparative politics that they have gained in this course. It is recommended to choose two or more countries, and make a comparison between them. Structure, content, and function of this essay will be discussed in the beginning of the course.

Readings

The students have to read the basic books (required texts) and one or two essays about the timely topic (further reading). The readings below are just some excerpt from the comparative politics library. It's advisable to check out the periodicals of comparative politics, for example the Journal of Comparative Politics (<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/jcp/>), the Comparative Political Studies (<http://www.sagepub.com/journal.aspx?pid=84>), and the Comparative European Politics (<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/cep/index.html>).

Required Books

Gabriel Almond - Bingham Powell - Kaare Strom - Russel Dalton: *Comparative Politics Today: A Worldview*; Longman Publishers, 2007.

Robert Goodin - Hans Dieter Klingemann: *A New Handbook of Political Science*; Oxford University Press, 2003.

Further Readings on Comparative Politics

Alan Zuckerman: *Comparative Political Science*; SAGE Publishers, 2008.

Alfred Stepan: *Arguing Comparative Politics*; Oxford University Press, 2001.

Dankwart Rustow - Kenneth Paul Erickson: *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*; Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.

December Green - Laura Luehrmann: *Comparative Politics of the Third World, Linking Concepts and Cases*; Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

Gabriel Almond - Bing Powell - Kaare Storm - Russel Dalton: *Comparative Politics, A Theoretical Framework*; Pearson Education, 2000.

Gabriel Almond - Russel Dalton - Bingham Powell: *European Politics Today*; Longman Publishers, 2001.

Guy Peters: *Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods*; Macmillan Publishers, 1998.

Howard Wiarda: *New Directions in Comparative Politics*; Westview Press, 1991.

Mark Lichbach - Alan Zukerman: *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure*; Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mattei Dogan - Dominique Pelassy: *How to Compare Nations? Strategies in Comparative Politics*; Chatham House Publishers, 1990.

Paul Brooker: *Non-democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics*; Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

Rod Hague - Martin Harrop: *Comparative government and politics: An Introduction*; Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Ronald Chilcote: *Theories of Comparative Politics: The Search for a Paradigm Reconsidered*; Westview Press, 1994.