

Comparative Thinking
Ph.D. - seminar in Sociology/Anthropology
4 credits
Fall 2012

Judit Bodnar
bodnarj@ceu.hu

‘Thinking without comparison is unthinkable.’ Yet the comparative method has become something distinctive, and comparative history, politics, government, literature as well as comparative-historical sociology have been institutionalized as separate fields. The course explores these explicit comparative strategies in the social sciences and the humanities. It, however, goes beyond that and handles comparison as a cultural system. The course scrutinizes the cultural embeddedness of the logic and categories of comparison, the location of ‘universal’ social theory as well as issues pertaining to hegemony, ideology and knowledge. Globalization has produced an awareness of intertwined histories and social conditions, and a new configuration of similarity and difference that challenge social research and comparative thinking. This will receive special attention in class.

Readings are of two types: (1) texts on comparative strategies and (2) examples of comparative research. The purpose of the class is to enhance your critical skills and help you develop a constructive, theoretically and practically viable approach to your dissertation research.

You are required

- to come to class prepared, (cca. 30% of your grade)
- to prepare a few critical summaries of the readings that are to initiate discussion in class (on a rotating basis), (30% of your grade)
- to devise a comparative research design based on the approaches discussed in class, preferably along the lines of your dissertation research. This is the term paper to be submitted shortly after the end of classes. (40% of the grade)

Week 1 Introduction

Part 1 *The comparative method*

Week 2 Macrosocial comparisons in historical studies

Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method*. California. Pp.1-69.

Theda Skocpol & Margaret Somers. 1994. “The uses of comparative history in macrosocial inquiry” Pp.72-95 in Skocpol: *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. Cambridge.

Clifford Geertz: *Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. Chicago, 1968. Chapter 1 “Two Countries, Two Cultures” Pp.1-22.

Theda Skocpol. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge.
Introduction Pp.3-43.

Recommended: Chapter 1 “Old-Regime States in Crisis” Pp.47-111.

Skocpol. 1976. "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions"
Comparative Studies in Society and History 18, 2:175-210.

Week 3

- 1. The institutionalization of comparative-historical sociology**
- 2. Microhistorical, asymmetrical and implicit comparisons**

Loïc Wacquant. "Urban Outcasts: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17, 3 (1993):366-83.

Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt. 1984. "Shopkeepers, master artisans, and the historian: the petite-bourgeoisie in comparative focus" Pp.3-31 in Crossick & Haupt: *Shopkeepers and master artisans in nineteenth century Europe*. London: Methuen.

Alexis de Tocqueville. 1969. *Democracy in America*. J.P. Mayer. Pp.31-57; 305-8.

Max Weber. 1958. "The Occidental City" Pp.91-120 in *The City*. The Free Press.

Comparative & Historical Sociology, Newsletter of the ASA Comparative and Historical Sociology section, vol. 18, no.1 (Fall 2006).

Also available online: <http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/newsletter/chs06fall.pdf>

Recommended:

Loïc Wacquant. 2008. *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Polity.

Week 4

- 1. The morphological method and the interpretation of historical evidence**
- 2. Disentangling difference**
- 3. Tensions of disciplines: case studies and causal analyses**

Carlo Ginzburg. 1990 [1986] "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm" Pp.96-125
"The Inquisitor as Anthropologist" Pp. 156-164 in *Myths, Emblems, Clues*.
Hutchinson.

George Steinmetz. 2004. "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and "Small N's" in Sociology" *Sociological Theory* 22:3 (September):371-400.

Peter Baldwin. 2004. "Comparing and Generalizing: Why all history is comparative, yet no history is sociology" Pp. 1-22 in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Conner (eds.)
Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective. Routledge.

Etienne Balibar. 1991. [1988] 'Class Racism' Pp. 204-216 in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.) *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. New York: Verso.

Judit Bodnar. 2001. "Constructing Difference" Pp.13-34 in *Fin de Millenaire Budapest*.
Minnesota.

Recommended:

Carlo Ginzburg. 1991. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*. Penguin. "Eurasian Conjectures" Pp.207-25; Introduction 1-30.

George Steinmetz. 2007. *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa*. Chicago.

In short version: 2003. "The Devil's Handwriting': Precolonial Discourse and Colonial Native Policy in German Samoa and Qingdao" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, 1:41-95.

Week 5 **Historical comparisons in a global system**

Jürgen Kocka. 1999. "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German *Sonderweg*" *History & Theory* 38, 1:40-50.

Sebastian Konrad. 1999. "What Time is Japan? Problems of Comparative (Intercultural) Historiography" *History & Theory* 38, 1:67-83.

Immanuel Wallerstein. 2000. "World-Systems Analysis" Pp.129-48 in *The Essential Wallerstein*, New York.

Philip McMichael. 1990. "Incorporating Comparison Within a World-Historical Perspective: An Alternative Comparative Method" *American Sociological Review* 55 (June):385-97.

Recommended:

Philip McMichael. 2000. "World-Systems Analysis, Globalization and Incorporated Comparisons" *Journal of World System Research* VI, 3 (Fall/Winter):68-99.

Week 6 **National holiday, No Class**

Week 7 **How the new evolves: the meaning and temporality of change**

William H. Sewell Jr. 1996. "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology" Pp.245-280 in Terence McDonald (ed.) *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*. Michigan.

Saskia Sassen. 2006. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton.

Introduction Pp.1-24.

"Disassembling the national" 143-7.

"The tipping point" Pp.148-221.

Recommended:

Andrew Abbott. 2001. *Time Matters*. Chicago.

William H. Sewell Jr. 1996. "Historical events as transformations of structures: Inventing revolution at the Bastille" *Theory and Society* 25:841-881.

Part 2

Week 8 **Dichotomy of cultures and civilizations: Orientalism and Occidentalism**

Edward Said. 1978. *Orientalism*. Vintage.

Required: Pp.31-72; 113-23.

Recommended: the rest

Edward Said. 1993. "Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodology of Imperialism" in *Culture and Imperialism*. Alfred A. Knopf. Reprinted in Prakash (ed.) *After Colonialism*. Pp.21-39.

Robert Thornton. 1995. "The Colonial, the Imperial and the Creation of the 'European' in Southern Africa" in James Carrier (ed.) *Occidentalism*.

Recommended: Sadik Jalal al-'Azam. "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse" *Khamsin* 8: 5-24.

Week 9 Knowledge, context and location: schools and epistemic communities

1. Theory from the North and South
2. The Chicago, LA and New York Schools of Urbanism

John and Jean Comaroff. *Theory from the South*. Paradigm Publishers. 2011.

Raewyn Connell. 2006. "Northern social theory: The political geography of general social theory." *Theory and Society* 35: 237-64.

Denis Judd and Dick Simpson (eds.) *The City, Revisited: Urban Theory from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York*. Minnesota.

Dennis Judd. "Theorizing the City" Pp. 3-20.

Michael Dear and Steven Flusty. 1998. "Postmodern Urbanism" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88(1): 50-72.

Roderick McKenzie. 1925. "The ecological approach" pp. 63-79 in Robert Park, Ernest Burgess and Roderick McKenzie, *The city*.

Recommended:

Ernest Burgess. 1925. "The growth of the city" Pp. 47-62 in Robert Park, Ernest Burgess and Roderick McKenzie, *The City*. Chicago.

the rest of *The City, Revisited*.

Part 3 Selected topics from social research

Week 10 Paths to neoliberalism: the multiple historical origins of a global policy paradigm

Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas and Sarah L. Babb. 2002. "The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries" *AJS* 108, 3:533-79.

Monica Prasad. 2006. *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*. Chicago. (on reserve)

Introduction. Pp.1-42.

One chapter/country out of the four (cca. 60 pages each) (not part of the reader)

Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal. 2002. "Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism" *AJS* 108, 2:310-52.

Week 11

1. 'Development' and 'backwardness'

2. Tensions of modernity, the limits of empathy, and the dilemmas of the researcher

Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith. 1974. *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries*. Harvard. Pp. 1-35.

Alejandro Portes. 1973. "Modernity and Development: A Critique" *Studies in Comparative International Development* 8, 3 (Fall): 247-79.

Nita Kumar. 1988. *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880-1986*. Princeton.
Introduction, Pp.3-11 (Recommended)
Appendix A "The Limits of Ethnology" p.243.

Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds.) 1997. *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. California.

F. Cooper: "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept" Pp.64-92.

James Ferguson: "Anthropology and Its Evil Twin: "Development" in the Constitution of a Discipline" Pp.150-175.

Recommended:

Wolfgang Sachs (ed.): *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Zed Books. 1991.

Week 12 Summing up: Globalization—theoretical and methodological challenges, and the business of doing global sociology, anthropology and history

Michael Burawoy. 2000. "Introduction: Reaching for the Global" Pp.1-40 in Burawoy et al. *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. California.

Michael Burawoy. 2009. *The Extended Case Method: Four Countries, Four Decades, Four Great Transformations and One Theoretical Tradition*. California.
Conclusions: The ethnography of great transformations. Pp. 245-67.

Dipesh Chakrabarty. 2000. "The Two Histories of Capital" Pp. 47-71 in Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton.

Michael Geyer. 2005. "World History and General Education: How to Bring the World into the Classroom" Pp.193-210 in Hanna Schissler and Yasemin N. Soysal (eds) *The Nation, Europe and the World*. Berghahn.

Recommended:

Arjun Appadurai. 2001. "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination" Pp.1-21 in Appadurai (ed.), *Globalization*. Duke.