‘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


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” 

Week 3
1. The institutionalization of comparative-historical sociology
2. Microhistorical, asymmetrical and implicit comparisons


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](http://www2.asanet.org/sectionchs/newsletter/chs06fall.pdf)

Recommended:

Week 4
1. The morphological method and the interpretation of historical evidence
2. Disentangling difference
3. Tensions of disciplines: case studies and causal analyses


Recommended:


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


Recommended:

**Week 6 National holiday, No Class**

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


“Disassembling the national” 143-7.

Recommended:

**Part 2**

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

Required: Pp.31-72; 113-23.
Recommended: the rest


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


Dennis Judd. “Theorizing the City” Pp. 3-20.


Recommended:

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**


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

Week 11
1. ‘Development’ and ‘backwardness’
2. Tensions of modernity, the limits of empathy, and the dilemmas of the researcher


   Introduction, Pp.3-11 (Recommended)
   Appendix A “The Limits of Ethnosociology” p.243.


Recommended:

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


Recommended: