POLS 5220: Comparative Politics

M.A. course, fall semester 2018

Instructor: Matthijs Bogaards (Visbogaards@ceu.edu)

Classes

Mondays, 9.00-10.40 (Room TBA) and Thursdays, 9.00-10.40 (Room TBA).

Office hours

Mondays, 11.00-12.40, Thursdays, 11.00-12.40.

Credits

4 CEU credits, 8 ECTS credits

Course description

The aim of the course is to make students familiar with some important issues and approaches in comparative politics. The focus is on concept formation and empirical research. Today, the subdiscipline of comparative politics relies heavily on data sets, many of them available on the internet. This course introduces students to some of the most widely used data sets and the research they have enabled. Topics covered include democracy, autocracy, leadership, ethnic conflict, power sharing, failed states, human rights, and constitutions.

Course requirements

This is a four-credit core course. The course does not presuppose any particular prior knowledge. Though many of the readings contain statistical analysis, prior knowledge of
quantitative research techniques is not needed. Students are expected to be present at all sessions. If one is unable to attend the class, (s)he should e-mail the instructor in advance. The use of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, e-readers, phones, etc.) is not allowed in class.

Assessment

1) Two 2000-word maximum (everything included) papers (25% each)
2) Introduction (20%)
3) Presentation (20%)
4) Class participation (10%)

Students write two papers. The first paper is based on the reading for week 2. The aim is to apply the guidelines for concept analysis to a bad concept in comparative politics. The second paper is on a topic of the student’s choice. The only requirements are that the subject is relevant to the course and agreed to by the instructor.

In every week, except for weeks 1, 2, and 3, there will be the opportunity for students to do an introduction or a presentation. The introduction in the Monday session consists of an introduction to the data set of the week. It should last no longer than 15 minutes. Details of the assignment will be provided in week 1. The presentation in the Thursday session consists of a presentation on one additional empirical study, selected by the presenter in consultation with the instructor, that uses the data set of the week. Details of the assignment will be provided in week 1. You cannot do the introduction and the presentation in the same week.

Students are expected to come to class prepared and to contribute actively to the discussion.

Please note that for all assessments, late submission and violation of the word or time limit will result in a lower grade.

The syllabus only lists the mandatory reading. Every week, further readings will be suggested in class.
Learning outcomes and their assessment

By the end of the course students are expected to understand how data drives empirical research in Comparative Politics. The research papers are expected to improve the ability to critically engage with concepts, to do empirical research, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. The discussion of the readings encourages a multi-faceted approach to political phenomena and will increase the students’ ability to see their discipline within a broader social science and humanities context. The presentations benefit both the presenter and the audience: the presenter has the opportunity to develop his/her presentation skills while all deepen the knowledge about a particular data set and research agenda. All aspects of the class contribute to develop the skill of problem analysis: the ability to understand problems in a cross-national comparative perspective and to discuss these with students of a different cultural background.

Week 1: Comparative Politics and Non-Western Political Science

Mandatory reading:


Week 2: What is a Good/Bad Concept?

Mandatory reading:

**Week 3: Data Sets in Comparative Politics**

*Mandatory reading:*


**Week 4: Freedom House**

*Mandatory reading:*


**Week 5: Varieties of Democracy**

*Mandatory reading:*


Week 6: Authoritarianism

*Mandatory reading:*


Week 7: Leadership Change

*Mandatory reading:*


Week 8: Minorities at Risk

*Mandatory reading:*


Week 9: Ethnic Power Relations

*Mandatory reading:*


Week 10: Comparative Constitutions Project

Mandatory reading:

Week 11: Human Rights

Mandatory reading:

Week 12: Fragile State Index

Mandatory reading: