

PO233-15 Core Issues in Comparative Politics

23/24

Department

Politics & International Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Renske Doorenspleet

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

The central aim of this module is to get students to think like comparativists, and –eventually- to get students to do research in comparative politics. Comparative politics is the systematic study of government and politics in different countries, designed to better understand them by drawing out their contrasts and similarities.

By comparing countries, we can explore fundamental questions which have fascinated people for centuries. Such questions are endless: Why do political regimes and institutions develop how they do, where they do? What does democracy mean? How do people view democracy, and are there different opinions around the world? Why are some countries democratic and others not? Why do people use political violence in some places and times? What effects do different institutional designs have upon political outcomes? Why does the level of voter turnout vary across countries? Why is nationalism stronger in some places? Why do some countries intervene in the economy more strongly than others?

Students will focus on such questions, and apply their theoretical knowledge of comparative politics by working on their own academic research projects. The module will combine theory and practice, and takes an integrative approach to the relationship between big themes and country case studies. This module serves as a good introduction for third year modules which focus on

specific countries or regions, as well as modules with a strong empirical component. In this module PO233, students will not only learn about topics and theories in comparative politics, but also how to do comparative research in practice. Moreover, they will make short films, see for outcomes in previous years.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

- to introduce students to the methodological and theoretical foundations of comparative approaches to political science;
- to deepen their knowledge in a number of relevant areas of comparative political research;
- to analyze and compare some of the current political developments in different countries around the world

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Introduction to the Module

Week 2: Conceptualising Democracy

Week 3: Measuring Democracy

Week 4: How to Compare Countries

Week 5: How to Explain Democracy

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Academic Research Projects in Comparative Politics (i)

Week 8: Academic Research Projects in Comparative Politics (ii)

Week 9: States and Nations, Identity and Nationalism

Week 10: Your Research Projects in Comparative Politics

Week 11: Civil War

Week 12: Poverty and Corruption

Week 13: Political Institutions in Divided Societies

Week 14: Political Institutions: Legislatures, Parties and Party Systems

Week 15: Political Institutions: Electoral Systems

Week 16: Reading Week

Week 17: How to Build the 'Best' Nation(s)- State?

Week 18: Public Opinion and Survey Studies

Week 19: Dissemination of Findings: Presentation of Research & Film Projects

Week 20: New Directions in Comparative Politics & Essay Writing

Week 21: Revision Materials

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand the core concepts, theories and methodologies in comparative politics
- Describe national political systems and their essential elements
- Make critical evaluations of differences between national political systems
- Critically apply the theoretical literature to practical examples
- Gather, organise and deploy evidence, data and information from a variety of secondary and some primary sources
- Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to relevant problems
- Evaluate research material in a critical way
- Develop and present his or her own research projects within the discipline of comparative politics

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

[Specific reading list for the module](#)

Subject specific skills

TBC

Transferable skills

TBC

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Total	150 hours

Type	Required
Private study	132 hours (88%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

TBC

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
3000 Word Essay	100%		Yes (extension)
1,500 word essay			

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Essays are marked according to criteria set out in the Undergraduate Handbook.

Availability

Courses

Course availability information is based on the current academic year, so it may change.

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UPOA-M102 Undergraduate Global Politics (with Integrated Year Abroad at Brussels School of Governance, VUB)