

UNDERGRADUATE MODULE HANDBOOK



Comparative Government – Concepts, Methods and Institutions 2022-23

Lecturer: Dr Dale Mineshima-Lowe
Email: d.mineshima-lowe@bbk.ac.uk

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KEY MODULE INFORMATION

Module Level and Credit Value

Level 4; Credit value: 15

Module Description

The module lays the foundations for other modules to follow at Level 5 and 6. This module splits into two parts. Part One – 'Comparative Government – Concepts, Methods and Institutions' - focuses on the contemporary institutions in democratic state. Part Two (next term) – 'Comparative Government – Processes' focuses on the practices within democratic states. Both parts will utilise the comparative method of case studies (e.g., states) to examine how these political institutions work at present in democratic states as compared authoritarian/non-democratic states.

Comparative Government – Concepts, Methods and Institutions: will focus on introducing students to comparative methods, theoretical approaches and key concepts before focusing on introducing them to contemporary institutions (e.g., judiciaries, legislatures, executives, and bureaucracies.)

Module Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:

- Be familiar with the role of major governmental institutions and their relationship to each other
- Have a broad understanding of the diversity of political systems
- Be able to produce comparative analysis and critically analyse comparative case studies
- Further develop research skills – make use of a wide range of sources of information on government and politics
- Be familiar with academic literature and debates about comparative government and politics
- Have fairly detailed knowledge of government and politics in several countries
- Develop communication skills – both written and oral – in presenting ideas and analysis of contemporary governments

Moodle

This module uses a virtual learning environment known as Moodle, which contains electronic copies of module-related materials, such as PowerPoint presentations and selected readings, as well as preparatory tasks/activities to complete before coming to seminar sessions. Moodle will also provide the principal means of electronic communication between lecturers and students and provide a platform for essay submission and marking. The Moodle base for this module can be accessed at the following address: <http://moodle.bbk.ac.uk> by logging on with your ITS username and password (which you should receive when you have enrolled at Birkbeck).

Module Organisation

Modules are measured in credits with one credit being broadly equivalent to 10 hours of student effort. This time incorporates contact hours and independent study outside of the classroom. Contact hours include lectures and seminars (whether face-to-face or online). Contact hours vary by module; however, as a guide, one credit is broadly equivalent to one hour of contact time e.g. a 15-credit module would involve approximately 15 hours of contact time and a 30-credit module would involve approximately 30 hours of contact time. The balance between lecture and seminar time will vary, with module leaders determining the most effective combination for student learning on their modules.

The delivery arrangements for this module are as follows:

There will be a recorded lecture and live seminar each week over the course of the module. The viewing of the recorded lectures and completion of the key readings set for each week's topic is mandatory and should be completed prior to coming to seminar sessions.

Seminar sessions will be held face-to-face and typically run from 6 – 7.30pm. During this time, you will have the opportunity to ask questions based on the topic/recorded lectures, discussion based on the topic and assigned key readings, and this time will include work individually and in small groups.

Additional / optional activities will be listed within the Moodle site to continue the discussions taking place during seminar sessions, as well as providing another opportunity to engage with your classmates and lecturers on the topics covered – adding comments, asking follow-up questions, and sharing any interesting resources you may find relevant to our topics, that others may also be interested in.

Attendance

Attendance is compulsory. Effective teaching and learning in seminars and lectures depend on all students attending.

If you are unable to attend a class, you should contact your lecturer to explain the circumstances.

If you miss two or more classes in any module you may be advised to meet with your personal tutor, who will help you to address any academic problems that have arisen. Students attending fewer than three quarters of their classes on all modules may be at risk of their registration being terminated. You can view the full Student Engagement and Attendance Policy [here](#).

MODULE CONTACTS

	Name	E-Mail
Module Convenor	Dr Dale Mineshima-Lowe	D.Mineshima-Lowe@bbk.ac.uk
Lecturer	Dr Dale Mineshima-Lowe	
Administrator	Mr Mitch Fryer	UGPolitics@bbk.ac.uk

The lecturer is available to answer your queries about the module.

Please e-mail them with any queries or if you would like to set up a one-to-one meeting, as I do not have scheduled office hours.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The Department believes that student feedback is important to the quality of its teaching. Lecturers and seminar tutor welcome informal feedback in person or via e-mail. It is also possible to provide feedback through the following formal channels.

Class Representatives are elected in the second/third week of the term. They represent the class in the Students' Union and at the Student-Staff Exchange Meetings (see below), and can also approach the programme director or the Head of Department to raise issues on behalf of the class or individual classmates.

Student-Staff Exchange Meetings are scheduled each term. All students are welcome, and class representatives are expected to attend. SSEMs are scheduled to precede Department meetings so that staff can consider their responses to the concerns raised and report back to students on action taken.

A **Module Evaluation Questionnaire** is circulated for each module. The module director examines the issues raised and identifies the follow-up action to be taken. A summary is presented by the Student Liaison Officer at the next Student-Staff Exchange Meeting.

Students are also encouraged to convey any concerns or complaints they have informally to module and programme directors or, if necessary, the Head of Department.

MODULE SYLLABUS

Term 2

***Please note:** there will be no seminar session in Week 2 of term due to lecturer availability. Instead, this module will have two sessions in Week 3 of the term (e.g., 23 and 27 January to cover topics 2 and 3).

Week beginning	Lecture	Seminar
9 January 2023	Introduction to Module/ Topic: Comparing	Key Concepts
23 January 2023	Topic: Comparing	Comparative Methods
27 January 2023	Topic: The State	The State
30 January 2023	Topic: Ruling	Democratic Rule
6 February 2023	Topic: Ruling	Authoritarian Rule
13 February 2023	Reading Week	
20 February 2023	Topic: Codifying	Constitutions
27 February 2023	Topic: Codifying	Judiciaries
6 March 2023	Topic: Leading	Executives
13 March 2023	Topic: Leading	Legislatures
20 March 2023	Topic: Leading	Bureaucracies

READING LIST

Background Reading

Smith, A.G. (2017) *A Comparative Introduction to Political Science. Contention & Cooperation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Caramani, D. (2013) *Comparative Politics*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Drogus, C. A. and Orvis, S. (2011) *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*, 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

** Other earlier editions of our main textbook can also be found / used from our Birkbeck Library Collection – some are e-books and others have multiple copies found in the library's collection in the Malet Street Birkbeck Library.

Week-by-Week Reading

We will be using one key textbook for the module (information found below), along with other supplementary readings and resources from our Birkbeck Library and online sources. These can be found within the weekly tiles in Moodle.

Main Textbook for the module:

Hague, R., Harrop, M., and McCormick, J. (2019) *Comparative Government and Politics – An Introduction*, 11th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Accompanying this book is an excellent set of online resources which are free to use, whether you've bought the book or not. See:

<https://www.redglobeexpress.com/companion/Hague-Harrop-Mccormick-Comparative-Government-And-Politics-11e/>

ASSESSMENT

Assessment scheme

Students on this module are required to complete a number of discrete assignments designed to encourage learning and building on class discussions. The following table provides an overview of required assignments.

Requirement	Due Date	Weight	Description
Essay	16 March 2023 by 12noon	90%	~ 1,500 words; essay questions included at the end of the reading list and posted on Moodle
Seminar Log	23 March 2023 by 12noon	10%	250-words

Word limits include the bibliography. Please do not go beyond the maximum; coursework that breaches the word limit by more than 10% might have marks deducted or might not be marked at all.

Please note that some students may find themselves facing the same deadline for assignments on two or more modules. You are encouraged to pay careful attention to this issue when managing your time so as to avoid working on multiple assignments at the last minute.

Coursework

Essay

Please choose **one** of the following questions:

1. Which would be preferable for a newly forming democratic state, a presidential or parliamentary system of government? Explain why.
2. 'Codified constitutions are the accepted norm globally for newly forming countries.' Identify and discuss the key strengths and challenges of having a codified constitution.
3. Identify and discuss what are the key roles of the state within a democratic state versus an authoritarian state.

Seminar Mark

10% of your grade for this module will be awarded for the successful completion of a 250-word seminar log. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned over the ten weeks of the module. In your seminar log, please write a reflective summary about what you have found interesting and have learned over the entire term. You should identify at least TWO ideas / topics as examples of in your reflection.

Full marks worth 10% will only be allocated for the full submission of the seminar log (ie., non- or partial submissions will receive a zero mark for this assessment).

Submission

Students are required to submit their coursework electronically via Moodle on (or before) the essay submission date.

The deadline time for all coursework is 12 pm (midday) on the date set.

The Department endeavours to maintain anonymity for marking. Students are asked to complete a coursework cover sheet using their student number but not their name. This form should be cut and pasted onto the first page of their essay document. **This file should also be saved using the student number rather than the student name (e.g.**

12106999.doc). This is very important. We cannot identify your submission if you do not do this.

A coursework cover sheet is available on Moodle at:

<https://moodle.bbk.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=516949>

Students are advised to use the Harvard system of referencing but other established systems are acceptable provided they are correctly and consistently employed. For guidance on how to reference books, journal articles, and other material, see:

<https://moodle.bbk.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=520867>

Please keep an electronic and hard backup of the essay for safekeeping.

Late Submission and Mitigating Circumstances

College policy dictates how the Department treats work that is due for assessment but submitted after the submission deadline.

Any piece of assessment that is submitted late and for which no application for consideration of mitigating circumstances (see below) has been accepted will be awarded a mark of no more than the pass mark of 40%. As a courtesy, you should tell your module seminar leader and your administrator if you are going to submit an essay late. However, staff cannot give extensions. Please also note:

There is a two-week cut off for late submissions;

And a 10% deduction for any assignment submitted up to 7 days late, after which it will be capped as usual;

If submitted later than two weeks, the assignment will not be considered for marking

Where an assessment has not been submitted or attended and no application for consideration of mitigating circumstances has been accepted a mark of zero will be awarded.

If your essay or essays are submitted late because of illness or other mitigating factors, you are advised to submit a claim for mitigating circumstances to be considered.

The mitigating circumstances form and procedure is available at

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/documents/MitCircs.pdf> (please read the policy

and guidance carefully). If your evidence is regarded as compelling, penalty marks will be revoked, and the 'merited' mark substituted.

Marks And Feedback

When you submit coursework during the year you can usually expect to receive a mark and feedback on Moodle within three to four working weeks (please note that work submitted *after* coursework deadlines may take significantly longer to mark, depending on the time of year). Please note, however, this turn around for marks and feedback excludes any periods during which Birkbeck is closed (e.g. for Christmas or Easter).

The purpose of all feedback is to help you hone your academic skills and improve your work. Feedback on assessment consists of a mark and information on how you did and suggestions for development that you can reflect on and implement in your next piece of work.

Remember to read the marker's feedback comments carefully – don't just look at the mark!

If you have failed a piece of coursework, you will be expected to resubmit – please see your programme handbook for information on resubmission and retakes. Whether you can resubmit a piece of coursework on the same topic or not depends on the reasons for the resubmission. You should contact your module leader to clarify this before you resubmit.

All marks are provisional until they are approved by the Politics Exam Board.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria: Based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed, the knowledge, understanding and skills markers expect a student to display in the assessment task and which are taken into account in marking the work.

Coursework is assessed according to the following criteria (not in order of importance):

Relevance: the extent to which the work has dealt directly and clearly with the assigned task and focused on the particular intellectual problem posed.

Coverage: the extent to which the work presents an appropriate range of facts and ideas.

Accuracy: the extent to which the information presented is free from factual errors.

Structure and organisation: the extent to which the work demonstrates coherent organisation of the material and presents an overall argument that proceeds logically.

Quality of argumentation and critical evaluation: the extent to which the work provides a critical analysis of the problem and evaluates competing arguments and interpretations rather than offering a purely descriptive or narrative discussion.

Quality of expression and presentation: the extent to which the work makes effective and correct use of the English language and is written in a clear and scholarly style.

Grade descriptors: encapsulate a level of achievement in relation to bands of marks. For individual assignments they indicate how well the assessment criteria have been met.

0-29:	Totally inadequate work, which does not address the question and shows little or no knowledge of the subject, and fails to deal with any of the issues.
30-39:	Inadequate work, which says something relevant to the question, but does not show much evidence of reading or an ability to develop a clear argument.
40-49:	Poor work, which shows some knowledge of the literature and addresses the question, but lacks organisation.
50-59:	Satisfactory work, which shows an awareness of the major issues, shows knowledge of the sources and of alternative approaches to the subject. Does not show a clear understanding of alternative arguments and makes uncritical use of sources.
60-69:	Good work, which treats the issues in a critical and balanced way, and shows an awareness of context, sources and different explanations.
70-79:	Excellent work, which displays exceptional knowledge of the literature and/or a substantial measure of originality.
80-100:	Outstanding work in virtually all areas. Contains substantial evidence of original and independent thought.

Plagiarism And Academic Offences

Demonstrating academic integrity is about demonstrating honesty and trustworthiness in relation to your academic studies, something we expect all of our students to do. This means that we expect all the work you produce for a module to be your own, original work i.e. you must not copy work (in any form) from anyone or anywhere else, including work that you have produced yourself for previous assessments.

Where you want to draw on the work of others you must acknowledge the source correctly according to academic referencing conventions for your programme. Failing to demonstrate integrity in relation to your academic studies is called an assessment offence.

The College takes any instance of an alleged assessment offence very seriously and has an [Assessment Offences Policy](#) that explains what will happen if we suspect you have committed an assessment offence.

Make the most of the [Study Skills resources](#) to support your studies, including [online tutorials on citation and referencing](#).

There are various types of assessment offence.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the presentation of another person's thoughts or words or artefacts or other output in such a way that they could be assumed to be your own. It represents a serious issue in education that impacts on academic standards and undermines the integrity of education, so it is important that it is understood and avoided.

The College uses Turnitin as an originality checking tool. Your work may be run through [Turnitin](#) to help identify potential areas of plagiarism.

The College has a set of [plagiarism guidelines](#), developed for departments by Birkbeck Registry, which are intended to explain what plagiarism is, and how you can avoid it. Speak to a member of staff if you have any concerns or questions.

Collusion

Collusion is defined as producing a piece of work for formal assessment with the assistance of another person, or persons, when the assignment was to have been undertaken and completed by you working individually. This includes cases where two or more students submit work for assessment that is identical in its entirety or in substantial parts.

Contract Cheating (including using 'essay mills')

Contract cheating refers to the submission of work for assessment in part or in entirety using one or more of a range of services provided by a third party. This is prohibited by the College and includes the use of 'essay mills', which commonly take the form of a company or individual that promotes themselves and receives orders via a website and charges a fee to students for completing an assignment or assignments and/or may offer proofreading and copy-editing services. Such companies have become known as 'essay mills', even though they supply more than just essays.

Examination offences

In the case of examinations, any action that could give you an unfair advantage over other students in an examination setting is defined as an examination offence. Examples of offences for face-to-face examinations can include, but are not limited to:

- Taking unauthorised material into the examination room

- Possessing electronic devices, such as mobile phones and smart watches, on your person when in the examination room
- Hiding unauthorised materials in places outside of the examination room
- Removing examination scripts from the examination room
- Communicating with other candidates during the examination
- Copying work from other candidates during the examination
- Assuming a false identity in the examination room
- Adding or amending to examination scripts after the official end of the examination.

Past exams

You can access [past exam papers](#) for both undergraduate and postgraduate modules, to give you a sense of the structure and format of exams and to aid your revision in the library.

READING WEEK

Reading Week

Reading Week is held in each term. Lectures and seminars do not run during the Reading Week, the purpose of which is to give you an opportunity to revise the material covered in the first half of the module and to prepare for the second half. This is also an excellent opportunity for you to make a start on essays and other coursework.

YOUR STUDIES

Personal Tutors

All students have an assigned personal tutor, who are there to provide you with pastoral support. If difficulties arise at work or with family, money, health or anything else that may affect your studies, feel free to set up a meeting with your tutor.

Personal tutors are not counsellors but they can listen to the challenges that you may be facing and they can point you to Birkbeck's Wellbeing Services, which include the Counselling Service, the Mental Health Advisory Service, and the Disability and Dyslexia Service.

Personal tutors are not there to answer very specific questions about essay deadlines or to provide feedback on particular pieces of coursework. Talk to your lecturer or seminar leader in such cases.

You can find out who your personal tutor is and how to contact them to set up a meeting on your MyBirkbeck profile (www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck — click on 'Academic Support').

Student Advice

The Student Advice team is available and ready to answer all your queries, from discussing how you can finance your studies to signposting you to other support services. You can contact us via telephone or ASK and an adviser will be happy to help you.

[Ask us a question via our online form.](#)

You can also phone us on +44 (0)20 3907 0700 during the following times:

Monday to Thursday: 12pm to 6pm

Friday: 12pm to 5pm

Study Skills and Studiosity

The Study Skills Team offer online face-to-face advice, guidance and support to help all Birkbeck students develop the study skills they need for academic success at university. This includes workshops, self-help resources and access to one-to-one appointments with learning development tutors.

At Birkbeck, you can also access Studiosity. This is an online service for all Birkbeck undergraduate and postgraduate students on taught programmes. It gives you assignment feedback and access to live online tutorials.

Subject-specific learning development tutors and coordinators are also here to provide you with additional study skills guidance and support in your subject area.

Wellbeing Services

At Birkbeck we welcome students with disabilities and we are committed to helping you seize the opportunities that studying here presents. Regardless of your condition, our experienced, understanding and welcoming staff are here to support you during your studies

Wellbeing Services encompasses Birkbeck's Counselling Service, Mental Health Advisory Service, and Disability and Dyslexia Service.

Call us on +44 (0) 20 3907 0700 to speak to a Wellbeing Services Administrator. We'll help you get the support you need.

Library

The Birkbeck Library provides a wide range of resources, facilities and services you need to make the most of your study time both on and off campus. Please access the link for full information including contact details for [your subject librarian](#).

Learning Online

[Learning online](#) is a Moodle module accessible through the dashboard or the link above. It is designed to give you advice on how to use the key tools that will be used to deliver teaching online as well as some general advice on how to make use of the online resources available to you.

Birkbeck Futures - Careers and Talent

[Birkbeck Futures](#) is a one-stop service that combines the Careers Service, Enterprise Pathways and Birkbeck Talent to support our students and graduates in their future lives.

Go further in your career with our dedicated services to enhance your skills, develop a business idea and connect with employers for your next career step.

ACCESSING RESOURCES ONLINE

MyBirkbeck or Moodle?



[MyBirkbeck](#)

- ✓ Your applications and enrolments
- ✓ Your teaching timetable
- ✓ Your exam timetable
- ✓ Your modules and marks*
- ✓ Your attendance and ID card swipes
- ✓ Your payment information
- ✓ Your personal tutor details
- ✓ Your Study Support Plan, and information on the academic support we provide

*Please note that marks will only appear here once they have been officially published, usually in July.

- ✓ Pay your fees
- ✓ Upload a photo and order your Birkbeck ID card
- ✓ Request a change to your study status
- ✓ Confirm your modules
- ✓ Submit an ASK query
- ✓ Maintain and update your contact details



Moodle

- ✓ Read your module information including handbooks, reading lists, weekly schedules and messages from tutors
- ✓ View lectures
- ✓ Access Library and IT skills information
- ✓ Participate in discussion groups
- ✓ Submit your coursework
- ✓ View feedback and provisional marks for your coursework*
- ✓ Enrol on study skills workshops
- ✓ Access Moodle support

*Please note that you will have to look on your MyBirkbeck profile to view exam marks and overall module marks. These are normally available in July each year.

APPENDIX

Policy on the Recording of Lectures and Other Teaching Sessions

Please note that the copyright in the lectures and other teaching sessions reside with the teacher responsible for the teaching session. Students may request permission to record any teaching session delivered as part of their programme of study. All such requests should be made prior to the recording to the teacher responsible for the teaching session, and the decision on whether to grant permission is at the discretion of the teacher. Special provisions apply to students with a disability who wish to record teaching sessions. Please see the Disability Office for further details.

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/disability/disability-office>

Recordings of teaching sessions may only be made for the personal and private use of the student making the recording. Students may not: (a) record teaching sessions on behalf of other students; (b) pass such recordings to any other person (except for the purposes of transcription, in which case they can be passed to one person only); and (c) may not publish such recordings in any form (this includes, but is not limited to, the internet and hard copy publication). Where students breach this policy, the College may regard this as a disciplinary offence. All such breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Code of Student Discipline.