

Comparing Political Systems

Introduction to the module

Damien Bol

Lecture 1

Plan

- 1 Content
- 2 Practicalities

Plan

- 1 Content
- 2 Practicalities

What is this module about?

Comparing Political Systems...

- ▶ is really about Comparative Politics

What is Comparative Politics (CP)

- ▶ A subfield of Political Science
- ▶ A research method in Political Science (and beyond)

CP as a subfield

Subfields of Political Science

- ▶ Political Theory (see module: Introduction to Political Theory)
- ▶ International Relations (see module: World Politics since 1945)
- ▶ Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics

- ▶ Largest subfield
- ▶ With many sub-subfields like British Politics (or ANY COUNTRY Politics)
- ▶ Connected to Economics and Political Economy via the method

CP as a subfield

CP is empirical (instead of theoretical)

- ▶ Studies the reality (instead of ideas)
- ▶ Example: “are there more democracies now than 20 years ago? And what is the effect of democracy for economic growth?”
- ▶ Focuses on evidence (instead of normative arguments)
- ▶ Example: “if a government wants to increase growth, it should implement democratic rule” (instead of democracy is good per se)

CP as a research method

What is a research method?

- ▶ Set of techniques that researchers use to conduct a scientific study

What research method in CP?

- ▶ The Comparative Method
- ▶ Studying simultaneously several countries
- ▶ In order to evaluate the effect of “country variables”
- ▶ (See Week 5)

Link to other disciplines

- ▶ Every time a researcher studies a phenomenon at the level of a country
- ▶ They need to use the Comparative Method, coming from CP

What does CP study?

Definition of politics

- ▶ Set of activities associated with the governance of any group of people
- ▶ Most often: of a country's population

Examples

- ▶ A citizen protesting against a dictator
- ▶ A court ruling out a government's bill
- ▶ A party forming a coalition with another one
- ▶ A lobbyist convincing a politician to introduce a bill

Unofficial definition

- ▶ CP as a subfield that study political relationships WITHIN countries

Note on unit of analysis

Focus of CP

- ▶ Countries

Why?

- ▶ Historical: old Western model of nation-states governs the world (still)
- ▶ Example: the United Nations

But the model is declining

- ▶ From the top: international organizations
- ▶ From the bottom: devolution and federalization (see Week 9)

Plan

1 Content

2 Practicalities

Sequence

Part 1: Me

- ▶ Political regimes (+ Week 5 on the comparative method)

Part 2: Fred Ajwang

- ▶ Political institutions (parliaments, governments, courts...)

Part 3: Julian Limberg

- ▶ Political representation (elections, voters, parties...)

Part 4: Julian Limberg

- ▶ Public policy (bureaucracy, interest groups...)

Sequence (2)

Each week

- ▶ One lecture
- ▶ One seminar

Last week of each term

- ▶ Preparing the upcoming assessment

Reading

Lecture

- ▶ Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and James McCormick (2019). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (11th Edition). MacMillan
- ▶ Online for free (see syllabus)
- ▶ One chapter by lecture

Seminar

- ▶ One scientific article (on Keats)
- ▶ One newspaper article (on Keats)

Further reading

- ▶ To prepare essay (see syllabus)

Evaluation

Two exams

- ▶ January and May/June
- ▶ Covering content of lectures and seminars
- ▶ Short questions + long question
- ▶ See sample exam script (to come)

One essay

- ▶ April 28
- ▶ Genuine learning channel, becoming expert in some countries
- ▶ See document “instructions for essay”
- ▶ See sample essays

To finish

If you have any question

- ▶ Forums on Keats

Office hours

- ▶ Monday 10.00 to 11.00 (online, <https://damien-bol.youcanbook.me/>)
- ▶ Tuesday 11.00 to 12.00 (in-person, Bush House NE 9.14)