

Department: International Relations

Faculty: Social Sciences

Course Title: Comparative Politics (MA, Compulsory)

Number of Credits: Four

Course Objectives:

The objective of this course on Comparative Politics (CP) is to introduce students to various facets pertaining to this rich and dynamic field of inquiry. A fundamental concern that informs this effort relates to how we can skill students of International Relations to think and argue comparatively. Commencing with an exposure to contending logics and methodological orientations within the field, the course introduces students to some topics that are of interest to scholars of CP. As a result, students are made aware of debates and research on topics such as democracy, separation of powers in polities, civil society, gender, and challenges that polities face ranging from corruption to ethnic conflicts. A conscious attempt has been made to balance readings that are theoretically oriented along with those that benefit from a solid engagement with empirics, especially from the South Asian region.

Course Structure:

Unit One: Methods, rationale

The opening unit introduces students to what Comparative Politics is, its broad trajectory over the years and the fundamental basis for comparisons as well as the methods that can be employed within the field to operationalize these comparisons within chosen domains of study.

(Weeks 1 and 2))

Unit Two: Democracy

The second unit focuses on democratic systems both from a historical dimension as also from a regional perspective. It examines factors that have led to the success and failures of democratic systems in different countries using the comparative lens. It also looks at the phenomenon of “illiberal democracies” that has shaped the discourse as regards democracies in recent times.

(Weeks 3 and 4)

Unit Three: Unitary and Federal Systems

The viability of a political system is sometimes dependent on how power is located within it. This unit focuses on federal systems - which has been seen by many in South Asia as a suitable system given the diversity one sees in the region. While the first reading will seek to conceptually understand the salience of federal systems,

the subsequent pieces shall look at the efficacy of such a system in different countries.

(Weeks 5 and 6)

Unit Four: Civil Society

No study of domestic politics can be undertaken without an appreciation of the salience of civil society. It has been argued that developments in civil society have important repercussions on issues as wide ranging as social welfare, political stability, and development. This unit examines some of the research that has emerged on the topic.

(Weeks 7 and 8)

Unit Five: Gender and Political Economy

Keeping in mind the fact that students who will be taking this course are those who are interested in studying politics at the international level, this unit examines the interaction between gender and the state and market across various locales in global politics. Through the readings, students will develop an appreciation of how using the gender lens can provide a better understanding of the dynamics between states and nature in the latter's quest for markets. Students are also encouraged to think of the possible linkages between resources and gender relations within states.

(Weeks 9 and 10)

Unit Six: Challenges

This unit looks at some of the common problems that confront states ranging from institutional failure, to corruption, to competitive politics and their negative effects on states across the globe. The readings examine various types of challenges posed to states.

(Weeks 11 and 12)

Reading Suggestions

Bates, Robert (2008), *When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fukuyama, Francis (2001), 'Social capital, civil society and development,' *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1).

Guha, Ramachandra (2007), *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, London: Macmillan.

Huntington, Samuel P. (1965), 'Political Development and Political Decay,' *World Politics*, 17(3).

Kohli, Atul (1997), 'Can Democracies Accommodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*.

Landman, Todd (2009), *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics*, London: Routledge.

Slaughter, Anne Marie (2012), 'Why Women Still Can't Have It All,' *The Atlantic*. Available at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-- women-- still-- cant-- have-- it-- all/309020/>

Suberu, Rotimi (2009), 'Federalism in Africa: The Nigerian Experience in Comparative Perspective,' *Ethnopolitics*, 8 (1).

Sunder, Nandini (2012), 'Civil society and democratic change in Asia,' *CETRI*. Available at <https://www.cetri.be/Civil-society-and-democratic?lang=fr>

Tickner, J.A (1993), 'States and Markets: An Ecofeminist Perspective on International Political Economy,' *International Political Science Review*, 14(1)

Vaishnav, Milan, 'India's democratic marketplace for criminality,' *Seminar*. Available at <https://vaishnavmilan.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/seminar-article-combined.pdf>