



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2020

3,305: Comparative Politics

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Central - Written examination (50%, 60 mins.)

Examination time: inter-term break

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (50%)

Examination time: term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[3,305,1.00 Comparative Politics](#) -- Englisch -- [Freyburg Tina](#)

[3,305,2.01 Comparative Politics: Exercises, Group 1](#) -- Englisch -- [O'Flynn Ciaran](#)

[3,305,2.02 Comparative Politics: Exercises, Group 2](#) -- Englisch -- [O'Flynn Ciaran](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

No formal prerequisites. Basic knowledge of political science concepts and methods would be an asset.

The present course [5,310 'Comparative Politics'] is held in English and will be assessed in English. Sollten Sie bevorzugen, den Kurs in Deutsch zu besuchen, so wählen Sie bitte den Pflichtkurs 5,308 'Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft.'

Students with special needs are kindly asked to identify themselves to the lecturer so that together we can think over how to best accompany them according to their Needs.

Learning objectives

The course provides invaluable skills and knowledge for anyone seeking to develop familiarity with some of the major issues in Comparative Politics and the practical skills in critically evaluating political systems worldwide.

The goal is to equip students of International Affairs with the foundation necessary to analyse politics within and across political systems in their research and to become critical consumers of political analyses in the news media, in policy reports, and in academic research.

The following learning objectives should be attained after successful completion of both the lecture and the associated exercise groups:

- Students have a thorough knowledge and understanding of key concepts and issues in Comparative Politics;
- Students show the ability to apply comprehensive knowledge (concepts, theories, and empirics) when addressing academic and real-world problems;
- Students demonstrate proficiency in critically evaluating scholarly work in comparative research.

Course content

Comparative Politics is one of the three main subfields of political science, alongside Political Theory and International Relations. Whereas Political Theory deals with normative and theoretical issues, Comparative Politics deals principally with empirical questions. Similarly, unlike International Relations it is concerned primarily with interactions within, rather than between, political systems. As a discipline it therefore deals with the very essence of politics where sovereignty resides (within the state),



focusing on where power is located, the institutional organization of political systems, and authoritative decisions that affect the community as a whole. For this reason, Comparative Politics constitutes one of the oldest branches of political science.

The basic ideas of Comparative Politics are (1) that politics varies across political systems: it works similarly in some ways and differently in others; and (2) that comparing the inner functioning of political systems over time and across systems teaches us a great deal about why they work the way they do and with what effect. This course focuses on the study of five major building blocks of political systems: (1) government systems; (2) electoral systems; (3) party systems; (4) constitutions, and (5) interest groups. We first study these essential components of any system in terms of general knowledge and analytical challenges. We then zoom into two political systems that currently face important challenges and are subject to profound change: The United Kingdom/UK (e.g. Brexit) and the United States of America/USA (e.g. Trump government and presidential elections). Each case study showcases a clear connection between a specific political system and particular thematic questions. For instance, we ask what the unwritten constitution means for an ordered Brexit of the UK, and in what way the checks & balances may prevent any US president from abusing executive power. Such an approach shows students how to connect the dots from the conceptual to the factual with concrete illustrations and by demonstrating how political scientists go about asking and answering topical questions.

The course thus takes an integrative approach to the relationship between big themes and empirical-analytical research. In addition to the discussion of substantial questions in Comparative Politics ("empirical knowledge"), we will reflect on how to study these questions with rigid scientific research ("methodological knowledge") to produce and test reliable and valid arguments that can be generalized beyond the studied cases ("theoretical knowledge"). Students will be required to identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of politics. This will ensure that students develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, political institutions, and political processes.

Note: While this course is an 'introduction' to Comparative Politics, this does not mean that the material covered will be easy. Indeed, many of the concepts and methods introduced in this class may well be more complicated than those addressed in upper-level classes. 'Introduction' simply means that the material addressed in this class is foundational and will allow students to better understand the subject matter examined in upper level classes.

Course structure

The course is designed to support a **flipped-classroom learning style**. It includes three key components: the online blog on Canvas, lectures, and exercise groups.

An online blog on the Canvas platform introduces students to key concepts and issues of Comparative Politics and challenges them with online discussion questions that they must solve individually. The five online chapters relate to pivotal building blocks of political systems, namely government systems, electoral systems, party systems, constitutions, and interest groups. The blog provides condensed introductions to the chapter theme, identifies key challenges and controversies in existing scholarly research, and prepares the theoretical and empirical ground for the lecture sessions and exercise group meetings.

The lecture expands on this preliminary foundation by asking students to apply the knowledge of these five chapters to a specific case study, either the UK or the USA. To this end, we split the class in two groups, each of which discusses questions emerging from the five chapters by taking the political system of the UK or the USA, respectively. Each group meets on a bi-weekly basis, using the meeting-free weeks for preparation and study. For students to have access to group discussions of both case studies, we pair UK group members and USA group members with the task of mutual exchange and discussion; each paired team also writes a 'one-pager' summarizing each of their respective US or UK-focused lectures, which we make available to all students on Canvas (the aim is to not only highlight and foster collaborative effort, but to transfer and deepen knowledge of both the US and UK issue areas). Using the latest research in the field of comparative politics, we examine competing answers to substantively important questions and evaluate the proposed arguments for their logical consistency and empirical accuracy. Active attendance during lectures is essential for a successful completion of the course. Students will be provided guidance on how to prepare for the exam during lectures.

The exercise groups flip the class even further, when student teams are asked to stimulate and lead the critical evaluation of journal articles in class. Through this set-up, students build their confidence to deliver their thoughts and ideas in a semi-improvisation setting, that is supported by careful preparation and research. Exercise group meetings provide opportunities for students to practice how to critically assess scholarly work. Meetings are discussion-based. Participation should reflect solid preparation - having attended lectures, done the required readings for the meeting's topic, thought about the material and done the best to understand it. Constructive participation includes not only providing thoughtful answers to questions posed by the lecturer and the respective student expert group but also asking questions about material that one has struggled to understand. Half of the journal articles to discuss present studies taking the political system of the UK as empirical case, the other half centres



on questions related to the case of the USA. Students will receive qualitative feedback on their group review presentation, which shall help them when working on their individual review paper.

Course literature

A reader will be made available through Canvas.

For introductions and overviews, see:

- Boix, C. and S. Stokes (eds) (2009) *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford UP.
- Caramani, D. (2020, 5. edition) *Comparative Politics*. Oxford UP.

For information on the case studies, see:

- O'Neil, P., K. Fields and D. Share (2018) *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. Norton.

Additional course information

Tina Freyburg is Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of Economics and Political Sciences at the University of St.Gallen. She currently serves as the academic director for the MA programme "International Affairs and Governance." In her research she explores the chances and challenges that emerge for democracy in a globalized and digitalized world. Please visit her personal website for more information: www.tina-freyburg.eu

Ciaran O'Flynn is PhD candidate at the chair of Comparative Politics. He is the teaching assistant for this class and leads the exercise group meetings. In his PhD research, he studies the interplay between politicisation and structural power, focussing on how this interplay affects issues such as monetary policy, international tax governance, and transgovernmental banking networks.

In the case of the President's Board having to implement new directives due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in AS2020, the course information listed above will be changed as follows:

- The course is conducted online via the platform zoom;
- The recordings of the course will not be saved;
- The lecturer informs via Canvas on the changed implementation modalities of the course;
- There are no changes necessary to the course information.

The examination information listed below would be changed as follows:

- The group presentation will be submitted as voice-over power point presentation;
- There are no changes necessary to the centrally organized exam;
- There are no further changes necessary to the examination formats;
- Further information are communicated via Canvas.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination time and form

Central - Written examination (50%, 60 mins.)

Examination time: inter-term break

Remark

sit-in examination

Examination-aid rule

Extended Closed Book

The use of aids is limited; any additional aids permitted are exhaustively listed under "Supplementary aids". Basically, the



following is applicable:

- At such examinations, all the pocket calculators of the Texas Instruments TI-30 series and mono- or bilingual dictionaries (no subject-specific dictionaries) without hand-written notes are admissible. Any other pocket calculator models and any electronic dictionaries are inadmissible.
- In addition, any type of communication, as well as any electronic devices that can be programmed and are capable of communication such as notebooks, tablets, mobile telephones and others, are inadmissible.
- Students are themselves responsible for the procurement of examination aids.

Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination time and form

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (50%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

critical review of journal articles, oral & written

Examination-aid rule

Term papers

Term papers must be written without anyone else's help and in accordance with the known quotation standards, and they must contain a declaration of authorship which is a published template in StudentWeb.

The documentation of sources (quotations, bibliography) has to be done throughout and consistently in accordance with the chosen citation standard such as APA or MLA.

For papers in law, the legal standard is recommended (by way of example, cf. FORSTMOSER, P., OGOREK R. et SCHINDLER B., *Juristisches Arbeiten: Eine Anleitung für Studierende*, newest edition respectively, or according to the recommendations of the Law School).

The indications of the sources of information taken over verbatim or in paraphrase (quotations) must be integrated into texts in accordance with the precepts of the applicable quotation standard, while informative and bibliographical notes must be added as footnotes (recommendations and standards can be found, for example, in METZGER, C., *Lern- und Arbeitsstrategien*, newest edition respectively).

For any work written at the HSG, the indication of the page numbers is mandatory independent of the chosen citation standard. Where there are no page numbers in sources, precise references must be provided in a different way: titles of chapters or sections, section numbers, acts, scenes, verses, etc.

Supplementary aids

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Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Examination content

[1] Central - **Written examination** (50%, 60 mins.)

Learning objectives 1 and 2 are assessed through a central exam, consisting of two parts. The *first part* assesses students' knowledge and understanding of key concepts and issues in Comparative Politics through a series of multiple-choice questions.



The *second part* assesses students' ability to apply conceptual, theoretical and empirical knowledge in Comparative Politics when answering one essay question, out of two provided. The selected question must be addressed using insights from both the US and the UK case studies.

[2]Decentral - **examination paper written at home** (individual) (50%)

Learning objective 3 is assessed through the critical evaluation of two different journal articles. For the *first review*, students are divided into "expert groups" at the beginning of the term. These groups then contribute expert input (max. 10 min.) to the exercise group discussions on the research article that is mandatory for preparing the meeting for which they signed up. They further prepare questions to stimulate class discussion. The *second review* takes the form of an individually written critique of a journal article (1'000 words) and is due by December 31 (17:00 CET). For this second review, students select an article from a list of pivotal journal articles that is made available through Canvas. The review must be written from the perspective of a potential ad hoc reviewer for a journal - critical, constructive and realistic.

Examination relevant literature

Material covered on the exam are provided through Canvas. All basic material will be made available by the start of term and complemented with additional material as we go.

Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW51) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 42 are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 34 (Thursday, 20 August 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 12 October 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 12 October 2020);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before the end of the registration period in CW 44 (Thursday, 29 October 2020).