



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Autumn Semester 2024

3,305: Comparative Politics

ECTS credits: 4

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (33%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Oral examination and technical discussions, Analog, Group work group grade (17%)

Examination time: Term time

central - Written examination, Digital, Individual work individual grade (50%, 60 mins.)

Examination time: Lecture-free period

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[3,305.1.00 Comparative Politics](#) -- English -- [Srijbis Oliver](#)

[3,305.2.01 Comparative Politics: Exercises, Group 1](#) -- English -- [Krishnan Pradeep](#)

[3,305.2.02 Comparative Politics: Exercises, Group 2](#) -- English -- [Krishnan Pradeep](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

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

The present course [3,305 '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 3,304 '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.

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 major building blocks of political systems, namely: states and nations; democracy; government systems; electoral systems and party systems. We first study these essential components of any system in terms of general knowledge and analytical challenges. We then zoom into political systems through the analysis of single cases or country comparisons. Each case study or comparative analysis showcases a clear connection between existing political systems and particular thematic questions. 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 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 identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between aspects of politics. In doing so, they 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 and indications of the learning and teaching design

The course is designed to support a "**flipped-classroom**"-learning style. It includes three key components: the online blog on Canvas, lectures, and the meetings of the 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 online chapters relate to the pivotal building blocks of political systems that we cover in this course. 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 applying the knowledge of these chapters to a specific case study or country comparisons. 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 as well.

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. 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. (ed., 2020) *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

Oliver Strijbis is Professor of Political Science at Franklin University Switzerland and affiliated researcher at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Zürich (IPZ). His research focuses on direct democracy, elections, migration and nationalism. You can find more information on his personal homepage: www.oliverstrijbis.com

Pradeep Krishnan is a PhD researcher at the Department of Politics at the University of St. Gallen, where he explores political attitude formation and political behavior using experimental approaches.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	33%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark

Examination paper written at home

Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/3)

Examination modalities



Examination type	Oral examination and technical discussions
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	17%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Group discussion

Examination-aid rule

Open Book

Students are free to choose aids, apart from the following restrictions:

- pocket calculator models which are not part of the Texas Instruments TI-30 series, as well as any programmable electronic devices that are capable of communication such as electronic dictionaries, notebooks, tablets, smartphones, headsets, additional screens, etc. are not admissible;
- there is an option for faculty members to explicitly define exceptions under supplementary aids.

Procuring any aids, as well as ensuring their working order, is the exclusive responsibility of students.

Supplementary aids

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3. Examination sub part (3/3)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written examination
Responsible for organisation	central
Examination form	Written exam
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Lecture-free period
Examination execution	Synchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	50%
Duration	60 mins.

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

Final written examination

Examination-aid rule

Closed Book



The use of aids is prohibited as a matter of principle, with the exception of pocket calculator models of the Texas Instruments TI-30 series and, in case of non-language exams, bilingual dictionaries without any handwritten notes. Any other aids that are admissible must be explicitly listed by faculty members in the paragraph entitled "Supplementary aids" of the course and examination fact sheet; this list is exhaustive.

Procuring any aids, as well as ensuring their working order, is the exclusive responsibility of students.

Supplementary aids

The examination will be conducted as a digital examination with the following admissible media:

- **Private notebook** (compulsory) – no tablets!
- **Mains adapter** (compulsory)
- External computer mouse (optional)
- External computer keyboard (optional)

We would like to point out explicitly that the examination cannot be taken with tablets/iPads.

You will need the following for the examination:

- Appliance and system requirements: [cf. StudentWeb](#)
- Special software: [LockDown Browser](#)
- HSG log-in including access modalities
- WLAN – operational access to Eduroam

Please make sure that

- all the updates have been carried out before the examination.
- In the run-up to digitally conducted examinations, technical tests (mock examinations without grades) are carried out. Participation is urgently required!
- You yourself are responsible for the perfect working order of your appliance, [cf. also StudentWeb](#).
- Keyboard stickers in the language in which the examination is conducted (such as English, German, as well as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, etc. in language examinations) are permitted. The stickers must be identical with the original characters of the language concerned.

Any use of additional appliances that are not listed above will be strictly prohibited throughout the examination.

Any necessary actions with another software or additional appliances require the express prior approval of the persons in charge of the examination and are only permitted under supervision.

Any infringement of these rules of conduct may be sanctioned as an infringement of the rules of the University.

Examination content

[1] Central - **Final written examination** (individual, 50%, 60 mins.)



Learning objectives 1 and 2 are assessed by 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 the 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 the case studies or comparative analyses covered in the course.

[2] Decentral - **Group discussion** (group, 17%)

Learning objective 3 is assessed through the critical evaluation of scientific journal articles. For the *first review* exercise, students are divided into "expert groups" at the beginning of the term. These groups are then expected to 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 discussion in class.

[3] Decentral - **Examination paper written at home** (individual, 33%)

The *second review* exercise takes the form of an individually written critique of a journal article (max. 1'000 words) and must be submitted electronically by December 31 (17:00 CET). For this second review, students choose one article from the class which they have not already discussed with their group for the *first review*. This *second review* must be written from the perspective of a potential reviewer for a scientific 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. All material will be uploaded at the end of the lecture period (at the latest).

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 43 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, 22nd August 2024);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 42 (Monday, 14. October 2024);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 43 (Monday, 21 October 2024);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 45 (Monday, 04 November 2024).