



POE214 Introduction to Comparative Politics

Fall Term 2023 modified for dual delivery



Comparative politics considers political structures – organizations, institutions, processes – and political agency – the beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups. Structure and agency interact like a mobius loop.

Instructor

David Last, BA(Hon)RMC, MA(Carleton), MMAS (USA CGSC), PhD (LSE), LCol (Ret'd) CD, *plsc, cgsc*

Phone: +1(613)532-3002 mobile, voice, SMS, FaceTime, WhatsApp

Email: last-d@rmc.ca, dmlast@mac.com, lastdav@gmail.com

Website: www.davidmlast.ca

Office: G406

Office hours: daily by appointment (send a text to confirm). Normally on-site Mondays 1400 to Fridays 1300 in the fall term.

Acknowledgement

Wherever we study, we acknowledge the significance of the land to the indigenous people who lived and continue to live upon it, and we express our gratitude to be able to live and learn here. We recognize that knowledge and teaching in all traditions and all forms are essential to real education. Comparative politics is a way to understand through comparison. If it gives us any power to understand the causes of things, to evaluate what works and for whom, then it confers on us a responsibility to use that knowledge for positive ends. As teachers, students, researchers, leaders, and public servants we seek to improve politics and society in the public interest.

Textbook and readings

Dickovick, J. Tyler, Eastwood, Jonathan Eastwood and MacDonald, David (2020). 1st Canadian Edition. *Comparative Politics: Integrating Theories, Methods, and Cases*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199026548

Additional readings will be available online.

Course description

“The course will commence with an overview of the many different and competing theories of comparative politics and will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each framework. In so doing, discussion will take place on the key issues in comparative politics. The course will also explore the increasing variety of measures employed in comparisons of the major regions and countries of the world. During the latter portion of the course, each student will select one country as a brief case study.” (RMC Undergraduate Calendar, 2020)

Course summary

Comparative politics is both a field of study, and a method for approaching questions. It is a field because we compare actors, processes, and issues of interest. It is a method because we cannot conduct experiments in the social sciences and must therefore organize observations and data

in useful (comparative) ways to make sense of the world around us. There are three modules to the course.

Module 1: Theories and Approaches to Comparative Politics will begin with an overview of the course. Students will then conduct a comparative exercise which illustrates process tracing and historical institutionalism as approaches to comparative politics. In 2023 the exercise will draw on Tony Judt's book, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* for case studies of the collapse of Communism in Poland, Russia, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Each student will be assigned to one case. The module will then explore alternative theories and approaches (week 3), sources of data, and forms of research design (week 4) in comparative politics.

Module 2: Comparing Actors and Institutions (weeks 5, 6, 7) will begin with an examination of states as objects of study in time series and cross-sectional perspective. An institution is a way of organizing social behaviour, and we will consider culture, social capital, democracy, and civil military relations from the perspective of both actors (who acts) and institutions (how are those actions organized). Policy is a central function of government, and we will consider methods of policy comparison and evaluation, and comparative aspects of equality, security, and stability.

Module 3: Comparing Ideas and Processes (weeks 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) will begin with ideologies and social movements. Those interested in comparative religions will be able to address them as ideologies – systematic sets of belief that describe, explain, and prescribe collective action. Week 9 will consider development and revolutions. Weeks 10, 11, and 12 will apply comparative methods to conflict and violence—non-violent contention and contentious politics, wars and violence, and the grey zone between positive peace and overt war.

Course objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Formulate research questions that employ the comparative method.
2. Articulate key concepts in comparative politics (for example, regime types, electoral integrity, social capital etc.), and identify and employ appropriate measures of them.
3. Identify reliable and valid sources of information and data.
4. Design avenues of research employing comparative methods, including both Small-N and Large-N comparisons.
5. Compare key government institutions between cases, including executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, models of multi-level governance and electoral and party systems.
6. Articulate various dimensions of political culture, including ideologies, social capital, political behaviour.
7. Explain the forces of change in cases, including regime change, economic and political development, social change, contentious politics, and violence.

Degree-level expectations (RMC IQAP)

Ontario Degree-Level Expectations	RMC Degree-Level Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop depth and breadth of knowledge • expand knowledge of methodologies, research and scholarship • extend the level of application of knowledge • develop communication skills • deepen autonomy and professional capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquire an understanding of civics and the structure of the Canadian government • increase knowledge of international affairs • increase understanding of ethics and leadership

Evaluation

Activity	Due Date	Weight
Participation and quizzes	Weekly	10 percent
Assignment 1 – Module 1	Friday of week 4	20 percent
Assignment 2 – Module 2	Friday of week 7	20 percent
Assignment 3 – Module 3	Friday of week 12	20 percent
Final exam	In hall, during exam routine	30 percent

Course Evaluation Components

Participation will be evaluated by the quality and quantity of relevant verbal and written contributions in weekly quizzes and discussions in class and online.

Quizzes test specific knowledge of content provided each week. They will typically be completed on Moodle with immediate feedback and may be redone for improved marks.

The three written assignments are intended to test specific learning objectives related to each module. Formats and marking rubrics are provided on the course site.

Assignment 1 addresses the cases examined in week 2 and the methods discussed in weeks 2-4.

Assignments 2 and 3 require research proposals defining a research question and specifying sources of data, methods of analysis, and theoretical approaches to problems related to the subject matter addressed in the modules.

The final exam includes short answer and essay questions. A practice exam with a pool of exam questions will be available for discussion by week 12.

All course work must be completed prior to the end of the term (5 Dec) regardless of whether it is submitted for marks or not.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic ethics, is a serious academic infraction for which penalties may range from a recorded caution to expulsion from the College. The RMCC Academic Regulations Section 23 defines plagiarism as: “Using the work of others and attempting to present it as original thought, prose or work. This includes failure to appropriately acknowledge a source, misrepresentation of cited work, and misuse of

quotation marks or attribution.” It also includes “the failure to acknowledge that work has been submitted for credit elsewhere.” All students should consult the published statements on Academic Misconduct contained in the Royal Military College of Canada Undergraduate Calendar, Section 23.”

“Assignments in this course are subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the Royal Military College of Canada. All assignments submitted will be retained as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of ascertaining the originality of current and future assignments submitted to the system.” Please note that this protects your work against being copied by others.

Written assignments must acknowledge use of artificial intelligence software, e.g., ChatGPT, Aiyla, Grammarly, OpenAI, and smart word-processing. Any block of text copied from a content generator like ChatGPT must be included in quotation marks and referenced to the software source with a link. Failure to do so may be construed as an academic integrity violation.

Course Schedule

The course will be delivered over 13 weeks in the fall semester, 5 Sep 2023 to 5 Dec 2023. Accommodations may be made for periods of disruption due to unforeseen circumstances. The course is scheduled for synchronous delivery on Wednesdays and Fridays, but all work may be completed asynchronously if necessary.

The course is designed for hybrid or dual delivery online and on-site, to accommodate personal or collective exigencies (illness, pandemic, cyber-attack, varsity sports, climate emergency, scheduling conflicts, zombie apocalypse, or other impediments). Speak to the instructor if you face circumstances requiring accommodation.

Semester Plan

The course is lecture-based, with Wednesday’s double period normally consisting of a lecture, and Friday’s single period normally consisting of a seminar-discussion or exercise. Students are expected to be prepared for the discussion. Roles may be assigned for discussions or exercises. Lectures will normally be recorded and may be uploaded in advance for asynchronous sessions.

Contingency plans

Students will be asked to provide civilian email and cellphone contacts for use if RMC means of communication are interrupted. Alternate means for synchronous delivery will be Zoom (ID: 774-488-6847, Password 330012) or Big Blue Button linked to Moodle. If Moodle becomes unavailable for more than 48 hours, readings will be provided on a Google Drive or Dropbox link. Students may request readings or links from the instructor at any time.

Student-centred learning

My first concern is for your wellbeing and learning as individuals and as future officers. I am always available for students. Don’t hesitate to contact me if you need help on the course, advice, or support for any aspect of life at RMC. This includes evenings and weekends.

Schedule, Objectives, and Readings (subject to adjustment – Moodle version supercedes)

All readings outside the textbook will be found on Moodle, with the instructor website as an alternate.

Week	Lesson Objectives and Assignments	Readings / references
Module 1: Theories and Approaches to Comparative Political Science		
1	<p>What is comparative politics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain where comparative politics fits within the field of political studies - Explain the general comparative method - Differentiate Static and dynamic comparisons - Differentiate normative and empirical comparisons - Differentiate qualitative and quantitative methods 	<p>Week 1 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovick pp.1-7</p> <p>Orvis 2-35</p> <p>Siaroff, Ch. 1</p>
2	<p>Comparative Exercise – Collapse of Communism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the uses of history - Describe events data and coding - Relate events data to history - Describe process tracing - Describe path analysis - Describe historical institutionalism - Explain how history and political science differ - Apply process tracing and historical institutionalism to a case 	<p>Week 2 presentation and notes</p> <p>Judt (2005) Postwar, Ch.19 (Moodle)</p> <p>Sage dictionary</p> <p>Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism</p>
3	<p>Theory and Approaches to Comparative Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain what theory is - Identify the characteristics of a good theory (for purposes) - Differentiate between modes of inference (induction, deduction, abduction) - Differentiate between verification and falsification - Classify main approaches and research traditions in comparative politics - Explain Sartori’s ladder of abstraction and levels of theory - Apply a suitable approach to your research problem 	<p>Week 3 presentation and notes</p> <p>Godfrey-Smith, 1-18</p> <p>King, section 1.2.2</p> <p>Sage Dictionary, Theory (three entries)</p> <p>Lichbach, 3-14</p> <p>Boix, introduction</p> <p>Blaikie, Ch. 7 (extracts)</p> <p>Kahwati, (extracts)</p>
4	<p>Data and Research Designs for Comparative Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the connection between theory, hypothesis, and evidence - Differentiate between correlation and causation - Explain ethnocentrism as a barrier to analysis - Explain the process of thinking comparatively - Explain the process of designing case study research - Explain criteria for claiming causality - Differentiate between cross-sectional and time-series research designs - Apply research design to your research problem <p>Assignment 1 due Friday of Week 4</p>	<p>Week 4 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovic pp. 7-18, 20-36</p> <p>Saldaña, Chapter 1</p> <p>Boix 90-182, 186-208 (tbc)</p> <p>Skocpol, Ch. 12</p>
Module 2: Comparing Actors and Institutions		
5	<p>States and State Characteristics in Comparative Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the state system in time series - Compare functions of states and markets over time - Compare world-system and realist perspectives on the state - Develop a cross-sectional comparison of state characteristics - Develop a time-series comparison of national development for a state 	<p>Week 5 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovic, Ch.3,4,5,6,7</p> <p>Bobbitt, extracts</p> <p>Siaroff, Table 2.2</p> <p>Orvis, Ch. 2</p> <p>Barany, extracts</p>
Due to the fall break, Week 6 will be conducted asynchronously 8-20 October		
6	<p>Institutions in Comparative Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe and critique universal political functions (executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative functions; succession mechanisms, legitimation, participation, civil military relations, security oversight) 	<p>Week 6 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovic, Ch.8,9,10,11</p> <p>Orvis Ch. 5, 6</p> <p>Siaroff, Ch. 2, 3</p>

Week	Lesson Objectives and Assignments	Readings / references
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe political culture and social capital as analytic tools - Compare the time series evolution of a political function - Compare how a function works in two or more polities 	
7	<p>Public Policies in Comparative Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify policies and outcomes suitable for comparative analysis - Identify theories related to policy development and implementation - Compare policy evaluation designs in the context of real-world evidence-based policy <p>Assignment 2 is due on Friday of Week 7</p>	<p>Week 7 presentation and notes</p> <p>Orvis, Ch. 12</p> <p>Yanow, extracts</p> <p>Pawson, Ch. 2</p>
Module 3: Comparing Ideas and Processes		
8	<p>Comparing Ideologies and Social Movements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify ideologies, philosophies, and elements of political culture suitable for comparative analysis - Identify theories related to comparison of ideas - Compare ideas in time series and cross-sectional analysis - Identify political processes suitable for comparative analysis (e.g. economic and political development, elections, political participation) - Identify theories related to comparison of political processes - Compare processes in time series and cross-sectional analysis 	<p>Week 8 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovic, Ch.5, 6, 7, 12, 15</p> <p>Summary – Moore, Acemoglu, Downing</p> <p>Goldstone</p> <p>Rueda, extracts</p> <p>Mügge</p> <p>Silva</p>
Due to the ISMS Conference (www.isofms.org) week 9 will be conducted asynchronously		
9	<p>Development and Revolution in comparative perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the ideological component of development theory - Compare Marxist and capitalist concepts of development - Define revolution - Identify comparative dimensions of revolution - Conceptualize development and revolution as processes 	<p>Week 9 presentation and notes</p> <p>Dickovic, Ch.5, 12</p> <p>Siaroff, Ch. 2</p> <p>Siaroff, Ch. 5</p> <p>Institute for Economics and Peace</p>
10	<p>Comparing forms of contention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify contentious politics suitable for comparative analysis (e.g. wars, revolutions, coups, protest movements) - Identify theories related to contention - Compare contention in time series and cross-sectional analysis 	<p>Week 10 presentation and notes</p> <p>Chenoweth, extracts</p> <p>ICNC</p> <p>Dickovick, Ch.12</p> <p>Luttwak, 1-13, annexes</p> <p>Orvis, Ch. 7</p>
11	<p>Comparing wars and violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differentiates states of war and peace - Operationalize positive and negative peace - Identify comparative datasets on conflict and violence - Discuss methods for comparison of war and violence 	<p>Week 11 presentation and notes</p> <p>Galtung, Ch.17, extracts</p> <p>SIPRI</p> <p>World Bank</p> <p>ACLED</p> <p>Conflict Research Society</p>
12	<p>Grey Zone Conflict and Hybrid War</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the problem of bifurcating peace and conflict - Relate grey zone conflict to events data (module 1) - <p>Assignment 3 is due by Friday of Week 12</p>	<p>Week 12 presentation and notes</p> <p>Last and Zakowska</p>
Review and Exam Preparation		
13	<p>Review</p> <p>All written work must be submitted by 5 December</p>	

Final Exam

The format and content of the final exam will be discussed in week 11. Normally, the pink slides in each set of weekly notes will identify the key terms for short answers (define and explain the significance) and the seminar questions on green slides will highlight analytical subjects for essay questions. Sample questions and answer outlines will be posted. An exam review may be scheduled during the exam period on student request.

References

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