

Course Title	: Theories and Approaches of Comparative Politics
Course Code	: MIA502
No. of Credits per Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Seminar
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours per week
Category	: MAIA programme required
Discipline	: Nil
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course attempts a general survey in the field of comparative politics. Some important concepts and methods of the discipline are introduced. Specific topics include methods and approaches of comparative politics; government, regime and state; unitary, federal and confederal systems; typologies of state-society relations, specifically on bureaucratic-authoritarianism, totalitarianism, corporatism, civil society and populism; political culture and nationalism; interest group and political party; election and political participation; parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems; comparative democracies between majoritarian and consociational model; and lastly on the topic of democratization and regime change.

Aims

This course surveys the leading theories and approaches within the field of comparative politics. Students will learn the relevant theories and approaches so that they will be able to connect their own research to broad disciplinary concerns. Students will be able to analyze political phenomena and events in a comparative manner if they put enough efforts in this course.

Learning Outcomes (LOs)

Students should be able to:

1. Critically evaluate alternative explanations and theories in the field of comparative politics and their applications to different national contexts.
2. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of these theories and their limitations in application.
3. Apply these learned methods, concepts, theories and approaches to understand the real world and to their own research.

Teaching Method

Seminar approach with lectures, presentations and discussions mixed; with an expectancy of high interaction between students and instructor in a lively learning environment and resulted in a better learning outcome.

Assessment

Reading (10%):

- Students are required to read the weekly reading materials uploaded to Moodle (usually one long piece or two short pieces) before the class.
- Students will be randomly called up to share their understanding of the reading in every lecture

Attendance and Participation (10%):

- Attendance is **COMPULSORY**
- **Each absence counts 1% off the total 10%, except that the absence is reasoned before the class through email, with related evidence provided.**
- However, students can make up their absence(s) by participation in the following formats:
 - Students' contributions to in-class debates and discussion
 - Contributions in classes include asking questions, sharing information and opinions, offering constructive analyses and criticisms
 - Informed discussion is based on everybody's regular reading and review of our covered topics.

Presentation (20%):

- A group of 7-8 students present on one topic to be listed on Moodle by **September 14**.
- 35-40 minutes presentation in the second half of the lecture starting from **October 5**.
- Each student should find **their own partners and get ready for a 5-minute presentation**.
- All groups should be formed by **September 21**.
- Post your presentation outline on **Moodle ONE day** before your presentation.
- Questions and discussion will follow the presentation.
- The grading is based on content, organization and effectiveness of the presentation as well as the afterwards leading of discussion by the presenters.

Term paper (30%):

- Students are asked to write a group term paper based on their group presentation. The key is to develop a research question, analyze and discuss this question in a logical and clear manner, with appropriate footnoting and referencing.
- Each student is required to write at least **500 words** for the group paper.
- The term paper should be typed in a Word file in Times New Roman, font size 12, double space and around **3500-4000 words** in length (i.e., 3500 words for a 7-person group; 4000 words for a 8-person group). Students only need to submit a soft (PDF form) copy to **Moodle Turnitin (one group submitting only one paper)**. The deadline of this term paper is **December 14, Saturday**. More details will be explained in class.
- Grading is mainly based on soundness of the research question, clear logic flow of the argument and convincing evidence provided. For more details, refer to the assessment rubric.

Final examination (30%):

- Closed book exam on **December 7, Saturday**.
- The final exam will be held in the lecture classroom and it tests students' overall understanding of related concepts and theories as well as empirical knowledge of different countries.
- The exam also tests whether students could apply their learned knowledge to understand the real world.
- If you need a special examination arrangement (only with justifiable reasons), please inform Dr. Wu earlier and seek for approval.
- Exam date and details will be further announced.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (September 14): What is Comparative Politics?

1st half the lecture:

- What is politics?
- Why does it matter?

2nd half the lecture:

- Comparative politics
- Theories and Methods

Week 2 (September 21): Dictatorship

1st half the lecture:

- What is dictatorship?
- Different types of dictatorship

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the authoritarian ruling of North Korea, Mainland China, Singapore

Week 3 (September 28): Democracy

1st half the lecture:

- What is democracy?
- Different types of democracy

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the democratic systems of the US, the UK, and France

Week 4 (October 5): Political Parties

1st half the lecture:

- What is political party?
- Different types of political parties

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the political party systems of Mainland China, Singapore, Japan, the US, Russia, and Germany

Week 5 (October 12): Electoral Systems

1st half the lecture:

- What is political election?
- Different types of electoral systems

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the electoral systems of Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Thailand, the US, and France

Week 6 (October 19): State-Society Relations

1st half the lecture:

- What is civil society?
- Different types of non-state actors

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the role of NGOs on environmental protection in politics in the following countries: Brazil, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, the UK, the US.

Week 7 (October 26): State-Market Relations

1st half the lecture:

- What are the “visible” hand and the “invisible” hand?
- Different types of political-economic systems

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the welfare system of Hong Kong, Japan, Sweden, France, the US, Germany, and Mainland China

Week 8 (November 2): Varieties of Capitalism

1st half the lecture:

- What is capitalism?
- Different types of capitalism

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the state-business relations of Mainland China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, the US, India, and Netherland

Week 9 (November 9) Varieties of State-Intervention

1st half the lecture:

- What is industrial policy?
- Different types of state-intervention

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the role of the state in industrial development: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Mainland China, the US, and Germany

Week 10 (November 16) Political Ideology

1st half the lecture:

- What is political ideology?
- Different types of political ideologies

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the following ideologies: socialism, communism, capitalism, classical liberalism, neo-liberalism, and conservatism with specific examples

Week 11 (November 23): Political Culture

1st half the lecture:

- What is political culture?
- Different types of political culture

2nd half the lecture:

- Compare the political influence of Confucianism (China v.s. Singapore), Christianity (the US v.s. Vatican), Buddhism (Nepal v.s. Bhutan), Muslim (Iran)

Week 12 (November 30): Conclusion and Review

Lecture:

- Review the class
- About the final exam
- Q & A

Week 13 (December 7): Final Exam

Required Readings

Weekly reading materials will be uploaded to the Moodle.