
COMPARATIVE POLITICS
A Global Perspective on Politics in Central and Southeast Europe
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Course Description

The concepts and methods scholars use in their attempt to comprehend polities, politics and policies have a history. They have travelled in translation(s), and experienced multiple appropriations. The story these notions tell us is that of the unequal distribution of social and symbolic resources across the world. Engaging in a reflection on Comparative Politics thus invites an exploration into the social conditions of knowledge production. It also offers a stimulating lens on the current world order. How situated are “universal ideas”? Which concepts and issues circulate, and how? To what extent can the analyses of extremely diverse local configurations engage in a conversation (to borrow Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s expression)? These are amongst the questions the course will address.

The purpose of this introduction to Comparative Politics is threefold. First, the aim is to acquaint students with key notions and empirical research in the field of political science – with a strong focus on how they came into being and were credited with an ability to account for social dynamics beyond their place and moment of origin. The relationships between “area studies” and “social sciences” will also be explored. Second, a majority of the case studies are borrowed from the historical trajectories of Central and Southeast Europe. In considering these cases, the course will adopt a twin perspective: It will examine the making of “Slavic/Soviet/post-Soviet” studies on the one hand; it will show how Eastern European configurations may shed new light on such comparative issues as state formation, identity processes and the resort to violence, on the other. Finally, the examination of cross-national insights into politics will provide a basis for a consideration of sources, research methods, and epistemological controversies. Central to this course is the belief that students need to familiarize themselves with a diversity of – print, sound and visual – sources in order to acquire the tools for developing a reflexive approach to the social sciences and further their own creativity.

Since the course coincides with the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, this particular event and its remembrance will be used as an entry point into the study of Central and Southeast Europe. Henceforth, each week a student will be asked to present a print, visual or sound source (including oral history materials) on a specific facet of 1989. This presentation will be recorded. By the end of the Semester, the class will collectively produce a reading of its own of what 1989 was, and how it is remembered today – East and West.

Requirements

Students will be assessed based on the quality of their **participation in class**, their **final paper**, as well as their **final exam**.

- **Participation in class** comprises contribution to collective discussions and a short oral presentation (presentation of a short document on 1989; discussion of a visual/sound source; presentation of a note on a concept/issue, i.e. “fichier technique”).
- In addition, each student will be asked to formulate a **research project** and write a final assignment (10 pages, TNR 12, single spaced). The research project will account for 30% of the grade. The **final draft will be due on December 3 at midnight**. Papers are to be sent by email to TD teacher, Victor Barbat.
- Finally, a 3 hour long **final exam** will be organized. It will be split into two parts: a. the discussion of a set of sources; b. the answer to a question.

Readings are provided in the syllabus, as well as the weekly outlines of the course. Students are required to read **two texts per session**.

Grades

The final grades will be obtained in the following way:

Oral presentation and participation in class:	30%
Final paper:	30%
Final exam:	40%

Part I – Comparative Politics: Historical Perspectives, Epistemological Issues, and Methodological Dilemmas

Session 1. The Emergence of a Field: The Production and Circulation of Knowledge on “Compared” Worlds

To be listened to in class:

BBC Radio 3 - Arts and Ideas, “The rise of translation and the death of foreign language learning”, at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06990rg>

Readings:

- Yves Gingras and Sébastien Mosbah-Nathanson, “Where are Social Sciences Produced?,” *World Social Science Report*, Paris: UNESCO, 2010, pp. 149-153 [pp. 170-174 pdf document].
- Orlando Fals-Borda and Luis Eduardo Mora-Osejo, “Context and Diffusion of Knowledge: A Critique of Eurocentrism,” *Action Research*, 1(1), 2003, pp. 29-37.
- Stéphane Dufoix, “Les naissances académiques du global,” in : Alain Caillé and Stéphane Dufoix (eds.), *Le tournant global des sciences sociales*, Paris : La Découverte, 2013, pp. 27-43.

Session 2. Comparison, Connections and *Histoire croisée*: What is to be Compared and How?

To be screened in class: Implicit and explicit comparisons

On the Threshold (Na progna), Kazimierz Karabasz, 1965, 23 mn, Poland (excerpts).

Readings:

- Cécile Vigour, *La comparaison dans les sciences sociales. Pratiques et méthodes*, Paris : La Découverte, coll. Repères, 2005.
- Romain Bertrand, “Histoire globale, histoires connectées,” in: Alain Caillé and Stéphane Dufoix (eds.), *Le tournant global des sciences sociales*, Paris : La Découverte, 2013, pp. 44-66.
- Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Aux origines de l’histoire globale, Paris : Collège de France & Fayard, 2014 [available at : <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/3606>]
- Michael Werner and Benedicte Zimmermann, “Histoire Croisée: Between the Empirical and Reflexivity,” *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 58 (1), 2003, pp. 7-36.
- Jean-François Bayart, “Comparer en France. Petit essai d’autobiographie disciplinaire,” *Politix*, 83, 2008/3, pp. 205-232.

Session 3. Multiple Scales: Micro, Macro and Beyond

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

What is *microstoria*?

To be screened in class: Mental mapping and the uses of micro-scales

Excerpts from the documentary film “Videomappings: Aida, Palestine,” Till Roeskens, 2009, 46 mn. (<http://documentsdartistes.org/artistes/roeskens/repro3-8.html>) (excerpts)

Readings:

- Jacques Revel, “Micro-analyse et construction du social », in : Jacques Revel (dir.), *Jeux d'échelle. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris : Gallimard & Éd. Seuil, 1996, pp. 15-36.
- Michael Callon & Bruno Latour, “Le grand Léviathan s'apprivoise-t-il ?” in: Madeleine Akrich, Michael Callon and Bruno Latour, *Sociologie de la traduction. Textes fondateurs*, Paris: Presse des Mines, 2006, pp. 11-32. [also available in English at bruno-latour.fr under the title “Unscrewing the big Leviathan”]
- Paul-André Rosental, “Construire le ‘macro’ par le ‘micro’, ” in : Jacques Revel (dir.), *Jeux d'échelle. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris : Gallimard & Éd. Seuil, 1996, pp. 141-160.

Session 4. Social Sciences and/vs. Area Studies: The Life and Death of Sovietology

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Archival material to be discussed in class:

Exploring evolving curricula on Slavic studies and Eastern Europe: The case of the École libre des sciences politiques (1871-1945).

To be screened in class:

De Crăciun ne-am luat ratia de libertate [For Christmas, we had a portion of freedom] by Cătălina Fernoagă and Cornel Mihalache, 1990, 19 mn, Romania.

Readings:

- Philippe Schmitter & Terry Lynn Karl, “The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far East Should They Attempt to Go?,” *Slavic Review* 53 (1), 1994, pp. 173-185.
- Valerie Bunce, “Comparing East and South,” *Journal of Democracy*, 6 (3), 1995, pp. 87-100.

Part II. Key Issues in Comparative Politics

Session 5. Eastern European Nationalisms: How Different Are They? (Or Are They Any Different?)

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

Reconstructing the intellectual trajectory of Rogers Brubaker.

Readings:

- Rogers Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups,” *European Journal of Sociology*, 113 (2), 2002, pp. 163-189.
- Peter F. Sugar, “External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism,” in: Peter F. Sugar and Ivo Lederer (eds.), *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, pp. 3-54.

Session 6. Change and Revolution(s): 1917 – Social Crisis and Creativity in the 1920s Going Global

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

What is a revolution and when do we know we have one?

To be screened in class: The Global 1920s-1930s?

The man with the movie-Camera [Человек с киноаппаратом] by Dziga Vertov, 1929, 80 mn, USSR, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZkvjWIEcoU> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z97Pa0ICpn8v> [both have soundtracks, which did not feature in the original].

& William Wellman, *Wild Boys on the Road*, 1933, 68 mn, United States.

Readings:

- S. A. Smith, “The Historiography of the Russian Revolution 100 Years,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 16 (4), Fall 2015, pp. 733-749.
- Ivan T. Berend, “Catching up or Lagging Behind?,” in: *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 3-23.
- Ilf and Petrov, *The Twelve Chairs* [Двенадцать стульев], 1st ed. 1928 (parts 1 and 2), available at: lib.ru/ILFPETROV/ilf_petrov_12_chairs_engl.txt

Session 7. Authoritarian Regimes and the Debate on Totalitarianism: Controversies during and after the Cold War

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

Definitions of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

Readings:

- John Connelly, “Defunct Theory, Useful Word,” *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 11 (4), 2010, pp. 819-835.
- Henry Rousso, “Introduction. The Legitimacy of an Empirical Comparison,” in: Henry Rousso (ed.), *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared*, University of Nebraska Press, 2004, pp. 1-24. **(online at google-books)**
- “Interview with Enzo Traverso: ‘History can be an ‘arm of power’,” *Barcelona Metropolis*, Winter 2010.

Session 8. Politics and Policies on Trial: Justice and the Making of Post-revolutionary and Postwar Orders

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

What is political justice?

To be screened in class:

Excerpts from the documentary film “The Judgment of the Peoples” [Суд народов], Roman Karmen and Elizaveta Svilova, USSR, 1946, 35mn, TSSDF (ЛЦДФ).

Readings:

- Julie Cassiday, “Marble Columns and Jupiter Lights: Theatrical and Cinematic Modeling of the Soviet Show Trial in the 1920s,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, 42(4), 1998, pp. 640-60.
- Donald Bloxham, “Prosecuting the Past in the Postwar Decade: Political Strategy and National Myth-Making,” in: David Bankier and Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust and Justice; Representation and Historiography of the Holocaust in Post-War Trials*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010, pp. 23-43.
- Valérie Pozner, Alexandre Sumpf et Vanessa Voisin (dir.), *Filmer la guerre. Les Soviétiques face à la Shoah, 1941-1946*, Paris : Éd. du Mémorial de la Shoah, 2015. (Exhibition catalogue)

Session 9. Reinventing Multiparty Politics after 1989: Are Clientelism and Corruption a Defining Feature of East European Party Systems (Only)?

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

What is populism?

Readings:

- Jean-Louis Briquet, “Clientelism and the Socio-Historical Interpretation of the ‘Italian Case’,” *Modern Italy*, 14(3), 2009, pp. 338-356.
- Denis Lacorne, “Chad Wars!: Voting Machines and Democracy in the United States,” in: Romain Bertrand, Jean-Louis Briquet and Peter Pels (eds.), *Cultures of Voting. The Hidden History of the Ballot Box*, London: Hurst, 2006, pp. 69-77.
- Nadège Ragaru, “How do Anti-corruption Initiatives Fly... and Where to? A Bulgarian Case Study,” *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, 3, 2010, pp. 40-63.

Session 10. Post-Cold War Violence – Thinking about Civil Wars

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

To be screened in class:

“We are All Neighbours,” Debbie Christie and Tone Bringa, 1993, 55 mn, Granada Television.

Readings

- Stathis Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?,” *World Politics*, 54 (1), October 2001, pp. 99-118.
- Mary Kaldor, “Introduction,” in: *New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 1-12.

Session 11. The EU Enlargement and the negotiation of a “common” past.

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

Fiche technique:

Do recent political evolutions in the “new” EU members invite a reconsideration of the EU accession process?

To be screened in class:

Commemorating the end of World War Two on European televisions: contrasted viewpoints.

Readings:

- Georges Mink, “Is there a New Institutional Response to the Crimes of Communism? National Memory Agencies in Post-communist Countries: The Polish Case (1998–2014),” *Nationalities Papers*, 45 (6), 2017, pp. 1013–1027.
- Laure Neumayer, “Advocating for the cause of the ‘victims of Communism’ in the European political space: Memory entrepreneurs in interstitial fields,” *Nationalities Papers*, 45 (6), 2017, pp. 992–1012.
- Oliver Plessow, “The Interplay of the European Commission, Researcher and Educator Networks and Transnational Agencies in the Promotion of a Pan-European Holocaust Memory,” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 23 (3), 2015, pp. 378–390.
- Emmanuel Droit, “Le Goulag contre la Shoah. Mémoires officielles et cultures mémorielles dans l’Europe élargie,” *Vingtième siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 94, 2/2007, pp. 101-120.

Session 12. “1989 at 30”: The Political Uses, Remembrance and Demise of 1989

Short oral presentation: Remembering 1989.

To be screened in class:

1. Ania Szczepanska, *Der Mauerfall begann in Polen*, Arte, France/Germany, 2019.

[The filmmaker may be able to come and join us to present her film to the class].

2. *12b08 East of Bucharest* [A fost sau n-a fost?], Corneliu Porumboiu, 2006, 89 mn, Romania.

Readings:

- Paul Betts, “1989 at 30: A Recast Legacy,” *Past and Present*, n°.244, August 2019, p. 271-305.
- Misha Glenny, “Conclusion. The Rebirth of History,” in: *The Rebirth of History. Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy*, London: Penguin Books, 1993 (1st ed. 1990), pp. 183-236.
- Jérôme Heurtaux et Cédric Pellen, “Introduction,” in: Jérôme Heurtaux et Cédric Pellen (dir.), *1989 à l’Est de l’Europe. Une mémoire controversée*, La Tour d’Aigues : Éditions de l’Aube, 2009, pp. 5-20.
- Alban Bensa et Éric Fassin, “Les sciences sociales face à l’événement,” *Terrains. Anthropologie & sciences humaines*, 38, March 2002, pp. 5-20.