Descriptif d'enseignement / *Course descriptions*

2ème année / 2nd year

Semestre 1

Titre du cours - *Course title*

Comparative politics

Type de cours : Cours magistral

Langue du cours/Language of instruction : English

Enseignant(s) – *Professor(s)*

Cécile Leconte

Maître de conférences HDR en science politique

Contact : cecile.leconte@sciencespo-lille.eu

Résumé du cours – Objectifs - *Course description – Targets*

Conceived as an introduction to the comparative study of politics, this course intends to familiarize students with the methodological and theoretical foundations of comparative research. It shows how, by identifying factors and/or categories of analysis to compare and contrast different political phenomena, comparative research questions and methods help address key political science questions and puzzles, such as: Are specific constitutional and institutional arrangements more likely than others to secure the robustness of democratic regimes? Why do some democratic revolutions seem to succeed while others do not? How can we account for cross-national differences in terms of welfare state types and levels of inequalities? How come that, faced with similar situations, countries adopt different policies that seem to vary greatly in their ability to "address" "problems"? Etc. Moreover, as cross-national comparisons are increasingly referred to in public debates and in the discourse of international organizations (for instance, when they "benchmark" countries' "performances" and identify "best practices") in order to legitimize or veto key political choices, it is crucial to encourage students to think critically about comparative issues and provide them with the analytical tools to do so.

Evaluation - *Assessment*

By groups of 5 to 6 (to be confirmed), students must hand over a paper (approximately 10,000 words long) outlining an original research design on a specific comparative case study. The paper should include the following sections: "Background/literature", in which students identify the relevant literature, identify potential gaps and introduce the research question; "Theory and Hypothesis", where students identify the "puzzle" they aim to solve, formulate testable hypotheses and specify their theoretical orientation; "Research Design", where students discuss possible data sources and potential methods, and finally "Potential Problems/Obstacles", where students discuss potential difficulties for the realization of this research design.

Plan – Séances - *Course outline*

Introduction (Class 1)

a) The relevance of the comparison for the understanding of politics
b) Understanding "the Other", questioning "the universal"
c) Of the political uses of comparisons

I. Historical, methodological and theoretical foundations

1) Comparing: the roots of scientific knowledge (Class 2)
2) The comparative research method (Class 3)
3) The pitfalls of culturalism and developmentalism (Class 4)

II. Case studies: some classical key puzzles

1) State- and nation-building processes (Class 5)
2) Democracies: consolidations, transitions and breakdowns (Class 6)
3) Political economy: welfare states and varieties of capitalism (Class 7)
4) Policy-making processes and public policies (Class 8)

III. Challenges to "classical" comparative politics and new avenues for research

1) Area- vs post- colonial studies: debating "the universal" (Class 9)
2) Questioning the nation-state as the central unit of analysis (Class 10)
3) Of transfers, circulations and translations (Class 11)
4) Comparing "from below" (Class 12)

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Detienne, Marcel (2000), Comparer l'incomparable, Paris : Le Seuil.

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Thiriot, C, M. Marty et E. Nadal, dirs. (2004), *Penser la politique comparée. Un état des savoirs théoriques et méthodologiques*, Paris, Karthala.

Tyler Dickovick, Jonathan and Jonathan Eastwood (2015), *Comparative politics: integrating theories, methods and cases,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.