

Professor Jeffrey Karp
jeffrey.karp@brunel.ac.uk
Virtual Office Hours (on Teams):
Monday 10-11:30; Thursday 9:30-11:00

PP1602 (Term 2 2022)
Version: 14.01.22

Introduction to Comparative Politics (20 Credits)

Introduction: The module introduces you to the study of comparative politics. The module will examine how the design of political institutions reflects competing visions of democracy and the implications this has for the processes that link citizens and policymakers. We will focus on various aspects of the political system such as the differences between parliamentary and presidential systems, federal and unitary systems, electoral rules, party systems. We will then consider how these institutional differences influence how political actors and citizens engage in the political process.

Some of the questions that we will be looking at include:

- What advantages (if any) do majoritarian systems have over consensus systems?
- How does the choice of an electoral system affect political competition?
- Why is voter turnout much lower in some countries than in others?
- Why are many citizens dissatisfied with the political process?
- Why are some countries more successful with dealing with the coronavirus crisis than others?
- What prompts demands for political reform?

Reading List

The readings can be accessed online through BBL on Talis.

Attendance and Engagement

Lectures are pre-recorded and are available via BBL on Monday. In person seminars are scheduled on Tuesdays at 2-3pm (see your timetable). You can also attend online at the same time on collaborate (on BBL).

All students are expected to attend either the in person or the online weekly seminar sessions regularly as those who fail to attend classes often get lower marks than those who do attend, and actively participate. It is in class where students learn subject matter and skills that they will be assessed on and when writing references members of staff often comment on a student's performance in classes. If you miss classes due to unforeseen circumstances it is good practice to contact your Personal Tutor.

Core Texts (both available as e-books via the Brunel Library)

Hague, Rod, Martin Harrop and John McCormick. 2016. *Comparative Government and Politics. 10th Edition*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Lijhpart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. 2nd Edition.

Schedule

Week 1 (10 January): Introduction: Why Compare?

Questions: What can be learned from cross-national comparisons? Is it fair to compare? How do we compare different countries with different institutions and different cultures?

Ch. 1. “Key Concepts” and Ch. 2 “The State” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Ashford, James. 2020. “Coronavirus: Is it fair to compare countries’ death tolls? *The Week* 15 May.

Boseley, Sarah. 2020. “UK Wrong to rule out global coronavirus comparisons, experts say” *The Guardian* 17 May.

Week 2 (17 January): What is Wrong with Democracy?

Questions: What are the requirements for democracy? What do people think about democracy? Is democracy at risk?

Readings:

Ch. 3 “Democratic rule” and Ch. 4 ‘Authoritarian Rule in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Ch. 1 in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*.

Drutman, Lee, Larry Diamond, and Joe Goldman. 2018. “Follow the Leader: Exploring American Support for Democracy and Authoritarianism” *Democracy Fund: Voter Study Group*.

Druman, Lee. 2018. “Will Trump Break American Democracy?” *Vox*. 20 March.

Week 3 (24 January): Majoritarian and Consensus Visions of Democracy

Questions: What are the main features of majoritarian and consensus systems? What countries are good examples of each vision? Which are not? What advantages (if any) do majoritarian systems have over consensus systems?

Readings:

Ch. 2-3 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Ch. 9 “Executives” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Anderson, Christopher J. and Christine A. Guillory. 1997. “Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems” *American Political Science Review* 91(1): 66-81.

Week 4 (31 January): Electoral Systems

Questions: What is the difference between a first past the post system (FPP) and a proportional representation system? Which system is best? How does the choice of an electoral system affect political competition?

Readings:

Ch. 4-5 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Ch. 15 “Political Parties” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Coll, Steve. 2020. “The Case for Dumping the Electoral College” *The New Yorker*. 28 September.

Week 5 (7 February): Elections and Integrity

Questions: What does electoral mean and how do we measure it? Why is it important? Which countries have high levels of integrity? What can be done to strengthen electoral integrity?

Readings:

Ch. 6 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Ch. 16 “Elections” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Norris, Pippa. 2017. “Electoral Integrity” in *The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*

Toobin, Jeffrey. 2020. “The Legal Fight Awaiting Us After the Election” *The New Yorker*. 21 September.

Week 6 (14 February): Reading week. No Lecture or Tutorials.**Week 7 (21 February): Voter Turnout and Political Engagement**

Is low voter turnout a problem? Why is voter turnout much lower in some countries than in others? Who is more likely to participate in the political process? Should voting be compulsory?

Readings:

Chapter 13 “Political Participation” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Chapter 16 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Tracy, Marc. 2020. “Voting Alone” *New York Times*. 20 September.

Week 8 (28 February): Representation and Direct Democracy

Questions: Why do some countries have more women in parliament than others? Does it make a difference? What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy?

Readings:

Ch. 8 “Legislatures” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Ch. 16 “Elections” pages 280-282. in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Lupia, Arthur and John G. Matsusaka. 2004. “Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions” *Annual Review Political Science* 7:463-82.

Week 9 (7 March): Ideology and Political Sophistication

Questions: How do people acquire political beliefs?

Ch. 17 “Voters” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2017. “Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 15(2): 443-454.

Week 10 (14 March): The Media and Political Information

Questions: Where do people get their information from? How much do people really know about politics? How much influence does the media really have?

Readings:

Ch. 7 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Ch. 14 “Political Communication” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Delli-Carpini, Michael. 2000. “In Search of the Informed Citizen: What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters” *The Communications Review* 4(1)129-164.

Mayer, Jane. 2018. “How Russia Helped Swing the Election for Trump” *The New Yorker*, 1 October.

Week 11 (21 March): The Covid-19 Pandemic

Questions: Why are some countries more successful with dealing with the coronavirus crisis than others? Who is likely to support policies that restrict civil liberties and freedom?

Readings:

Chapter 12 “Political Culture” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Chapter 17 in *Patterns of Democracy*

Ch. 19 “Public Policy” in *Comparative Government and Politics*

Week 12 (28 March): Feed Forward: Preparing for the Final Exam

Assessment

Assessment	Submission Deadline	Notes
Essay (40% of grade). 1500 words.	22 February, 2022	See question below. Essay must be submitted to Wiseflow by 12:00 (see below).
Final Take Home Exam (60% of grade)	30 March, 2022	Exam will be distributed on Wiseflow on 29 March at 9:30am

Essay Question

Countries have responded to the Covid pandemic in different ways. For example, some countries have been slow to respond and have been reluctant to impose restrictions while others have adopted tough measures such as lockdowns. Write an essay in which you first discuss how the UK has responded to the pandemic and compare the UK response to one other country. What best explains why these countries differ in the way they responded to the pandemic? Justify your answer by referring to readings and material covered in the module.

The essay should be fully referenced and include a bibliography.

The essay should be fully referenced and include a bibliography. For more information on coursework, exams and referencing please see the [Politics and History webpage](#) and the [Chicago Manual of Style](#).

Note on Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is any action that may give a student an unpermitted advantage and is governed by [Senate Regulation 6](#). These actions include plagiarism, collusion, and the recycling of work. Plagiarism is defined by the University (SR 6.21) as: *the knowing or reckless presentation of another person's work or ideas as one's own, and includes the use of published or unpublished work without acknowledging the source*. It is important you understand the rules and regulations with regards to plagiarism and that you reference your coursework appropriately.

The following are some ways to avoid plagiarism:

- Always use your own words to summarise an argument made by others. Everyone has their own style.
- Work on developing better writing skills. Writing is not easy and takes a lot of practice!
- Remember, we do not expect you to produce work that is of publishable quality. If we see it we will suspect something!
- Use multiple sources and learn how to use literature to develop and support an argument.

Collusion and Recycling of Work:

- Do not share your work with anyone. You could be subject to misconduct procedures even if someone else submits your work for assessment.
- Do not submit anything that you have previously submitted for assessment for any module.

The Wiseflow system will match published and unpublished material on the internet and produce a similarity score. These scores will flag your essay. The range of penalties includes temporary or permanent suspension and/or exclusion from the University or from specific University facilities or activities, and permanent expulsion from the University, including Residences. At a minimum (ie. first offence), it will result in a capped resit counting for 0 for your GPA but repeated instances could be far more severe. The academic misconduct procedure is a lengthy process which could easily take 6 months or even a year to resolve.

Submitting coursework

As per the [College Student Handbook](#) and [College Coursework Submission Procedure](#), formal coursework submissions must be made via WiseFlow *only*. On no account will we accept any coursework via any other means. So, if you attempt to, or actually submit it to, a lecturer, the Taught Programmes Office (TPO) or to anyone else, either in person or via email, we will not accept it, and we will not look at it or mark it. This is the case for those with extenuating circumstances and for those without extenuating circumstances. Any coursework not submitted via WiseFlow will be deemed to have not been submitted.

While submitting your coursework online, you must use the e-coversheet available on Blackboard Learn in the folder called 'How to submit' available on the main page of each module. In this folder you will also find a video and a written description of the coursework submission process.

Please note that we will not accept coursework submitted in any other file format than this/those prescribed on the coursework brief's submission instructions section. We do not accept any

document ending in '.pages', and if you choose to use a Mac, you should be aware that this is not supported by the University and there are sometimes technical 'issues' caused when you choose to do so. What 'technical issues'? It might be that the document is not open-able (the most likely) or that something is deleted. After submitting your coursework to WiseFlow, please check that it is actually there. Do not rely on simply pressing the 'submit' button *hoping* that it has been submitted and it is on WiseFlow. Go back in, and check, that it is actually there. Because, if you discover, later, that it is not then this will be an error on your part for which the university cannot be held accountable.

Late submissions of coursework

The late submission policy has changed as of September 2016. How 'late coursework' is handled and who to get in contact with is detailed in the College Student Handbook in the 'Late Submission Policy' and 'Extenuating Circumstances' sections: [College Student Handbook](#)

Academic support

It is useful to note that Brunel staff email addresses usually use the format of: [Firstname.Surname@brunel.ac.uk](#). Academic staff will normally respond to student emails within 2 working days.

During term 1 and 2, all academic staff have feedback and consultation hours for personal tutees and for students taking their modules. These will normally be posted on the academic member of staff's door and published on the TPO page on Blackboard Learn. Students may use these hours to follow up aspects of the modular/study or assessment block or to discuss their studies. You can go to an office hour on your own or in a small group.

Out of term time, academic staff are still available for discussions and meetings (for personal tutees and for Dissertation tutees), but often work from home or are on annual leave. Therefore, it is advisable to contact them by email to arrange an appointment.

More information on academic support can be found in the student well-being handbook available on this module's BBL page.