

Politics Department: Subfield Guides for Undergraduates

Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics is a sub-field in which students investigate the similarities and differences in patterns of politics around the world. Among the many questions addressed by scholars of Comparative Politics include: Why are some countries more democratic than others? What role does the state play in economic development? What are the determinants of violence and economic growth? How do different party systems form and with what consequences for the representation of interests? What causes revolutions, and what factors lead to effective government? Unlike the sub-field of International Relations, which focuses on the interactions between states, Comparative Politics tends to address what happens *within* states (while also recognizing that politics are shaped by various trans-national influences such as colonialism, the Cold war, and globalization).

Though it is not a required course, many students will be introduced to Comparative Politics through our introductory course: Introduction to Comparative Politics, POL 230. The department highly recommends this course to students specializing in Comparative Politics. In giving students an overview of the central topics and debates in the field, covering a range of countries, this course serves students as an excellent foundation from which to explore more specialized questions.

While the study of Comparative Politics will be enhanced by a wide variety of course offerings from the department and beyond, two sets of courses are particularly relevant and fulfill sub-field requirements. The first set--of thematic courses--addresses the major substantive and theoretical questions relating to topics such as political development, political economy and democratization. These courses offer an overview of the major debates and findings within the sub-field. They tend to be broadly comparative, cutting across world regions in the discussion of cases and evidence.

The second set of courses (though also theoretically oriented) is explicitly regional in focus. The Comparative Politics faculty at Princeton encourages students to develop research questions related to major scholarly debates, while also having sufficient historical grounding in particular places and world regions to be able to carry out substantive research for independent work. Thus, an undergraduate specializing in comparative politics should take some mix of thematic *and* regionally-focused courses.

Sample courses that cover the two main areas in Comparative Politics:

I. Thematic Courses	II. Regionally-Focused Courses
<p>POL 230: Introduction to Comparative Politics</p> <p>POL 349 Political Economy</p> <p>POL 351/WWS The Politics of Development</p> <p>POL 352 Comparative Political Economy</p> <p>POL 356 Comparative Ethnic Conflict</p> <p>POL 358 State, Nation, and Cultural Identity</p> <p>POL 360 Social Movements and Contentious Politics</p>	<p>POL 231 European Politics</p> <p>POL 362 Chinese Politics</p> <p>POL 364 Politics of the Middle East</p> <p>POL 366 Politics in Africa</p> <p>POL 367 Latin American Politics</p> <p>POL 375 Politics after Communism</p> <p>POL 372 Political Economy of Western Europe</p> <p>POL 374 Russian and Post-Soviet Politics</p> <p>POL 378 Politics in India</p>

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