

## Comparative political theory [proposed]

Political theory has long been criticized as a Eurocentric discipline, centered around “great thinkers” like Plato, Hobbes, and Nietzsche, while failing to engage thinkers from the world outside of Europe and North America. Beginning in the 1990s, a number of new fields emerged within political theory to address this shortcoming. Comparative political theory seeks to promote dialogue between different traditions of political theorizing across cultures – or so claimed its early proponents.

The primary focus of this course will be on how the idea of “comparative” continuously evolves within political theory. What is being compared? How can we compare, or are traditions of political thought that emerge from different cultures simply incommensurable? Does thinking comparatively broaden our dialogues, or does it pigeonhole other traditions as “Others,” making them forever foreign?

For this course, students will write one short (4-6 pages) paper, and one longer (8-12 pages) paper. The first paper will focus on one major idea explored in the course so far, and explore different “comparative” approaches to that idea. For the final paper, students will choose one book from the second half of the syllabus and develop (in consultation with the professor) their own research question, informed by other course readings, to analyze the book of their choice. Over the course of this seminar, we will read (certain) authors multiple times. Pay attention to how their arguments grow and change, and be prepared to think about whether their later arguments are compatible with their earlier commitments.

Additionally, we will be reading several introductions and prefaces to edited volumes. Introductions can be very helpful because authors make succinct justifications for their projects; they are indispensable for understanding the context of the project, and they attempt to give a compelling answer to the “why this, why now?” questions. Though they tend to be short, students should read these carefully.

### Course Requirements

As comparative political theory is uniquely concerned with “dialogue,” your dialogue will be central to this course. 35% of your grade will be based on a variety of participation metrics: participation in class discussion and online discussion boards, as well as submitting at least 5 questions prior to class over the course of the academic term. The short paper will count for 20% of your grade, and the final paper will be 45% of the final grade.

We will be continuously referring to past readings during the course, so it is strongly advised that students print the course readings and keep them in a binder which may be brought to class, that way they have all the readings at hand.

**Week 1:** Antecedents – has comparative political theory been with us all along?  
Leo Strauss, “Introduction” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (SKIM)  
Edward Said, “Traveling Theory” in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*

**Week 2:** Establishing comparative political theory as political science

Anthony J. Parel, "Introduction" in *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies under the Upas Tree*

Roxanne Euben, "Premodern, Antimodern, or Postmodern?: Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity"

**Week 3:** Two paths for comparative political theory

Fred Dallmayr, "Introduction," in *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory*

Pratap Banhu Mehta, "Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason"

**Week 4:** Comparative Political Theory after 9/11

Fred Dallmayr, "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory"

Roxanne Euben, "Killing (for) Politics: Jihad, Martyrdom and Political Action"

Fred Dallmayr, "Preface" in *Comparative Political Theory: An Introduction*

**Week 5:** Pure Cultures, Ancient Traditions?

Andrew F. March, "What is Comparative Political Theory?"

Farah Godrej, "Response to 'What is Comparative Political Theory?'"

**Week 6:** What do we mean by "Comparative?"

Murad Idris, "Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison"

Farah Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting 'the Other'"

**First paper due**

**Week 7:** Traveling theory, revisited, week 1:

Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, chapters 1, 2, 3

**Week 8:** Traveling theory, revisited, weeks 2:

Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, chapters 4, 5, 6

**Week 9:** "Comparative" theory looking back at the West

Nakae Chomin, *Discourse on Government by Three Drunkards*

Timothy Kaufman-Osborne, "Rousseau in Kimono: Nakae Chomin and the Japanese Enlightenment"

**Week 10:** Anticolonialism as comparative political theory?

Kevin Pham, "Nguyễn An Ninh's Anti-Colonial Thought: A New Account of National Shame"

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* chapters 1, 4, 5

**Week 11:** Colonial Education, Colonized Life

Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British Protected Child*

**Week 12:** Comparative political theory in the world week 1

Andrew March, *The Caliphate of Man* chapters 1, 2, 3

**Week 13:** Comparative political theory in the world week 2  
Andrew March, *The Caliphate of Man* chapters 4, 5, 6, 7

**Week 14:** Dialogues on comparative political theory  
Hansong Li and Pratap Banhu Mehta, “A Conversation on South Asia in Global Political Thought and International Politics”  
Jun-Hyeok Kwak and Phillip Pettit, “Interview with Phillip Pettit: Neo-Roman Republicanism and Northeast Asia”  
**Final paper due by Wednesday of finals week.**