

ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY (CPT)

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Course description: This course is about methods. Among the more innovative recent approaches in political theory or thought, *Comparative Political Theory* (CPT) certainly occupies a prominent place. Because the field's attractiveness from scholars from different fields, the methodological approaches that are considered legitimate are consequently contested. Thus, the course explores and critically assesses competing approaches and concepts in CPT in order to discover intellectually meaningful and critically reflected methodologies and concepts in CPT that ideally can be applied to other research projects with a particularly trans- or cross-cultural emphasis. Thus, the course eventually aims at applying the methodological objectives to selected cases that are primarily determined by the students' academic backgrounds and interests.

For this purpose, the course discusses different *approaches* to CPT. It critically assesses promoted, although not necessarily mutually compatible, approaches in CPT. It explores the dialogical (Dallmayr 1999; 2008), ideological (Freedon 2012), and critically objective approaches (Bashir 2013, Koch 2015, March 2009). It discusses the particular attraction of Gadamer's (2010; 1989) critical hermeneutics who is perceived, at least by some scholars, together with Husserl's phenomenological approach as representation of non-Western methodology [sic!].

Further, the course critically discusses essential *Concepts*: It explores key concepts (although frequently used but significantly under-reflected) in CPT. For instance, that is meant by the West, what is the "Other"? What do we mean by "culture"? And when can and should we speak of cultural imperialism (Hamm & Smandynh 2008)?

Finally, the course moves from *Theoria* to *Phronesis* by exploring and applying previously discussed approaches and concepts critically to the comparative study of Islamic or Arab and Indian or Hindu political thought with emphasis on concepts of statehood, democracy, and religion. Ideally, students who have taken the course are enabled to apply the different methodological approaches to their own research in a critical and reflected way.

FORMAT The course is designed as a seminar. There will be no formal lectures, but rather the primary classroom work will be discussion of the assigned reading for the week. The professor will facilitate and direct discussion, and occasionally offer relevant background or conceptual information. Each student will be expected to contribute on a weekly basis to the debate and interchange within the class.

REQUIREMENTS Students are expected to be current with the reading assignments. They will be expected to make at least one presentation during the course of the semester (10%). These presentations will be a critical engagement (NOT a summary) with one of the core readings. Each student is expected to hand in two shorter essays (approximately 7-10 pages) reflecting on the previous readings (30%) and to be actively engaged in class discussion (20%). Students who are enrolled in the seminar will also write a 20-25 pages research paper on some aspects of the seminar's themes (40%). Possible topics will be discussed with the instructor on an individual basis.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY It is a sign of the times that the professor feels the need to warn students regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is understood to be the representation of the words or ideas of another person as one's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project or assignment submitted in a course or program of study, or the representation as one's own of an entire essay or work of another, whether the material so represented constitutes a part or the entirety of the work submitted. In short, plagiarism is copying from any source whatsoever without proper acknowledgment or reference. Penalties for plagiarism are severe, so if you have any doubt whatsoever whether you have (even inadvertently) plagiarized, consult the professor prior to submitting your assignment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities must be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you need adaptation or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in the case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

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Saturday [November 1971]

Dear Imre,

So I found you out at last! After your last letter which sounded as if you were lying on your deathbed, I rushed to the telephone to talk with you once more before you expired, and what do I find? You are gallivanting about on conferences instead of sitting at home writing MAM. Disgraceful! I now have a theory about all these sad letters of yours. You are not really ill at all, nor is your house in such a bad shape, but you have no idea how to attack AM and so you procrastinate, invent stories about slothful British workers, drafty rooms, aching heads, while the *only* ache you have is the one created by chapter 25 of AM and by the 12 points at the end of it. Why don't you admit it? Why don't you write a nice confession to that effect, add it to AM and terminate the suspense?

Incidentally, have you read Feigl's attack on the two of us? He already regards us as being one and the same person, and that "Imre Lakatos" are my two first names. So hurry up, establish your identity in MAM—this is your last chance. I liked Feigl's paper, not because it is right but because of the spirit of it. While Sir Karl is moping about, while he is complaining and whining, Feigl is having fun defending empiricism. And this is how it ought to be. I am writing a reply and maybe if it gets finished in time it will get published, together with Herbert's [Feigl] paper, in the *Boston Studies*.

So, will you be in Boston in March? That is when I intend to start on my European trip with Karen, going first to Paris, then to Vienna, then to Heidelberg (looking for jobs in Germany) and then to London (looking for jobs in England—UC Berkeley is getting worse and worse), and, maybe, I will meet you in May in London. I hope I get the money together, right now I have no money at all, I gave it all away to impoverished friends etc., this is the reason why I had to cancel my fall trip to England and Europe. I wish somebody would pay my trip in March, or end of February, but this is too much to expect, nobody wants me these days, so I have to go on my own.

Now, be well, don't work too much, cheer up, and write.

Paul

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¹ In Motterlini 1999, p. 263.

COURSE SCHEDULE**Week 1:** Introduction to the Course

Reading: March, Andrew F. 2009. "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *The Review of Politics* 71 (4): 531-565.

*A Foundational Conflict***Week 2**—Scientific Methods and Western (?) Rationality

Reading: Imre Lakatos. 1999. "Lectures on Scientific Method." In Matteo Motterlini (ed.), *For and Against Method: Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend, Including Lakatos's Lectures on Scientific Method and the Lakatos-Feyerabend Correspondence*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 19-109.

Week 3—An Opposing View: Critique of Western (?) Rationality

Reading: Paul K. Feyerabend. 2011. *The Tyranny of Science*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

*Approaches and Concepts***Week 4**—Comparative Political Theory as Dialogue

Reading: Dallmayr, Fred (ed.). 1999. *Border Crossings: Towards a Comparative Political Theory*, Lanham: Lexington.

Week 5—Comparative Political Theory and Ideology

Reading: Michael Freedon & Andrew Vincent (ed.). 2012. *Comparative Political Thought: Theorizing Practices*, London: Routledge.

Week 6—Critical Approaches to Comparative Political Theory

Readings: Bettina Koch. 2015. *Patterns Legitimizing Political Violence in Transcultural Perspectives: Islamic and Christian Traditions and Legacies*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Introduction. Andrew F. March. 2009. *Islam and Liberal Citizenship: The Search for an Overlapping Consensus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Introduction.

Week 7—Gadamer's Hermeneutics I

Reading: Hans-Georg Gadamer. 2nd. ed. 1989. *Truth and Method*, London: Continuum., Part I (pp. 1-174).

Week 8—Gadamer's Hermeneutics II

Reading: Hans-Georg Gadamer. 2nd. ed. 1989. *Truth and Method*, London: Continuum., Part II.2 and III (pp. 270-484).

Week 9—Culture, Language, and the Limits of Understanding

Reading: Norbert Elias. 1991. *The Symbol Theory*, London: Sage Publications.

Week 10—Nation, Culture, and Otherness

Reading: Mohammed A. Bamyeh. 1993. "Culture." *Current Sociology* 41 (3): 31-65. Sesemann, Vasily. 2010. *Selected Papers*. Ed. by Mykolas Drunga and Leonidas Donskis, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

From Theoria to Phronesis: The State, Democracy, and Religion in Contemporary Middle Eastern and Indian Thought

Week 11—Democracy and Hindutva

Readings: M. Reza Pirbhai, 2008. "Demons in Hindutva: Writing a Theology for Hindu Nationalism." *Modern Intellectual History* 1: 27-53. Singh, Mahendra Prasad and Himanshu Roy (ed.). 2011. *Indian Political Thought: Themes and Thinkers*, Delhi: Pearson, 155-270.

Week 12—Radical Democracy?

Reading: Manabendra Nath Roy. 2004. *Radical Humanist: Selected Writings*. Ed. by Marisetti, Innaiah, Amherst: Prometheus Books.

Week 13—Manifestations of Statehood in Islamic Thought

Reading: Abdelilah Belkeziz. 2009. *The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Historical Survey of Major Muslim Thinkers of the Modern Era*, London: I. B. Tauris.

Week 14—Between Marx, Arab Identity, Secularism, and the Islamic Democracy

Reading: Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab. 2009. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Week 15—Comparing Indian and Arab, Hindu and Muslim Concepts

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Charfi, M. (2005). *Islam and Liberty: The Historical Misunderstanding*. London: Zed Books.

Dallmayr, F. (Ed.) (1999). *Border Crossings: Towards a Comparative Political Theory*. Lanham: Lexington.

Dallmayr, F. (2008). Comparative Political Theory: What is it Good For? In T. Shogimen, Cary J. Nederman (Eds.), *Western Political Thought in Dialogue with Asia* (pp. 13-24), Lanham: Lexington.

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Ghassem-Fachandi, P. (2012). *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Godrej, F. (2011). *Cosmopolitan Political Thought: Method, Practice, Discipline*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Pirbhai, M. (2008). Demons in Hindutva: Writing a Theology for Hindu Nationalism. *Modern Intellectual History*, 5 (1), 27-53.

Sesemann, V. (2010). The Issue of National Culture. In V. Sesemann. *Selected Papers*. Ed. Drunga, Mykolas, Donskis, Leonidas, (Ed.) (pp. 49-53), Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Singh, M.P., Roy, Himanshu (Eds.) (2011). *Indian Political Thought: Themes and Thinkers*. Delhi: Pearson.