

Department of Comparative Politics

In Comparative Politics the main focus of the research is democracy and democratisation in a wide sense, thematically and geographically.

Contact

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About the department

The founder of the department, professor Stein Rokkan, was appointed Professor in Sociology in Bergen in 1966. The Department of Sociology was renamed as the Department of Sociology and Political Science in 1977 with sections for Sociology, Public Administration and Organisational Theory and Comparative Politics. The sections became independent departments in 1980.

Comparative politics should be understood as an element in the more general discipline of political science. At our department, the comparative dimension is strongly emphasised, and the courses offered in Bergen provide a much more far-reaching, systematic knowledge of differences and similarities between political systems than is the case for the other main political science departments at other universities in the Nordic area.



Stein Rokkan

Study programmes:

- Bachelor Programme in Comparative Politics
- Bachelor Programme in European Studies
- Master Programme in Comparative Politics

Courses

All undergraduate courses in English at the department are open for all incoming exchange students. Postgraduate courses in comparative politics are primarily available in the spring semester to master level students. All courses are 10 or 15 ECTS.

Teaching methods are lectures and seminars. Assessment methods are desk exams and take-home exams (mostly undergraduate) and essays (mostly postgraduate).

Note that incoming students may combine courses from different departments at the Faculty of Social Sciences.



Stein Rokkan memorial lecture 2013

Research

Research at the Department of Comparative Politics is organized in three research groups.

- Democracy and Development
- Citizens, Opinion, Representation
- Challenges in Advanced Democracies

All researchers participate in at least one research group. The research groups arrange seminars, guest lectures and other activities.

Other related research groups or projects:

- Norwegian Citizen panel
- Sino-Nordic Welfare Research Network (SNoW)
- Climate change: media, politics and society
- Labour migration and the welfare state



Published books

Department management

Head of Department:

- Professor Gunnar Grendstad

Deputy Head of Department:

- Associate Professor Jan Oskar Engene

Head of Teaching:

- Associate Professor Michael Alvarez



The Department

EUR105 European Union Institutions and Politics (spring)

European Union Institutions and Politics aims at giving a good understanding of the polity, politics and policies of the European Union from its beginning to the present. Much emphasis is put on the institutional development towards an ever closer union and the conflicts created by the constant enlargement of the EU. The theoretical perspective combines intergovernmental federalist and supragovernmental functionalist approaches to the understanding of European integration.

SAMPOL115 Democracy and Democratization (fall)

Students in this course should have acquired a broad and sophisticated knowledge of democratic and non-democratic political systems as well as the processes which result in changes in the type of political system and should be able to analyze these topics theoretically, historically, and scientifically. Students should also have knowledge about institutional varieties of democratic systems and acquired the ability to study scientifically whether different types perform better in terms of economic outcomes.

SAMPOL120 Scandinavian Politics and Government (fall and spring)

The objective of the course is to provide the students with a basic understanding of political structures, political actors and public policies in the Nordic countries. The course addresses state- and nation building processes of the Scandinavian states, including the current status of ethnic minority groups within the societies, structure of the governmental institutions, political participation, party systems, political representation and development of the Scandinavian welfare state.

SAMPOL204 Varieties of Political Regimes: Latin America in Comparative Perspective (spring)

The course is divided into four sections. The first section provides theoretical and conceptual as well as analytical tools for the empirical study of different political regime types. The second section provides an overview of political regime development in 19th century Latin America.

The third section is devoted to varieties of non-democratic regimes in Latin America, whereas the fourth section concerns varieties of democratic regimes in Latin America.

SAMPOL205 Regions, Federalism and EU Integration (spring)

Much of comparative politics and EU integration research focuses on governmental institutions, non-majoritarian bodies or societal stakeholders. This course focuses on a different category of actors: regions. Sometimes directly elected and endowed with primary legislative powers, sometimes purely nominated with limited policy authority, regional governments and administrations are often neglected in comparative politics and EU analyses. This seminar seeks to explore the relationship between regionalisation and Europeanization, as well as the interaction between these different sets of actors.

SAMPOL208 The Commercialization of Security in Peace and Conflict (fall)

The course will cover both different theoretical approaches and a practical perspective of different manifestations of commercialized security, ranging from mercenaries and private military companies to hybrid actors and unarmed private security providers. Essentially, the course aims to foster an understanding of new ways that security is governed at the state level, but also at the international level.

SAMPOL209 Courts, Law and Politics (fall)

This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the role of courts and judges in contemporary politics. The role of courts as political actors and arenas for political battles has increased significantly in the past decades, across geographical regions as well as policy areas. The student is introduced to the central scholarly debates around judicial behavior and judicial politics, and draws empirical examples from all regions of the world.

SAMPOL211 Islamist Movements and Contentious Politics in the Middle East (spring)

This course introduces the history of the Middle East, an overview of various strands of Islamism and a survey of theoretical debates regarding contentious politics and social movements.

We will focus on the relationship between, first, the emergence of Islamist movements and state-society relations in the region and, second, religious identities and contemporary contentious mobilization. Following this, students are challenged to apply their knowledge to critically assess the role of Islam in contemporary dynamics of Islamist movements and contentious politics in the Middle East.

SAMPOL214 Political Economy (spring)

This course presents a rigorous survey of introductory and intermediate-level topics in the study of political economy. Following an introduction to rational choice theory, the course proceeds to survey some rival approaches to the study of the relationship between the state and the economy: neoclassical, Chicago School, Keynesian, and Marxian. Next, we study some varieties of fiscal and monetary public policies and their consequences. We also examine the manners in which the interests of political parties and politicians, as well as the nature of democratic political competition affect the types and forms of macroeconomic policy. Following this, we engage in a detailed study of the nature of the business cycle and economic downturns under capitalism.

SAMPOL216 Labour market reform (fall)

The course aims to provide students with a comprehensive and critical understanding of contemporary labour market policy across advanced capitalist countries. The jobs people have are crucial for their income, social status, and well-being. This makes labour market policy a particularly important field of government intervention. The course will help students to acquire sound knowledge of general principles of labour market policy as well as an appreciation of variation across developed countries (mostly OECD member states).

SAMPOL218 Constitution and Politics (spring)

Introduce students to Norwegian Constitutional law, its foundations, the political processes in which it is embedded, and current challenges - all in a comparative context. The course is an interdisciplinary project between the Faculty of Social Sciences, department of Comparative Politics and the Faculty of Law, and addresses the topic both from a legal and a social science perspective.

SAMPOL270 American Government and Politics (fall)

The course offers a theoretical and empirical introduction to the US political system with topics emphasizing the constitution, separation of powers, federalism, cleavages, party system, political participation, and economic policy. Students will acquire basic knowledge on and understanding of the organization and operations of the political system of the United States.

NEW COURSES SPRING 2017:

SAMPOL2xx Terrorism and counterterrorism

SAMPOL2xx Politics in the developing world

Master courses (300-level)

OBS: Master level courses are subject to change each semester. Normally each research group will offer one elective course in English every spring semester.

These courses are offered spring 2016

SAMPOL319 Democracy: Liberalism and Its Critics

Liberalism and Its Critics: Classic and Contemporary is a graduate research seminar on political philosophy which focuses on theories which have high relevance for the subfield of comparative politics: democracy, civil society, power, the state.

SAMPOL327: The Politics of Gender: Citizenship, representation and development

This course examines current debates in the discipline of politics about gender and sexuality. It will seek to elucidate a number of important debates related to gender centred round three main issues: (a) equality and difference, (b) participation and power, and (c) work and care.