

SOC40810 - Introduction to Comparative Social Change: Concepts and Cases

Module Information	
Module Code	SOC40810
Module Title	Introduction to Comparative Social Change: Concepts and Cases
Department	Sociology
Year Group	MSc in Comparative Social Change
Module Personnel	Dr Gerard Boucher
Academic Year	2026-27
Credit Weighting	10 ECTS
Semester	Semester 1
Contact Hours	1 2hr lecture per week

Module Content	
Module Description	Rather than a constant, stable structure, our social reality is in flux. Seemingly permanent fixtures of our social, demographic and political landscape fade, suddenly collapse and emerge within remarkably short periods of time. From the fall of the Berlin Wall to the Brexit and from the Arab Spring to the Syrian Refugee Crisis, social currents ebb and flow in seeming unpredictable ways. Rather than accept that our society evolves randomly, this module seeks to offer insight into the theory and logic of social change. The study of social change within and between societies is a central concern in classical and contemporary sociology. This module critically examines some of the sociological theories and concepts that have been devised to analyse comparative social change. It focuses in particular on theories and concepts of state-society relations and on institutionalism as a perspective to better understand and explain social change across societies. It then critically applies these theories and concepts to a selection of historical and contemporary case studies of countries, regions and social movements. The main aim of the case studies is to illustrate some of the durable

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	concepts, robust findings, internal differences and unresolved issues in the study of comparative social change.
Module Learning Aims	
Learning Outcomes	• Demonstrate ability to critically analyse sociological theories and concepts of comparative social change; • Show capacity to critically apply theories and concepts of comparative social change to selected case-studies; • Exhibit personal, social and communication skills useful for active contribution to a group presentation; • Demonstrate critical writing ability to construct, support and summarise an argument that links concepts and cases of comparative social change.
Indicative Reading / Resources	Allen, K. and O'Boyle, B. (2013) <i>Austerity Ireland: The Failure of Irish Capitalism</i> London: Pluto Press. Appelbaum, R. and Henderson, J. (eds.) (1992) <i>States and Development in the Asia-Pacific Rim</i>. London: Sage. Arrighi, G. (2009) <i>The Long Twentieth Century</i>. London: Verso. Arbrutyn, S. (2014) <i>Revisiting Institutionalism in Sociology</i>. New York: Routledge. Avdagic, S., Rhodes, M. and Visser, J. (eds.) (2011) <i>Social Pacts in Europe: Emergence, Evolution, and Institutionalization</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (2005) <i>The New Spirit of Capitalism</i>. London: Verso. Brinton, M. and Nee, V. (eds.) (2001) <i>The New Institutionalism in Sociology</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Castells, M. (2015) <i>Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age</i>. Cambridge: Polity. Crouch, C. (2011) <i>The Strange Non-Death of Neo-Liberalism</i>. Cambridge: Polity Press. Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (2006) <i>Social Movements: An Introduction</i> (2nd Edition) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. Hall, P. A. and Soskice, D. W. (eds.) (2001) <i>Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Hobsbawm, E. (1999) <i>Industry and Empire</i>. London: Penguin. Ó Riain, S. (2014) <i>The Rise and Fall of Ireland's Celtic Tiger</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Sassen, S. (1998) <i>Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money</i> New York: The New Press.

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	Vogel, E.F. (1993) The Four Little Dragons. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press. Wallerstein, I. (2007) World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction Durham: Duke University Press. Zielonka, J. (2014) Is the EU Doomed? Cambridge: Polity.

Assessment	
Assessment Components	Concept Analysis – Week 4 (500 words): 15% Applied Analysis – Week 8 (1,000 words): 25% End of Trimester Essay (1,500 words): 60%
Assessment Details	

Additional Information	
Prerequisites	None
Co-requisites	None
Any other information	