

Comparative Sociology of Europe (1) | SOU33061

Year	Senior Fresh
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	
Pre-requisite	
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	
Contact Email	

Module Outline:

Cross-national comparative research is a fundamental building block of sociological research. While different views on its purpose and methodology co-exist, one can argue that comparative sociology in general aims to advance sociological knowledge by either describing and exploring social phenomena across various countries and societies, establishing the degree of generalizability of findings, considering the significance and effects of nation specific contexts and institutions for social outcomes, or providing causal explanations at multiple levels of theoretical inference. A long tradition of comparative research has furthered our understanding in numerous fields such as social revolutions, social policy and welfare programmes, occupational and social stratification, inter- and intragenerational social mobility, education and schooling, poverty, health inequalities, or gender relations.

Comparative Sociology of Europe 1 introduces students to the intellectual world of comparative sociology and cross-national research. The module explicitly eschews a textbook approach because principles of comparative research develop heavily in the practice of comparative research and few if any good introductory textbooks exist. Instead, the module approaches the breadth of comparative sociological research by focusing on selected seminal works and debates as they have been emerging in the field. Therefore, the seminar will predominantly rely on high-quality peer-reviewed journal articles and material from selected books and edited volumes. Students will benefit of this approach as they will, first, discover the variety of perspectives as well as the partly fierce debates characterizing the corpus of comparative sociology and, second, get familiar with actual research that build upon comparative rationales and cross-national data.

The module setup follows two major objectives. *First*, students will learn more about the *comparative method per se*, in particular the aims as well as theoretical and methodological underpinnings of comparative sociological research programmes. We will discover various ways of doing comparative research and how they connect to sociological theory and manifest in concrete research strategies and designs. *Second*, students will get familiar with selected classical and more recent works in comparative sociological research. As the substantive body of literature in comparative sociology is vast, a focus is set to topics related to welfare statism in Europe, social mobility and social stratification, inequality of educational opportunity, and the gender revolution.



Learning Aims:

The Module aims:

- to provide an overview to theoretical and analytical debates on international comparative research across Europe and beyond;
- to assess common challenges in applying quantitative and qualitative techniques to specific 'real-world' sociological questions from a comparative perspective;
- to provide a complex understanding of how European societies differ around key selected sociological phenomena at the social, policy and cultural level;
- to critically address various empirical strategies to study cross-country differences in contemporary social science research.

This course has several primary objectives. One goal is to familiarise you with the methodological and epistemological debates concerning qualitative research. The second is to give you a number of practical, applied tools during the course of the semester. The third objective is to give you an opportunity to practice and implement these tools and reflect on the research experience. The fourth is to read and discuss work by qualitative researchers, especially focusing on the lessons they learned and the challenges they faced.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able:

- To reflect around theoretical approaches on cross-national comparative sociology;
- To describe the peculiarities, diversity and similarities of contemporary European societies in their social and demographic structures and dynamics;
- To critically examine comparative research to reflect advantages and shortcomings of various types of research designs;
- To develop the ability to use advanced methodological strategies to rigorously compare countries and regions around 'real-world' sociological phenomena.

Assessment:

Coursework 100%

Attendance at seminars is compulsory. Failure to attend at least half of the seminars will automatically result in a 10% deduction (one full grade) from the overall grade.

Without an authorised extension, the mark given will be lowered by one grade.



Recommended Reading List:

Some general books, while only recommended, can provide useful knowledge for students to prepare the content of the module around some of the key topics covered in class. The following books could provide a useful guide for students:

- Breen, R. (Ed.) (2004). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Immerfall, S., and Therborn, G. (2010). *Handbook of European Societies. Social Transformations in the 21st century*. New York et al: Springer.
- Mau, S., and Verwiebe, R. (2010). *European Societies. Mapping Structure and Change*. Bristol: Policy Press.

More literature and research papers will be provided via Blackboard.