

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Political Science 225
North Dakota State University

What is Political Science?

What is Political Science?

Definition

Political science is the study of politics in a scientific manner.

Ok, but what does this mean?

What Political Science is Not

- Modern history
- Journalism
- Getting involved/political action
- Policy?

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Where might we observe politics?

- At work
- In the family
- In a city council
- At the United Nations

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 - Heads of state
 - Legislatures
 - Bureaucracies
 - Courts

The Comparative Method

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- Generalization
- Example: Democracy

Big Questions in Comparative Politics

Comparative politics is a large field but has focused on a number of 'big' questions:

- Why is there such variation in how political interests are organized?
- Why do some democracies work better than others?
- Why have some countries democratized while others remain authoritarian?
- Why do some countries have healthier economies than others?
- Why do some countries experience internal violence?

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 - Example: Northern vs southern Europe
- Institutional accounts focus on strategic decision-making under constraints
 - Pro: Generalizable and precise
 - Con: Oversimplifies human behavior
 - Example: Presidential vs parliamentary government