

## Key terms + ideas

- the state
- regime
- government
- comparative method
- hypothesis
- method of agreement
- method of difference
- correlation vs. causation

## Key questions

### Q: Why do we study comparative politics (CP)?

**A:** We study comparative politics to describe and explain as Lasswell encapsulates “who gets what, when and how” (as cited in Samuels 2013, p. 4) in different places around the world. And because it’s fun!

### Q: What is the comparative method? What are its goals?

**A:** The comparative method seeks to compare and contrast cases that are similar with different outcomes or cases that are different with the same outcome. Its goal is to generate hypotheses that explain the essential task of comparative politics.

### Q: What are the challenges that researchers and readers tackle in CP?

**A:** Challenges arise in comparative politics when we try to (1) separate correlation from causation, (2) identify causation, and (3) access unreliable data. In short, there are many challenges but good work is often upfront about its limitations. All of these challenges are good things to keep in mind as you read and analyze the material in this course.

### Q: What are the schools of approaches to CP?

**A:** There are many ways of explaining the basic question of comparative politics. The camps tend to be grouped as the economic (otherwise known as structuralist), cultural, voluntarist, and institutional modes.

### Q: What is a state? How is it different from a regime or government?

**A:** As Professor Levitsky described in the lecture, Weber defines the state as an organization with the monopoly of legitimate force over a given territory. We can think of a government as a group of people or organization that holds that monopoly whereas a regime describes the monopoly’s system of rule.

## Week's readings

- David Samuels, *Comparative Politics* (Pearson, 2013), pp. 4-25.
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Penguin 2002), pp. 1-36, 67-87, 105-122.
  - As Professor Levitsky noted, this is a complex reading! So focus on the main argument and don't get bogged down in the details.

## Review questions

Check your understanding of this week's material and key ideas with the following questions.

1. What are the main critiques of each school of approach to comparative politics?
2. What is a hypothesis? What are the characteristics of a good hypothesis?
3. What types of cases do comparativists study? List some examples.
4. How does the "method of agreement" or "method of difference" help us establish causality? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
5. How can we collect and evaluate evidence in comparative research?

## References

Samuels, David (2013). *Comparative Politics*. Pearson.