Wahlmodul
Comparative Welfare State Analysis

VVZ 4395
HS 2012
AND 2-48
Wednesday, 16.15-18.00h

1. General information

What is a welfare state and why does it exist in capitalist economies? Why did welfare states develop at such different speed and why have they become so different cross-nationally in their extent of generosity and redistribution? Do globalization and post-industrialization threaten welfare states? What are the most important current challenges to welfare policies, such as old age, unemployment or sickness insurance, and which policies present the most urgent needs for reform?

These are questions that are at the core of this seminar. Our goal is to reach a nuanced understanding of current welfare policy trends through cross-national comparison. Therefore, we will read and discuss both fundamental text of comparative welfare state analysis and recent theories and approaches in comparative political economy.

The readings for this seminar are substantial and mostly in English. Successful participation includes a short oral presentation, written discussion questions, passing a written exam at the end of the semester, and active participation. For details on requirements, see part 4 of this syllabus.
2. Course program

Course block I: The development of Western welfare states in the 20th century: trends, types and typologies

September 19th
Session 1: Organization and introduction

September 26th
Session 2: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: typologies of welfare regimes

How and why does social policy differ between countries? Research on welfare regimes distinguishes between different types of welfare states, which have developed after the second World War. Which are the distinctive criteria that separate different regime types? What are the distinctive distributive effects of these regime types and for whom? Which regimes redistribute the most? More generally: who are the winners and losers of welfare states in the three regimes Esping-Andersen distinguishes?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings:


October 3rd
Session 3: Determinants of welfare state development I: “Power resources”

“Power resources” became the dominant approach in welfare state research in the 1980s. How do proponents of this approach explain welfare state development? What are the most important driving forces? Why and to what extent does the design and generosity of welfare policies vary between countries?

How benefits from the welfare state in Esping-Andersen’s three regimes?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings:


October 10th session cancelled
October 17th

Session 4: Determinants of welfare state development II: “Varieties of Capitalism” and Institutionalism

The Power resources approach and Esping-Andersen’s typology have caused many debates and criticism. Two of these “answers” are alternative approaches in themselves: “Varieties of Capitalism” and institutionalist arguments.

a) proponents of institutionalist approaches argue that the analysis of power relations alone is not sufficient: political institutions have their own, independent influence on the design and size of welfare states. Which institutions are relevant? What does this argument change about the typology of Esping-Andersen’s three worlds of welfare capitalism?

b) To what extent is “Varieties of Capitalism VoC” an alternative to power resources and to institutionalist accounts of the welfare state? How do proponents of VoC explain the development of the welfare state? Who benefits from social policy? What are “institutional complementarities”?

How could we test which explanation of welfare state development (power resources, institutionalism, VoC) is the most accurate?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings


**October 24th**

**Session 5: Switzerland – Policies and typological contextualization**

In comparative perspective, the Swiss welfare state has developed very slowly and late. Even today, it remains of a very moderate size comparatively. How can we make sense of this in the light of the previously discussed theories (power resources, institutionalism, varieties of capitalism)?

The positioning of the Swiss welfare state within Esping-Andersen’s typology was contested for a long time. Why? Which type would you attribute it to? Who benefits from social policy in Switzerland?

**Obligatorische Lektüre:**


**Vertiefende Lektüre:**


**October 31st**

**Session 6: Globalization and post-industrialization: Challenges to the welfare state?**

The context of welfare policy has changed profoundly since the 1970s: while politics revolved around the extension and construction of the social security during the post-war years, the signs suddenly turned to financial consolidation and austerity from the 1980s onwards.

Where does this pressure on the welfare state come from? What exactly are the “challenges” that derive from globalization and post-industrialization on “industrial welfare states? To what extent are these challenges different according to different welfare regimes?

**Required readings:**


**Optional additional readings**


Course block II: Welfare states in the post-industrial era: challenges and reactions

November 7th

Session 7: Politics of adaptation: stability or change?

How do welfare states react to the challenges of “permanent austerity”? Pierson has developed a “new politics”-argument of stability and inertia, which holds that welfare policies cannot be retrenched for institutional reasons. Clayton and Pontusson contradict this thesis on the basis of the power resources approach, and so do Allan and Scruggs. According to them, post-industrial politics is indeed characterized by welfare retrenchment. What are the political mechanisms these authors base their arguments on? Why do they reach such different conclusions?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings


November 14\textsuperscript{th}

Session 8: A post-industrial social structure – a changing welfare reform agenda for a changing society and labor market

Austerity is not the only new challenge to the welfare state. In the wake of post-industrialism, labor market structures and family structures change as well, and they create a new set of social needs and demands to which the welfare state is supposed to provide an answer. What are the main changes in labor market and social structures? What are the typically post-industrial social needs and demands? In which regimes do they appear saliently on the agenda and why?

Required readings


Optional additional readings


November 21\textsuperscript{st}

Session 9: Politics of adaptation: new social risks and social investment policies

A strand in the recent welfare literature argues that new social risks create pressure for new and additional social protection and a new social policy paradigm: social investment. What are new social risks? Who is affected by them and how do they differ from the “old” social risks? What is social investment and in what sense does it differ from traditional social policy? What are the chances that welfare states adapt to the new challenges?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings


November 28th

Session 10: Politics of adaptation: dualization of welfare states

A rapidly growing literature argues that welfare states are becoming increasingly „dualized“: this means that they differentiate benefits and services between labor market insiders and labor market outsiders.

What do we mean by „dualization“? Which two groups are to be distinguished? Where does dualization come from? Is it structurally caused or politically made? Is dualization welfare retrenchment? Does it necessarily lead to more inequality?

Required readings:


Palier, Bruno and Kathleen Thelen (2010). “Institutionalizing Dualism: Complementarities and Change in France and Germany”.

Optional additional readings:


December 5th

Session 11: Conflict lines in the post-industrial “modernization” of welfare states and the new partisan politics of the welfare state

Post-industrial welfare politics involves different political conflict lines and cleavages. Is the class conflict still relevant? Which other/new conflict lines structure postindustrial social policy reform processes?

What does this change in conflict lines imply for power relations between actors, coalitions and reform outputs?

Required readings:


Optional additional readings


December 12th

Session 12: Switzerland – recent reforms and politics

What is the impact of the new context (financial pressure, new social risks) on recent social policy developments in the Swiss welfare state? Given the many veto points in the Swiss political system, we would expect stability rather than change. Can the Swiss welfare state be reformed? Does it need to be reformed? In what direction?

Required readings


Optional additional readings


December 19th

Session 13: Written exam
3. Organization / Presentation / Written Exam

Materials
All course material – slides, readings - will be available through OLAT to registered students.

Oral presentations
Registered students need to give a short (max. 10 min) oral presentation on the topic (i.e. the readings) of one of the sessions. The presentation is NOT supposed to summarize the readings. Rather, students should present those 3-5 aspects they consider the most relevant in these readings. These can be points of criticism or positive aspects, or also just the most interesting or important aspects of a text. Thereby, they should argue a) what is said in the texts on this aspect, b) why they consider this relevant for the literature and c) why they personally consider this relevant.

Topics for oral presentations are distributed directly on a first come, first served basis in the first session of the seminar.

Questions for discussion
Registered participants need to send in written questions and/or contributions for discussion for 4 of the 12 sessions on the electronic learning platform OLAT. You can choose the sessions for which you send questions freely. Deadline for sending in these questions is Sunday before a course block, at midnight.

Written exam
There is a written exam at the end of the semester, in the last session (December 19th). The exam is open book.

Credit points
To receive the 4 credit points for this seminar, you need to fulfill both parts satisfactorily (oral presentation & written questions for discussion; written exam). The oral presentation counts for 30%, the written exam for 70% of the final grade.