4182 Comparative Public Policy

Institution: International Institute of Social Studies, EUR

Year, Block: Year 1, Block 1

Course type: Core course

Assessment: Assignment 1 (presentation): 40%

Assignment 2 (essay): 60%

ECTS: 5

Brief description (including learning outcomes):

This course builds on the problem situating approach of the ISS York IBEI Mundus MAPP tracks and therefore considers comparative public policy as an object of critical study. Under this premise, a fundamental question of the course concerns the role of comparison in public policy analysis, and the rationale, strengths and limitations of comparative approaches. To address this question, the course first provides a brief historical perspective on the emergence of the comparative tradition as a response to more traditional rationalist (i.e. deductivist) approaches to policy making. It presents the comparative perspective as an attempt to better ground government interventions in the contextual specificities of the populations they seek to benefit. The course also integrates examples of policy making across different sectors, including education, health and environmental policy, to encourage discussion and reflection linking students' own experiences in policy making with contemporary critical perspectives on comparative public policy.

While the course aims to strengthen students' skills in producing public policy analyses that can be translated into specific policy instruments, such as policy briefs, it also encourages students to develop a critical perspective on the production of knowledge and evidence around policy problems. In this way, the course seeks to build a coherent bridge from mainstream approaches to comparative public policy to broader theoretical and philosophical discussions on the institutional, governance and contextual conditions of possibility of effective policy making, thereby setting the scene for the core Mundus MAPP courses in the following academic terms.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the main arguments within the comparative tradition and assess its rationale, strengths and contributions to public policy analysis and policy making.
2. Critically evaluate the limitations of the comparative public policy tradition, particularly regarding its capacity to account for context and the broader conditions of possibility that shape policy making.

3. Produce comprehensive policy briefs grounded in a comparative perspective that draw on evidence and good practice, while critically reflecting on the possibilities and limitations of these approaches.