

University of Cologne  
Cologne Center for Comparative Politics  
Summer Term 2025

Course: **Current Questions in International and Comparative Political Economy**  
Module: SM Vertiefung Politikwissenschaft (PO 2021) (6 ECTS)  
Dates & Room: April 16<sup>th</sup> (first session) 4:00-5:30 pm → Seminar room 0.A.01 (Bauwens-Building)  
May 9<sup>th</sup> → Block Day 1 → 09:00 am - 05:00 pm → Room 3.40 (IBW Building)  
May 30<sup>th</sup> → Block Day 2 → 09:00 am - 05:00 pm → Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)  
June 26<sup>th</sup> → Individual office hours session (online)  
July 11<sup>th</sup> → Block Day 3 → 09:00 am - 05:00 pm → Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

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Office hours: By request

## Course Description

Reflecting current research questions in international and comparative political economy the seminar presents analytical approaches and methods used in the international comparative analysis of capitalism. Thus, the seminar covers some of the most important challenges political economies have been dealing with: the advent of the financial sector (financialization), the emergence of digital capitalism, the challenge of climate change, and the rise of geoeconomics. Through a combination of theories, concepts, and methods, the seminar illustrates how to analyze political economies across countries and over time and situate them in the international context. Students that have successfully participated in the seminar are able to understand current research in comparative political economy and international political economy and are prepared to conduct their own research in the field. The seminar is divided into three blocks: 1. Current Questions in Comparative Political Economy, 2. Current Questions in International Political Economy, 3. Mini-Conference on Students Research Designs.

## Learning Objectives

The aim of the seminar is to enable participants to understand and contribute to discussions on recent debates in comparative and international political economy. Participants will also develop in-depth knowledge of common concepts in comparative and international political economy and gain more in-depth experience in writing empirical research papers.

## Prerequisites

Knowledge of basic concepts and methods of political science is required. Prior knowledge of political economy is an asset and we strongly recommend having taken the introductory lecture prior to attending the seminar. Participants are asked to engage in active discussions based on preparatory readings. To facilitate discussion, the compulsory reading for each session must be read by all participants. Classroom and exam language is English. However, especially in class, no perfection is required.

## Formalities

Registration for the seminar takes place exclusively via Klips. Exam registration also takes place via Klips. The deadline for exam registration will be announced asap. Late registrations cannot be considered.

## Examination

The examination consists of a **15-20 minute** in-class **presentation** (20% of grade) and a **term paper of 4000 words** (80% of grade, length includes: body of text + bibliography, tolerance: +/- 10%). The presentation summarizes the core statements and the research design of a supplementary text. The term paper uses an empirical research design to address a research question that is thematically relevant to the seminar content. Useful resources for writing term papers and the assessment criteria can be found on the website of the Center for Comparative Politics (<https://cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/teaching/information-for-students>). The term paper must be submitted via Ilias by **15.08.2025** (08:00 am) at the latest. There are no exceptions to this deadline. Another prerequisite for successfully passing the exam is the submission of an **exposé** that outlines initial ideas and approaches to the topic of the term paper (**deadline**: 04.07.2025, 08:00 am). Again, there is no exception to this deadline. In the last seminar session, the mini-conference, we will discuss the student's exposés to best prepare them for work on their term paper. The exposés are not graded and serve the sole purpose of helping to develop the paper. Before submitting the exposé, there will also be an opportunity to discuss initial ideas for the exposé/term paper during office hours (see scheduled session on June 26<sup>th</sup>). Further details on the examination (presentation, exposé, term paper) will be provided in the first seminar session. In this session we will also assign the presentation dates.

## Plagiarism & Artificial Intelligence

Each term paper must include a declaration (see point 5 of artificial intelligence rules) confirming that it was written independently and only with the resources specified. All submissions will be checked with plagiarism software. The following rules apply to the use of **artificial intelligence**:

Studying at university is not only about learning subject-specific skills, but also about developing general skills such as critical and structured thinking. The benefits and limitations of AI therefore need to be considered independently by each student. In general, AI can enhance the research process, but it cannot replace it. Whenever AI is used, the following points must be strictly adhered to:

1. Students must undertake independent research, and it must be recognizable as their own work.
2. Students must make the use of AI as transparent as possible and document its use. This includes identifying the content involved, the purpose of the use, the model used, the prompts and settings used, the date of retrieval, and the storage of generated content. If AI tools are used for text processing that goes beyond spellchecking, this must be indicated in a footnote at the beginning of the paper, citing the model used.
3. AI models are not authors and AI-generated content is not a scholarly source and cannot be cited as such.
4. Students are solely responsible for the accuracy of the content. This means that they must correctly cite the sources of the information they use, avoid plagiarism and prevent the spread of false information (e.g. AI hallucinations).
5. According to the current Joint Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Cologne (GPO), the declaration of independence must be worded as follows: "I hereby affirm that I have completed the present work independently and without the use of any aids other than those stated. All parts that have been taken literally or analogously from published and unpublished third-party sources, including content generated by AI tools, have been marked as such." (§12(2b), GPO, November 24, 2024)

## Course Schedule

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 4:00 - 5:30 pm; Seminar room 0.A.01 (Bauwens-Building)

### Session 1: Introduction

No mandatory readings

**Attention:** Attending this session is mandatory to take part in the seminar as we assign the presentations!

## Part I: Current Questions in Comparative Political Economy (May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025)

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May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 9:00 - 10:30 am; Room 3.40 (IBW Building)

### Session 2: Digitalization & the Platform-Model of the Firm

Mandatory reading(s):

- RAHMAN, K. Sabeel and Kathleen THELEN. 2019. "The Rise of the Platform Business Model and the Transformation of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism". *Politics & Society*, 47(2): 177-204.

Supplementary reading(s):

- SCHWAN, Michael, Christine TRAMPUSCH and Jonas HORN. 2024. "How Industry 4.0 Inc. shakes the supremacy of top dogs: The digital transformation of German industry and new corporate networks" Unpublished Manuscript.
- BARWISE, Patrick and Leo WATKINS. 2018. "The evolution of digital dominance: how and why we got to GAFA". In: Moore, Martin & Tambini, Damian (eds.). *Digital Dominance. The Power of Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple*. Oxford University Press, 21-49.

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 10:45 am - 12:15 pm; Room 3.40 (IBW Building)

### Session 3: Platform-Power

Mandatory reading(s):

- CULPEPPER, Pepper D. and Raphael REINKE. 2014. "Structural Power and Bank Bailouts in the United Kingdom and the United States." *Politics & Society* 42(4): 427-54. *[Focus on theory-section!]*
- CULPEPPER, Pepper D. and Kathleen THELEN. "Are We All Amazon Primed? Consumers and the Politics of Platform Power" *Comparative Political Studies* 53(2): 288-318.

Supplementary reading(s):

- SEIDL, Timo. 2020. "The politics of platform capitalism: A case study on the regulation of Uber in New York" *Regulation & Governance* 16(2): 357-374.
- LINDBLOM, Charles E. 1982. "The Market as Prison." *The Journal of Politics*, 44(2): 324-336.

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 1:15 - 2:45 pm; Room 3.40 (IBW Building)

#### **Session 4: Digitalization of Work**

Mandatory reading(s):

- HASSEL, Anke and Felix SIEKER. 2022. "The platform effect: How Amazon changed work in logistics in Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom". *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 28(3): 363-382.

Supplementary reading(s):

- HELMERICH, Nicole, Gale RAY-REICHERT, and Sabrina ZAJAK. 2021. "Exercising association networked power through the use of digital technology by workers in global value chains" *Competition & Change*, 25(2): 142-166.

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 3:00 - 4:30 pm; Room 3.40 (IBW Building)

#### **Session 5: Financialization & Climate Change: The Rise of the Big 3**

Mandatory reading(s):

- FICHTNER, Jan, Eelke M. HEEMSKERK, and Javier GARCIA-BERNARDO. 2017. "Hidden power of the Big Three? Passive index funds, re-concentration of corporate ownership, and new financial risk". *Business and Politics* 19(2): 298-326.

Supplementary reading(s):

- BAINES, Joseph and Sandy Brian HAGER. 2023. "From passive owners to planet savers? Asset managers, carbon majors and the limits of sustainable finance" *Competition & Change*, 27(3-4): 449-471.
- LAZONICK, William and Mary O'SULLIVAN. 2000 "Maximizing Shareholder Value: A New Ideology for Corporate Governance" *Economy & Society* 29(1): 13-35.

## Part II: Current Questions in International Political Economy (May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025)

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May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 9:00 - 10:30 am; Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

### Session 6: Basics & Classics of International Industrial Policy and Development

Mandatory reading(s):

- OQUBAY, Arkebe. 2020. "The Theory and Practice of Industrial Policy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Industrial Policy*, edited by Arkebe Oqubay, Christopher Cramer, Ha-Joon Chang, and Richard Kozul-Wright, 17–60. Oxford University Press.

Supplementary Reading(s):

- DOBBIN, Frank. 1994. *Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 1 – Political Culture and Industrial Rationality]
- EVANS, Peter B. 1995. *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. [Chapter 3 – States]

May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 10:45 am - 12:15 pm; Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

### Session 7: Global Chains – Commodity and Value

Mandatory reading(s):

- GEREFFI, Gary. 1994. "The Organization of Buyer-Driven Global Commodity Chains; How U.S. Retailers Shape Overseas Production Networks." In *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism*, edited by Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz, 95–122. Praeger Publishers.

Supplementary reading(s):

- GEREFFI, Gary. 1999. "International Trade and Industrial Upgrading in the Apparel Commodity Chain." *Journal of International Economics* 48 (1): 37–70.
- GEREFFI, Gary, John HUMPHREY, and Timothy STURGEON. 2005. "The Governance of Global Value Chains." *Review of International Political Economy* 12 (1): 78–104.

May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 1:15 - 2:45 pm; Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

### Session 8: Global Networks – Production and Financial

Mandatory reading(s):

- HENDERSON, Jeffrey, Peter DICKEN, Martin Hess, Neil COE, and Henry Wai-Chung YEUNG. 2002. "Global Production Networks and the Analysis of Economic Development." *Review of International Political Economy* 9 (3): 436–64.

Supplementary reading(s):

- YEUNG, Henry Wai-chung. 2021. "Regional Worlds: From Related Variety in Regional Diversification to Strategic Coupling in Global Production Networks." *Regional Studies* 55 (6): 989–1010.
- COE, Neil M., Karen P. Y. LAI, and Dariusz WÓJCIK. 2014. "Integrating Finance into Global Production Networks." *Regional Studies* 48 (5): 761–77.

May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 3:00- 4:30 pm; Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

### **Session 9: Geoeconomics, Digital Empire, Green Industrial Policy**

Mandatory reading(s):

- McNAMARA, Kathleen R. 2024. "Transforming Europe? The EU's Industrial Policy and Geopolitical Turn." *Journal of European Public Policy* 31 (9): 2371–96

Supplementary reading(s):

- BRADFORD, Anu. 2023. *Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 1 – Introduction]
- ALLAN, Bentley B., and Jonas NAHM. 2025. "Strategies of Green Industrial Policy: How States Position Firms in Global Supply Chains." *American Political Science Review* 119 (1): 420–34.

## **Part III: Mini-Conference & Term-Papers**

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June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### **Session 10: Individual Office Hours**

**Attention:** Date can change! Individual slots will be assigned beforehand.

July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm; Seminar room S180 (Modulbau)

### **Session 11: How to Write a Term Paper & Mini-Conference**

Mandatory reading(s):

- GSCHWEND, Thomas and Frank SCHIMMELFENNING. 2007. "Designing research in political science - a dialogue between theory and data" In T. Gschwend & F. Schimmelfenning (ed.), *Research design in political science: how to practice what they preach*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

*Discussion of the student's exposés.*