

Revista Andina de Estudios Políticos

ISSN: 2221-4135

<http://www.iepa.org.pe/raep>

Ravecca, Paulo (2016). The comparative politics of political science: Chile and Uruguay in authoritarian times. *Revista Andina de Estudios Políticos*, Vol. VI, N° 1, pp. 4-17.

Artículo Publicado por: Instituto de Estudios Políticos Andinos – IEPA

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THE COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: CHILE AND URUGUAY IN AUTHORITARIAN TIMES

LA POLÍTICA COMPARADA DE LA CIENCIA POLÍTICA: CHILE Y URUGUAY EN TIEMPOS AUTORITARIOS

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Abstract

The article compares the history of political science (PS) in Chile and Uruguay in the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing on research that includes 58 interviews with Chilean and Uruguayan scholars and a systematic analysis of the main academic journals of these countries, it shows that important aspects of the Chilean case have not been fully taken into account by the literature. While in Uruguay PS was indeed undermined by the authoritarian government, in Chile key components of the current institutional infrastructure of the discipline were created during, and sometimes by, the dictatorship. The contrast between these two PS trajectories problematizes the linear narrative ‘democracy→PS’ and provides a more nuanced understanding of the discipline’s development(s) as well as of its political nature(s). In the background of this piece there is a theoretical meditation on the relationship between knowledge and power.

Keywords: History of political science. Power. Dictatorships. Chile. Uruguay.

Resumen

El artículo compara la historia de la ciencia política en Chile y Uruguay en las décadas del 70 y 80. Basándose en una extensa investigación que incluyó 58 entrevistas a politólogos chilenos y uruguayos y el análisis sistemático de las revistas académicas más destacadas de estos países, se demuestra que aspectos relevantes del caso chileno han sido ignorados por la literatura. Mientras que la dictadura uruguaya socavó la ciencia política y la expulsó de las instituciones públicas, en Chile algunos componentes importantes de la actual infraestructura de la disciplina fueron creados durante, y a veces por, la dictadura. El contraste entre estas dos trayectorias problematiza la narrativa lineal ‘democracia→ciencia política’ y aporta a una comprensión más refinada tanto del desarrollo disciplinar como de la naturaleza política de este saber. El marco general del artículo es una reflexión teórica sobre la relación entre el saber y el poder.

Keywords: Historia de la ciencia política. Poder. Dictaduras. Chile. Uruguay.

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THE COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: CHILE AND URUGUAY IN AUTHORITARIAN TIMES

Introduction

The leitmotif of the literature on the history of political science (PS) in Latin America is the discipline's institutionalization, assumed as the primary goal and often measured by the number of programs, publications, and graduates by country (Leyva Botero, 2013; Reveles Vázquez, 2012). The role of political context is usually addressed through a broad explanation of PS' development that links its itinerary to changes in political regime. In this literature as well as in countless academic events, it is often claimed that the incipient PS in the Southern Cone was "paralyzed," "abruptly interrupted" or "trumped" by the right-wing authoritarian regimes of the 1970s (Altman, 2005, p. 4; Altman, 2006, p. 196; Barrientos Del Monte, 2012, p. 22; Bulcourf, 2012, p. 71; Buquet, 2012, p. 6; Fortou, Leyva Botero, Preciado, & Ramírez, 2013, p. 38; Garcé, 2005, p. 235; Huneus, 2006, p. 141; Viacava, 2012, p. 95). At the very least, the social sciences were banned from public universities, and if lucky, had to migrate to private research centers (Huneus, 2006; Lesgart, 2007).

Even though this literature acknowledges that the social sciences were developed under less repressive authoritarian regimes (Brazil and Mexico in particular), it assumes that democracy and PS are 'natural allies'. According to this widespread narrative, PS flourishes within democracy or *against* authoritarianism. Only within liberal democracy do politics not interfere with science (or at least the interference is less damaging). Democracies allow people, including scholars, to talk about politics. Dictatorships do not: they repress knowledge (at most they tolerate it). From this dichotomist point of view there is interference and obstruction (dictatorship of some kind) or there is freedom and rule of law (democracy). Given that our job is to study and talk about politics it is only natural that PS is conceived as the *knowledge of democracy*, developing a normative commitment with this political regime: the one which, after all, allows us to exist! Thus, the dominant perspective regarding the relationship between power, political context, and PS is one of *exteriority*.

In this short article, I compare PS' history in Chile and Uruguay in the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing on research that includes 58 interviews with Chilean and Uruguayan scholars and a systematic analysis of the main academic journals of these countries, I show that the Chilean case has been systematically misread by the literature. While in Uruguay PS was indeed undermined by authoritarianism, in Chile key components of the current institutional infrastructure of the discipline

were created during, *and sometimes by*, the dictatorship.¹ The contrast between these two PS trajectories problematizes the linear narrative ‘democracy→PS’ and provides a more nuanced understanding of the discipline’s development(s) and political nature(s). The last section argues for the need to more carefully explore the relationship between PS and power. What does the fact that there could be PS under a dictatorship say about the discipline, liberalism and politics? *Is PS “clean” of power?*

Contrasting PS trajectories

In Uruguay the mainstream narrative is accurate. PS was not developed during the 1973-1985 right-wing dictatorship. Publicly-funded social science institutions were frozen or were closed. This dictatorship operated through intellectual censorship and persecution, regarding social scientists as enemies. Let me exemplify this through one of the 58 interviews that I conducted in 2012 and 2013. I asked a senior Uruguayan scholar who was a graduate student at The Latin American Center of Human Economy (CLAEH) during the dictatorship if she had read Marx.²

U15: We did read Marxism during the dictatorship but we had to dig the books up because they were buried... so we read from very wet and deteriorated books!

PR: Dig them up!?

U15: Yes, we somehow got a bunch of books such as *Capital*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire* through a senior researcher but they were buried in the backyard of his house. So we had to go there and dig them up. We read them... it was a very thin paper with silk texture. They were really wet! (my translation).

Certainly, Marxism was a natural target for an anticommunist dictatorship, but was simple censorship the only way to deal with this opponent? My interviews, document analysis, and several historiographical debates show an overwhelming consensus: the Uruguayan dictatorship persecuted social sciences and at most tolerated the private research centers created during these years. This concurs with the diagnoses advanced by Altman (2006) and Garcé (2005), among others.

One of the few Uruguayan professors who taught PS in this period at the public School of Law (U8) suggested a subtle detail that contributes to a more nuanced account of this process. In his view, the military persecuted *people* involved in radical politics rather than ideas, theories or disciplines. He observes that he was allowed to teach ‘deviant’ theories because he was not perceived to be a

¹ Heine (2006), for instance, addresses the flourishing of PS during the authoritarian period and on footnote 11 acknowledges the “ambiguous” relationship that the regime had with the discipline. However, his analysis of PS’ take off does not fully consider the *active* role that the regime had in the process and its theoretical implications.

² CLAEH is a private center for higher education and research in Uruguay that is inspired by Christian and progressive ideals. During the dictatorship, it became an important refuge for research and academic life. It is still an active institution.

threat. Despite this, the widespread assumption about the destructive nature of the dictatorship is, on the whole, empirically well-founded. Either because the military at the time hated the social sciences and what they represented or because Uruguayan scholars were overwhelmingly involved in radical politics, the global result remains the same: social sciences were under siege during the dictatorship in Uruguay. Even the Economics discipline did not flourish as was the case in Chile (Markoff & Montecinos, 1994).

The dictatorship's brutality remains in the memory of Uruguayans to such an extent that is difficult to find one single scholar who would say anything positive about the regime. The images with which interviewees describe their relationship with the authoritarian government are very powerful and revealing. The regime was a "monster" unto which one dreams of extirpating an eye or an arm (U3). It was also a long road with a dense fog that paralyzed you (U5), or simply a terrifying oppressive regime that controlled your movements, conversations and thoughts: "We only had spaces in the interstices because control over society was brutal" (U15). For a senior colleague and former director of the Institute of Political Science of the University of the Republic (*IPS-UR*), it was an entire period of life Uruguayans were robbed of: "The dictatorship took away so many things from us. It took so many things away from me. I was 15 in 1973. Imagine everything they took from me from when I was 15 to 24 years old!" (U4).

Uruguayan PS consolidated *after* the transition to democracy: the *IPS-UR*, which still holds a virtual monopoly of PS in the country, was gradually created between 1985 and 1988. In Chile my findings were different.

I visited the Documentation Center of the current Institute of Public Affairs (*INAP*), former Institute of Political Science at the University of Chile (*IPS-UCH*) several times in January 2013. Thanks to one of my first interviews with a librarian recruited in the early 1980s (CH33), I discovered the "Memories of Activities," an institutional newsletter published from 1982 to 1992. As its name suggests, these booklets document the memory of the institution. I was surprised when my interviewee mentioned that Lucía Pinochet, the dictator's daughter, was "a regular" of *IPS'* many activities. The minor anecdote revealed to me that Pinochet's regime was radically different from the Uruguayan dictatorship and that had had significant implications for PS' history in Chile. However, I was going to see something even more illuminating – and shocking. We were sitting at my interviewee's office. It was a hot afternoon but the house of the current *INAP* was pleasantly cool. While listening to her I leafed through the pages of these old documents. From one of them, this picture emerged from the shadows of PS history...



Figure 1. Left: “Memory of Activities 1983”, *IPS-UCH*. Right: Cover of Special Edition of *Política*, *Chile 1973-1983. Enfoques para un decenio* (Chile 1973-1983. Perspectives for a decade), Nov. 1983.

The man in front of the microphone is Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, the authoritarian president of Chile (1973-1990), who through a violent *coup d'état* overthrew the democratically elected president Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973 (Figure 1). This is a picture of the ceremony, held in 1983, in which Pinochet received as a gift the first copy of a special issue of *Política*, the official publication of the *IPS-UCH*. The publication’s title is “Chile 1973-1983: Perspectives for a Decade” and it analyzes the first decade of “Military Government” (as non-detractors call it). This picture is very revealing. To begin with, it plainly shows that there was PS during the dictatorship in Chile in *public* institutions.

The *IPS-UCH* was formally created on November 16, 1981 through legal act 14.251, signed by Brigadier General Alejandro Medina Lois, then President of the University of Chile.³ This means that the Institute was founded during *and by* the dictatorship. *IPS-UCH* would become a prolific publisher and research center. *Political Science Notebooks*, *Society and the Army*, *North American Studies* (supported by the American Embassy) and the journal *Política* were some of its regular publications. In this period, seminars and courses were organized and international academic personalities were invited to publish, give talks and participate in *IPS-UCH*’s activities. Julien Freund, a philosopher well known for introducing Max Weber to France, is just one of several examples (he was invited in June 1982).

Basic elements of the current PS institutional infrastructure were forged during authoritarian times. To the *IPS-UCH* and *Política*, we have to add *Revista Chilena de Ciencia Política* (RCP; since 1979) published by the Institute of Political Science of the Catholic University (*IPS-CU*) and the University

³ University of Chile and the Catholic University are considered the “traditional universities” and the most prestigious institutions for higher education in the country.

of Chile's Master's Program in PS (founded in 1982), with majors in Government and Political Theory. A significant number of high-ranking military members such as Jaime García Covarrubias (heavily involved in both academics *and* bloody repressive activities) would become students of this program.

The Chilean and Uruguayan dictatorships related to the social sciences in radically different ways. A symptom of the different linkages between (academic) knowledge production and (political) context is the contrasting ways in which Marxism, prominent in Latin American academic circles during the 1960s, was treated by the two right-wing authoritarian regimes. As was mentioned before, in Uruguay repression was the *only* logic followed. In Chile the story was more complicated: *knowledge was (re)shaped instead of simply censored*.

A systematic and in-depth analysis of the 188 articles published by *Política* between 1982 and 1989 shows that Marxism was a salient and intense topic of conversation: 42% of the articles addressed some aspect of Marxism in negative terms (Graph 1). In other words, official academia of the time did engage in an intellectual battle with what was seen as its main adversary. Examples of this are "The Marxist conception of society" by Fernando Ocariz and "Does a Humanist Marxism exist?" by Manfred Spieker, both of which appeared in *Política* N°16 in 1988 (Figure 2). Similarly, "The insurrection in Latin America and Chile 1973-1983. A view of theory and practice," an MA Thesis defended by Fernando Opazo Larraín in 1988, extensively discusses Marxism "in theory" as well as the political groups inspired by it (Figure 3).⁴

In Uruguay, Marxism was censored during the dictatorship (1973-1985) and completely ignored afterwards. The consensus around such an indifference is overwhelming (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5, U6, U7, U9, U10, U11, U12, U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U18, U19, U20, U21, U22).⁵ In contrast with the cases of Tocqueville and Locke, for instance, there is not one article in the main Uruguayan PS journal (*RUCP*) published between 1987 and 2012 addressing Marxist theory as its main theme. Marx has been quoted three times in the whole history of the journal (Graph 2). Given the agreement about the strong connection between social sciences and the left in the 1960s and early 1970s (U1, U15), the almost absolute absence of Marxism (including neo and post-Marxism) in *RUCP* is striking. Such a shift points to the ideological transformations that the dictatorship produced in academia, a topic that exceeds the scope of this article and that I have analyzed elsewhere (Ravecca, 2016).⁶

⁴ This and other "neoconservative" theses of the time are significant, especially given that in the Latin American context the academic and social value of BA and MA degrees used to be much higher than in North America.

⁵ In this regard, the testimony of U11, a British scholar living and working in Uruguay, is interesting given that it sheds "comparative" light on the case: "in British academia and intellectual life (Marxism) was present (...) here not at all!"

⁶ 'Marxism' will consistently diminish its presence as a topic after the dictatorship in the Chilean case too, to the point that it practically disappears in the period of 2001-2012.

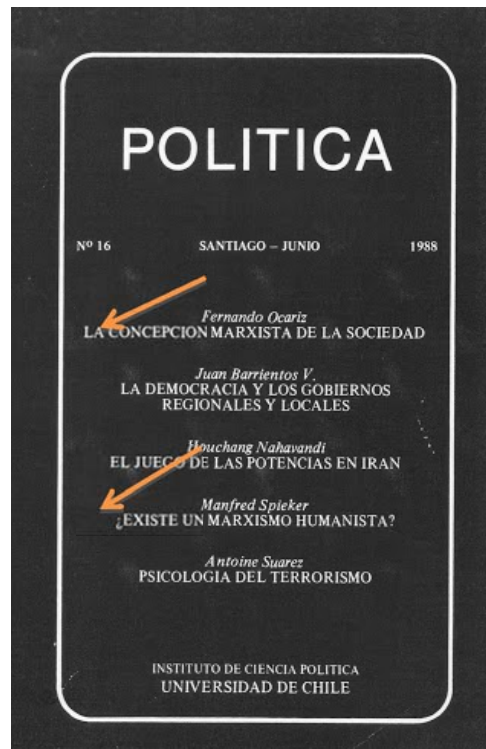


Figure 2. Cover of Journal *Política* N°16, 1988.

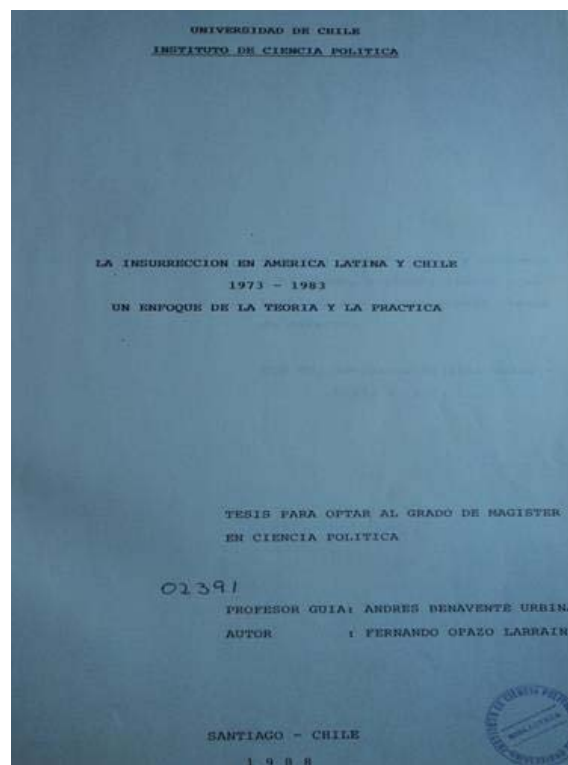
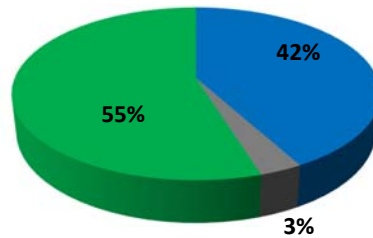


Figure 3. “The insurrection in Latin America and Chile 1973-1983. A View of theory and practice”, Fernando Opazo Larraín. MA Thesis in PS, IPS-UCH, 1988.

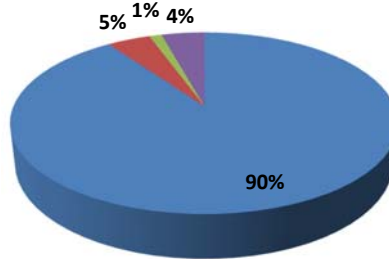
**Graph 1: View of Marxism
Política 1982-1989**

■ Negative ■ Neutral ■ None



**Graph 2: View of Marxism.
RUCP 1987-2012**

■ None ■ Negative ■ Positive ■ Neutral



Context, Power... PS!

The Chilean case challenges the idea that PS is the knowledge of democracy. An objection to my argument may point to the ‘type’ of PS practiced during this period. Some interviewees dismissed what may be called Authoritarian Political Science (APS) (Ravecca, 2015) when I brought it up in conversation. CH4 remarked, “that was academic crap.” He had the misperception that the only topics addressed then were geopolitics and other militaristic “nonsense.”

My aim here is not to assess the academic quality of that PS. However, I must say that I find the intellectual space delineated by, among others, a contribution of philosopher Julien Freund (Freund, 1982) and a piece on Anthony Downs (Wilhelmy, 1982), both of which appeared in the first issue of *Política*, very interesting. *RCP* also shows intellectual vibrancy from the beginning with articles on International Relations and Law (Durán Sepúlveda, 1980; Kunert, 1979; Infante, 1979; Meneses, 1979), politics and freedom of speech (Mac Hale, 1979), political systems, constitutions and democracy (Bravo Lira, 1980; Cea Egaña, 1979; Cuevas Farren, 1979; Merino Medina, 1979) and Political Philosophy (Widow, 1979) to name a few topics of early contributions. These texts are diverse in methods and theories.

To sum up, the contrast between the two cases is sharp. While in Uruguay, social sciences suffered a process of de-institutionalization during the dictatorship (Filgueira, 1974), in Chile, the PS discipline was institutionalized in the most literal sense of the term (i.e., institutions, programs and journals were created *and publicly funded*).⁷ What is more, *Política* and *RCP* published more articles during the authoritarian 1980s (47% and 24%) than in the democratic 1990s (30% and 18% respectively). These findings contradict the literature on PS development in Chile and the region. They suggest the relevance of going beyond commonsensical assumptions about the relationship between democracy and the discipline. Only by carefully locating PS within its context is it possible to make sense of the varied paths of its development.

The exercise also shows that by looking at PS' history we may learn about the politics of the time: in this case, about the nature of the authoritarian regimes of the 1970s and 1980s in Chile and Uruguay. Indeed, exploring knowledges is a potent strategy for tracing operations of power (Foucault, 1991). The implications of this insight are theoretically disruptive: PS' object of inquiry shapes, at least to some extent, PS' analytical discourse. Analysis does not just 'study' the object but in fact reproduces it at the academic level. Knowledge and power are inseparable.

In Chile, the right-wing tone of state-driven academia in the early 1980s is clear, as is the case of American contributions to *Política* (Tambs & Aker, 1982) and to *RCP* (Theberge, 1979; Theberge, 1983). Figure 4 and 5 show the covers of *Política's* special issues on neo-conservatism and neoliberalism. The authors openly support the perspectives under study. The way "democracy", "transition" and the State-Market relation are discussed is in line with the regime's project of producing a "governable democracy" in which "communism" has no room and where Pinochet's economic, political and social legacy is careful protected.

I would not dismiss these academic products because of this. In fact, it is important to note that both 'objective' and critical voices did also have a space. In *RCP*, the 'polyarchic discourse' is present from the very beginning and becomes prominent before the transition (Dahl, 1987-88; Huneus, 1985). *Política* seems to have been more aligned with the regime than *RCP*, but even there Uruguayan scholar Gros Espiel (1983) argues early on for the restoration of the rule of law and pluralism in Uruguay. These findings complicate even more the sustainability of the claim that PS and democracy are always linked.

⁷ Gustavo Cuevas Farren, the *IPS* Director at the Catholic University and subsequently at the University of Chile, explicitly claimed that his objective was to contribute to PS development in Chile while analyzing and solving the problems linked to "the political-institutional evolution of the country" (Cuevas Farren, 1991, p. 114). He supported the dictatorship.

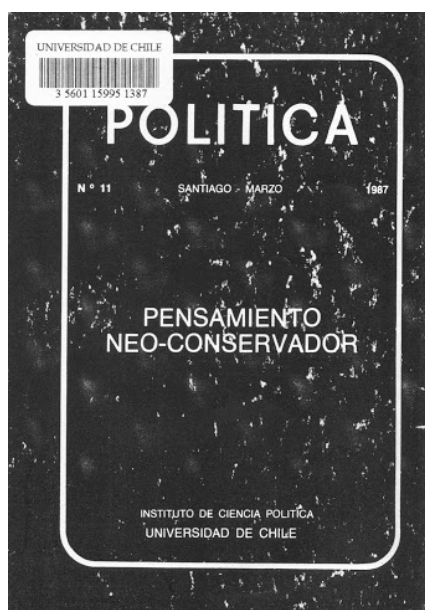


Figure 4. Cover of Special Issue of *Política* on “Neoconservative Thinking”, n°11, 1987.



Figure 5. Cover of Special issue of *Política* on “The entrepreneurial role of the State” and “Politics and Social Communication”, n°13, 1987.

The future historian of Latin American academia might find it strange that *political* scientists at the beginning of the 21st century understood the development of their discipline in apolitical terms. So far, the issue of power relations is absent in the regional conversation about PS' history. If politics are conceived *just* as a threat (dictatorship) or as a support (democracy) for the *existence* of the discipline, the complexity of the substantial linkages between PS and politics is erased from the analysis.

Critical theories have extensively showed through different vocabularies that an exercise of power that talks and thinks is more effective than a culturally naked power (Cox, 1987; Foucault, 1991; Gramsci, 2008). Powers that deploy ways of knowing generate 'culture' and thus (re)shape social existence. Gramsci's old notion of hegemony proves to be a solid analytical tool, again. Indeed, the Chilean dictatorship was legitimate in Weberian language and hegemonic in Gramscian terms and that is why not so long ago one could still encounter a group of young people at some random corner in Santiago proudly holding banners with Pinochet's face, while in Uruguay any analogous situation is unthinkable. In a word, the Chilean dictatorship was 'smart' and attempted to reshape the country so that it could to some extent keep the transition to democracy under (its) control (Lechner, 1990; Mayol, 2012; Mella, 2011; Moulián, 2002). This meant it had to engage with the democratic discourse, and knowledge in general, in an active way.

PS' discourse and institutional development during this period was not untouched by this process. PS was implicated in the devices and public narratives that transformed power relations in Chile such as the Constitution of 1980, the neoliberal agenda and the scorn of Marxism and radical politics. Pinochet's intellectually dense regime was perhaps more violent than the Uruguayan dictatorship, but it also left a powerful legacy on many fronts that included a new electoral system that remains today.⁸ By *critically* approaching PS' development, we learn more about the complex history of power.

Ahead, we have the fascinating task of extending this perspective towards a critical engagement with liberal democracies and their own politics of knowledge that we, political scientists, are currently part of.

⁸ *Política's* contributors Marín Vicuña (1986) and Bambach (1986) focus on electoral systems. Marín Vicuña (1986) assumes the point of view of 'protected democracy'. The argument goes as follows: between 1963 and 1973, the partisan competition pushed the political system towards the left and weakened the right (139). The policy implication was to strengthen the center by applying the electoral binomial system combined with the political presence of the military.

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DESAFÍOS

ISSN 0124-4035 • ISSN E 2145-5112

dx.doi.org/10.12804/desafios



DESAFÍOS • NÚMERO 28-I • PP. 9-462
UNIVERSIDAD DEL ROSARIO • BOGOTÁ
dx.doi.org/10.12804/desafios28.1.2016

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Christian Völkel



Universidad del
Rosario



Maestría de Investigación en Política Comparada Convocatoria 2016-2018

Objetivo

Esta maestría busca formar investigadores con destrezas teóricas y metodológicas para afrontar el estudio de los distintos fenómenos sociales de los que se ocupa la Política Comparada, entendida como un sub campo de la Ciencia Política.

¿A quién va dirigida?

La maestría va dirigida a profesionales de las Ciencias Sociales en general y de la Ciencia Política en particular, interesados en mejorar su bagaje teórico y habilidades metodológicas para describir e interpretar los problemas clave de la vida política de los distintos países de América Latina.

Plan de estudios*

Formación general

Teoría política
Política comparada
Economía política comparada
Historia política de América Latina
Teoría de la Democracia

Investigación

La Lógica de la investigación científica en los estudios
de Política comparada
Métodos cualitativos y mixtos
Métodos cuantitativos
Estadística aplicada a la Política comparada
Taller de tesis I, II y III

Especialización/Optativas**

Partidos y Sistemas de Partidos
Sociedad civil, movilización y participación
Sistemas Políticos comparados
Instituciones políticas
Cortes de justicia y legislaturas en América Latina
Elecciones y procesos electorales
Comunicación política
Opinión pública

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Presentación de solicitud de admisión: hasta el 27 de mayo de 2016.



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