
COMPARATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Political Science 4063

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Tu & Th 9:00 – 10:20
203 Woodin Hall
Fall 2016

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is dedicated to the comparative analysis of political institutions, which in comparative politics are viewed as either rules or organizations. The primary orientation of the course material lies in state governmental institutions, although some social institutions will also be examined. The course focuses on what has come to be called the "new institutionalism," which adopts a more decidedly structural or state-centric approach to politics. It emphasizes the relative autonomy of political institutions, and thus seeks to present a counterweight to the predominant view of politics as merely a reflection of the aggregation of individual preferences and behaviors. If it can be argued that individuals and institutions impact each other, the new institutionalism focuses primary attention on how relatively autonomous political institutions (i.e., rules and organizations) affect individual political behavior and impact the performance of the political system. As a result, it is assumed that (a) the design of institutions is a major determinant of the behavior and performance of political actors, and (b) that institutions can be engineered to produce more or less predictable results.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

First, each student is expected to attend each and every class session. Second, it is imperative that students keep pace with the reading assignments. Come to class having already read the assigned materials for that day. Third, each student must sit for two examinations. The first examination is scheduled for our class session on Tuesday, October 11. The second examination is set for the final examination day on Thursday, December 8, 3:00-5:00. The examinations are non-cumulative, and are each weighted at 35 percent of the course grade. Finally, each student is required to write a short (approximately 1800 words of text) essay on one of the themes listed at the end of this syllabus. This paper is weighted at the remaining 30 percent of the course grade and is due no later than Tuesday, November 29. See the detailed instructions for this assignment at the end of this syllabus.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades for the course will be based on the following thresholds, reflective of both LSU's new +/- grading scale and the LSU *General Catalog*, which stipulates that the various letter grades reflect the following levels of mastery of the course material. Each student will be assigned a grade in the highest category below that matches their final course average.

“A” indicates “distinguished mastery”

A+ = final averages of 97 and above

A = final averages of 93 and above

A- = final averages of 90 and above

“B” indicates “good mastery”

B+ = final averages of 87 and above

B = final averages of 83 and above

B- = final averages of 80 and above

“C” indicates “acceptable mastery”

C+ = final averages of 77 and above

C = final averages of 73 and above

C- = final averages of 70 and above

“D” indicates “minimally acceptable achievement for credit”

D+ = final averages of 67 and above

D = final averages of 63 and above

D- = final averages of 60 and above

“F” indicates “failing”

F = final averages below 60

TEXTS

The following books are required for the course, and are available at the bookstore. Additional assigned readings are available on the course Moodle page.

Arend Lijphart (2012). Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Giovanni Sartori (1996). Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes, second edition (New York: New York University Press).

COURSE CALENDAR

August 23, 25	Introduction to the Course
August 30, September 1	The Modern State: A Critique
September 6, 8	Majoritarian versus Consensus Democracy
September 13, 15	Political Parties and Party Systems
September 20, 22	Executives and Cabinets
September 27, 29, October 4	Executive-Legislative Relations
October 6	No Class – LSU Fall Holiday
October 11	Midterm Examination
October 13, 15, 20, 25	Electoral Systems and their Consequences
October 27, November 1, 3	Vertical Distribution of Power
November 8, 10, 15	Legislative Powers
November 17, 22	Constitutional Amendments & Judicial Review Powers
November 24	No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday
November 29 , December 1	Majoritarian vs Consensus Institutions: Does It Matters? (Paper Due)
December 8	Final Examination (3:00-5:00 pm)

TOPICS AND SYLLABUS OF READINGS

(1) INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Aug 23, 25

Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson (2000). "What is an Institution?," pp. 23-37 in The New Institutional Politics: Performance and Outcomes (Routledge).

Bo Rothstein (1996). "Political Institutions: An Overview," pp. 133-166 in Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds., A New Handbook of Political Science (Oxford University Press).

Josep M. Colomer (2008). "The Invisible Hand in Institutional Design," paper presented for the conference "Designing Democratic Institutions," London School of Economics, 13-14 May 2008.

Kirk Goldsberry (2012). "CourtVision: New Visual and Spatial Analytics for the NBA," paper presented at the Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, March 2-3, Boston, MA.

(2) THE MODERN STATE: A CRITIQUE

Aug 30, Sept 1

James C. Scott (1998). "Authoritarian High Modernism," pp. 87-102 in his Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Charles Tilly (1985). "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," pp. 169-191 in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Mancur Olson (1993). "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," American Political Science Review, vol. 87, no. 3: 567-576.

(3) MAJORITARIAN VERSUS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

Sept 6, 8

Lijphart, chapters 2-3

Donley T. Studlar and Kyle Christensen (2006). "Is Canada a Westminster or Consensus Democracy? A Brief Analysis," PS: Political Science and Politics, vol. 39, no. 4: 837-841.

Kenneth D. McRae (1997). "Contrasting Styles of Democratic Decision-Making: Adversarial versus Consensual Politics," International Political Science Review, vol. 18, no. 3: 279-295.

(4) POLITICAL PARTIES & PARTY SYSTEMS

Sept 13, 15

Lijphart, chapter 5

Steven B. Wolinetz (2006). "Party Systems and Party System Types," pp. 51-62 in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., Handbook of Party Politics (Sage).

Hans Keman (2006). "Parties and Government: Features of Governing in Representative Democracies," pp. 160-174 in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., Handbook of Party Politics (Sage).

(5) EXECUTIVES & CABINETS

Sept 20, 22

Lijphart, chapter 6

Wolfgang C. Muller & Kaare Strom (2000). "Coalition Governance in Western Europe: An Introduction, pp. 1-31 in Muller & Strom, eds., Coalition Governments in Western Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Lieven De Winter and Patrick Dumont (2006). "Parties into Government: Still Many Puzzles," pp. 175-188 in Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, eds., Handbook of Party Politics (Sage).

(6) EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

Sept 27, 29, Oct 4

Lijphart, chapter 7

Matthew Soberg Shugart (2008). "Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations," pp. 344-365 in R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Klaus von Beyme (2000). "The Role of the Head of State in Relation to Parliament and Government," pp. 108-148 in Klaus von Beyme, Parliamentary Government (London: Macmillan).

John Gerring, Strom C. Thacker and Carola Moreno (2009). "Are Parliamentary Systems Better?," Comparative Political Studies, vol. 42, no. 3: 327-359.

Alan Siaroff (2003). "Comparative Presidencies: The Inadequacy of the Presidential, Semi-Presidential and Parliamentary Distinction," European Journal of Political Research, vol. 42, no. 3: 287-312.

(7) ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Oct 13, 15, 20, 25

Lijphart, chapter 8

Sartori, chapters 1-4

Ferdinand A. Hermens (1936). "Proportional Representation and the Breakdown of German Democracy," Social Research, vol. 3, no. 4: 411-433.

Josep M. Colomer (2005). "It's Parties that Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down)," Political Studies, vol. 53, no. 1: 1-21.

(8) VERTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Oct 27, Nov 1, 3

Lijphart, chapter 10

Brian Galligan (2008). "Comparative Federalism," pp. 261-280 in R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Charlie Jeffery and Daniel Wincott (2006). "Devolution in the United Kingdom: Statehood and Citizenship in Transition," Publius: The Journal of Federalism, vol. 36, no. 1: 3-18.

(9) LEGISLATIVE POWERS

Nov 8, 10, 15

Lijphart, chapter 11

Sartori, chapter 10

John Uhr (2008). "Bicameralism," pp. 474-494 in R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

(10) CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS & JUDICIAL REVIEW POWER

Nov 17, 22

Lijphart, chapter 12

Sartori, chapter 13

James L. Gibson (2008). "Judicial Institutions," pp. 514-534 in R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

(11) MAJORITY VS CONSENSUS INSTITUTIONS: DOES IT MATTER?

Nov 29, Dec 1

Lijphart, chapters 15, 16

Sartori, pp. 69-75

Paul Pierson (2000). "The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change," Governance, vol. 13, no. 4: 475-499.

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Each student must write a short research paper that addresses one of the themes below. The essay is to be approximately 1,800 words (not counting the cover page or footnotes), using an 11- or 12-point font and with normal margins. Use of outside materials is required and should constitute the bulk of your sources for the paper; all materials used in the preparation of the paper must be cited. Citations must include the author, title, source, and page number where the information was found. Pick one of the following topics and your arguments in response must be institutional in nature. The paper may be submitted electronically via e-mail to the instructor. It is due on or before Tuesday, November 29.

Listed below are the stipulations that apply to the papers:

- (1) The paper is expected to be approximately 1,800 words in length, not counting the cover page or footnotes.
- (2) Utilize standard page margins and 11- or 12-point fonts. Do not use running headers or footers.
- (3) Papers must be fully cited using footnotes (not endnotes, not in-text parenthetical citations). Footnote citations must adhere to acceptable styles of citation, and must include the page numbers where the referenced materials can be found. Refer to the citation style used in this syllabus for articles and book chapters assigned as readings. Do not use in-text APA style parenthetical citations.
- (4) Source materials must be vetted scholarly sources or primary source documents (i.e., not websites, blogs, or on-line encyclopedias such as Wikipedia). See the "Databases" tab under "Library Resources" on your MyLSU page.
- (5) Do not cite class lectures as sources.
- (6) Papers must adhere to the rules of proper English grammar, punctuation, and syntax. They must be well written and well organized. Avoid colloquialisms, neologisms, and contractions. Write formally.
- (7) Any long quotations (i.e., longer than two sentences) should be presented in the paper as block quotes: single-spaced and with indented margins on both the left and the right.
- (8) Avoid overuse of direct quotations.
- (9) Unless inside quotation marks, all words must be those of the student. Plagiarism and other forms of intellectual dishonesty will result in severe penalties.
- (10) No work that has been or will be submitted to satisfy the requirements of any other course may be included within the papers.
- (11) Papers must be submitted to the instructor in electronic format (email attachment).
- (12) Late papers will be penalized.

Paper Topics:

- (1) Is British Devolution federalism?
- (2) Is India (or Canada) really an exception to Duverger's Law?
- (3) Why have there been no long-term major third parties in US political history?
- (4) Why do most political scientists prefer parliamentarism over presidentialism?
- (5) When is the head of state important in German politics?
- (6) Who is more important in France: the president or the prime minister?
- (7) Why has the US never held a national referendum?
- (8) What would happen if Britain adopted PR for general elections to the House of Commons?
- (9) Did Charles de Gaulle play fair with the French Constitution?

- (10) Did Russia's Boris Yeltsin act unconstitutionally in the 1998 Kirienko nomination affair?
- (11) What likely will happen to the British House of Lords?
- (12) Why does the current French constitution prohibit MPs from serving on the cabinet?
- (13) What are the strengths and weakness of coalition governments?
- (14) Would Al Gore have been elected president in 2000 if the US had a popular vote-based system?
- (15) Is the British Prime Minister becoming increasingly "presidential"?
- (16) Why have Italian governments had such short life spans?
- (17) Is France's constitutional council a "third house" of the French legislature?
- (18) Are political parties more important inside of government or outside of government?
- (19) Why do federalism, bicameralism, and judicial review all tend to go together?
- (20) Why has the Weimar constitution of interwar Germany become a metaphor for the present?
- (21) Is the constitutional rule in the USA of two Senators per state undemocratic?
- (22) What effect does France's parliamentary election system have on the French party system?
- (23) How does the PR electoral system of Weimar Germany differ from its current PR system?
- (24) Is the Swiss political structure really a confederacy?
- (25) Is Russia a semi-presidential system or a super-presidential system?
- (26) Why did Australia impose compulsory voting in 1924? What's been its long-term impact?
- (27) Was the German Constructive Vote of No Confidence in 1982 properly executed?
- (28) What is the rationale for Article 99 of the Belgian Constitution? How has it impacted cabinet formation?
- (29) In what ways is the Good Friday Agreement consociationalist? In what ways is it not?
- (30) How does parliamentarism at the state level impact the operation of the German Bundesrat?