



Political Representation and its Challenges



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N.B: This course outline is subject to changes throughout the course.

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Course Description

In this course, we will learn to reflect on and discuss the nature and quality of political representation in modern democracies and beyond. The class is structured as a combination of seminars and guest lectures. Throughout the course, students will be presented with both theoretical readings and empirical readings on the nature and quality of present day representation.

The seminar starts with a theoretical reflection on what political representation is. What does it mean to be represented in the political realm? And what duties are associated with being a political representative? We will reflect on the question whether political parties are necessary vehicles for representation, or whether citizens can be represented through different means, too.

Subsequently, we will examine and discuss the extent to which and the mechanisms through which political representation works in modern (Western) democracies. We will discuss whether citizens are knowledgeable enough to hold politicians accountable in a meaningful way. We will review the evidence that politicians listen to citizens, and discuss how electoral rules and systems affect the quality of representation. While politicians should be steered by citizens, we also examine the opposite relationship: are citizens cued by political parties to hold different policy preferences, and how does that affect their representational role?

In a next step, we will explore the emergence of niche parties, such as the radical right, who challenge

the mainstream status quo. What kind of parties are these, and what does their emergence tell us about the state of representation? Subsequently, we look at how citizens respond to parties that change their policy positions and engage in painful compromises. Do citizens accept such flexibility or do they reject changing and compromising parties?

In light of the evidence of political responsiveness, we will examine in the second party of the course whether all citizens are equally likely to be ‘responded’ to? Are women equally well represented as men, are women equally able to run for public office? Are ethnic minorities on an equal footing with the remainder of society in terms of political representation? In addition, we turn to the question whether representation works for all income groups and educational classes, or are our parliaments – as radical right politician Geert Wilders posited – ‘fake parliaments’ representing only the well-off and well-educated?

We will also discuss non-electoral and indirect forms of democracy. We will examine and discuss the efficacy of protest movements, the function of unelected people acting as representatives, and the role of labour movements and strikes in political representation. Lastly, we will discuss how representation can work beyond the nation-state in a transnational fashion. Reviewing the case of the European Union, we study the challenges and opportunities for transnational representation.

All in all, the course gives students insight into the major political science debates on political representation and helps them to apply theoretical notions of representation to current issues and affairs in different ways.

Credit points: 6 ECTS

Learning Goals & Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be are capable of:

1. explaining and discussing different understandings of democratic representation;
2. explaining important theories and concepts used in the scientific debates concerning political representation;
3. understanding the methodological approaches used in the study of political representation;
4. applying important scientific debates and concepts used in the study of representative democracy with respect to current social and political developments;
5. identifying and discussing structural inequalities in political representation today
6. working with empirical academic research on core themes within comparative politics related to the functioning of political representation in present-day democracies;
7. communicating and presenting relevant research on current developments and issues to both an academic and a non-academic audience.

Assessment

- Final Exam
 - The final exam is an essay-based exam. In the exam, students are required to engage with the literature discussed in class.
 - Students should demonstrate their command of and understanding of the course's literature, develop original arguments based on that literature, and apply their knowledge to real-world examples.
 - The exam will be administered digitally at the university. This means you will type your answers on a laptop, rather than by hand. Laptops will be provided.
 - NB: Students used to a different keyboard than QWERTY should familiarize themselves with the QWERTY keyboard before the exam.
- Project Assignment: 'What is the biggest challenge for political representation today?'
 - This is a group assignment. Group size is 3-5 students.
 - To do so, you answer the question 'What is the biggest challenge for political representation today?' in a creative way.
 - You may focus on different aspects and themes of political representation. These may be inspired by the course's weekly themes, but this is not strictly necessary.
 - You need to choose a target group or audience and spell out learning objectives for this group.
 - The way you choose to present your work is extremely open. For instance, you make a YouTube video, a podcast, a magazine, a website, an app, or a political programme of a (fictitious) political party. You name it!
 - The topic and the format as well as the group composition will have to be approved by the course instructor.
 - The assignment will count for 30 % towards your grade.
 - Each student is expected to spend around 20h on the assignment.
 - The deadline for the contributions is **Friday, 23 December 2022 at 17:00h.**
 - More information can be found in the document *Project Assignment: Instructions* (see Brightspace).

Grades

- The course contains the following graded components:
 - Project Assignment: 30%
 - Final Exam: 70%
- Students must obtain a passing grade (5.5 or higher) for both components of the course in order to pass the course. The final grade is the average weighted grade of the graded components.

Course Policies

- **Course Format:**
 - In the course we will read, reading, summarize and discuss the prescribed readings.
 - Students are expected to attend all the classes, to have completed the readings and to actively discuss the readings in class. The readings are a combination of books, journal articles and chapters from books. The book chapters and articles are available in the library or online (if not indicated otherwise).
 - Depending on the number of students, the classes will take place in one or two groups (a Tuesday and Wednesday group).
- **Communication:**
 - All official class information will be posted to the course's Brightspace page.
- **Online Platform:** (*if necessary*)
 - This course will meet in person for all sessions. If in-person teaching cannot be realized, we will switch to *Zoom*.
 - Login to Zoom using this link: <https://bit.ly/3erV9Vn>
 - Please try to follow the course at a place where you have a stable internet connection. A mobile 4G connection will likely not be fast enough.
 - Please follow the course at a place where you can sit in peace. Please follow the course with a laptop / tablet. Using your smartphone is not recommended.
 - If you do not have access to one of these things, please notify the course instructor.
- **Attendance and Absence:**
 - Attendance is mandatory. In case of illness or other reasons for your absence, please notify me by sending an email *BEFORE* the meeting starts and submit a short written assignment.

- *Short written assignment:* To make sure that also students who (exceptionally) cannot make it to class engage sufficiently with the course material, you are required to write a short written assignment

In the short written essay assignment (max 1.5 A4 excluding bibliography and font 11), you will compare and contrast the assigned readings of the week identifying a common thread between them and discussing to what extent and how the authors agree as well disagree with respect to it. No summaries of the articles! The assignment needs to be sent by email (maurits.meijers@ru.nl) *within one week* of the session.

- Students are responsible for all missed work, regardless of the reason for absence. It is also the absentee's responsibility to get all missing notes or materials.
- If you miss more than two sessions without a valid reason, you cannot complete the course.

- **Plagiarism:**

- You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from.
- You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material.
- If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask!
- Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. Fortunately, it is also easy to avoid and if you are the least bit careful about giving credit where credit is due you should not run into any problems.

Course Overview:

N.B.: The course overview is subject to change throughout the course.

Class	Date	Content
Class 1	Sept. 7	• Introduction: Studying Political Representation
		<i>Electoral Representation, Substantive Representation and Responsiveness</i>
Class 2	Sept. 14	• Electoral Rules and The Quality of Representation
Class 3	Sept. 21	• Substantive Representation: Public Competence, Responsiveness, and Partisan Cueing
Class 4	Sept. 28	• Niche Parties: Representing the Unheard?
Class 5	Oct. 5	• Party Policy Change and Political Compromise
		<i>Challenges to Equal Representation</i>
Class 6	Oct. 12	• Women's Representation: Challenges and Solutions
Class 7	Oct. 19	• Project Work Session
Class 8	Nov. 9	• Minority Representation and Intersectionality
Class 9	Nov. 16	• Unequal Representation: Income, Education, and Class
		<i>Non-Electoral and Indirect Representation</i>
Class 10	Nov. 23	• Political Protest and Representation
Class 11	Nov. 30	• Work and Labour Market Representation: Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (Guest lecture: Dr. Alex Lehr, Radboud University)
Class 12	Dec. 7	• Representation Beyond the Nation: The European Union
		<i>Concluding Sessions</i>
Class 13	Dec. 14	• Project Presentations
Class 14	Dec. 21	• Closing Session

Course Overview:

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Class 1. Introduction: Studying Political Representation

Date: Sept. 7, 2022

Content:

- Introduction to theme of political representation
- Introduction to the course's content, objectives, and structure
- Introduction to the project assignment
- Getting to know each other

Readings:

- Dovi, Suzanne, "Political Representation", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/political-representation>. [See also PDF on Brightspace]
- Thomassen, J. (1994). Empirical research into political representation: Failing democracy or failing models. *Elections at home and abroad: Essays in honor of Warren Miller*, 237-265. [See also PDF on Brightspace]

Electoral Representation, Substantive Representation and Responsiveness

Class 2. Electoral Rules and The Quality of Representation

Date: Sept. 14, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss the main tenets of electoral representation by reviewing the impact of electoral systems and party systems on electoral representation
- Next, we will review how electoral systems affect the substantive representation of citizens in parliament and government

Readings:

1. Lijphart, A. (1999). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. Yale University Press (Ch. 1: pp. 1-8 & Ch. 8: pp. 143-170).
2. Powell Jr, G. B., & Vanberg, G. S. (2000). Election laws, disproportionality and median correspondence: Implications for two visions of democracy. *British Journal of Political Science*, 30(3), 383-411. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/194001>.

3. Golder, M. and Lloyd, G. (2014), Electoral Rules and Congruence. Eur J Polit Res, 53: 200-212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12031>

Class 3. Substantive Representation: Public Competence, Responsiveness, and Partisan Cueing

Date: Sept. 21, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss the concept of substantive representation and the prerequisites for it.
- We will discuss whether 'the public' is rational enough to clearly signal its preferences and whether political parties respond
- Finally, we discuss the leverage parties have over the policy preferences of citizens.

Readings:

1. Page, B. I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1992). *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press., Excerpt of Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26) (PDF on Brightspace).
2. Soroka, S. N., & Wlezien, C. (2010). *Degrees of Democracy: Politics, Public opinion, and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-21) and Ch. 2 (pp. 22-42).
3. Wlezien, C. (1995). The public as thermostat: Dynamics of preferences for spending. American journal of political science, 981-1000. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2111666.pdf>.
4. Druckman, J. N., Peterson, E., & Slothuus, R. (2013). How elite partisan polarization affects public opinion formation. American Political Science Review, 107(1), 57-79. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23357757.pdf>

Class 4. Niche Parties: Representing the Unheard?

Date: Sept. 28, 2022

Content:

- The last twenty years, parties challenging the status quo have emerged with considerable success.
- We will discuss the origins of niche and challenger parties and we will discuss their impact on the quality of democratic representation

Readings:

1. Wagner, M. (2012). Defining and measuring niche parties. *Party Politics*, 18(6), 845-864. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354068810393267>

2. De Vries, C. E., Hobolt, S., & Hobolt, S. B. (2020). *Political Entrepreneurs*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 15-39).
3. Van De Wardt, M. and Otjes, S. (2021), Mind the gap: How party–voter incongruence fuels the entry and support of new parties. *European Journal of Political Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12445>

Class 5. Party Policy Change and Political Compromise

Date: Oct. 5, 2022

Content:

- Models of representation assume parties have clearly recognizable policy profiles, but what happens if parties change their policy positions?
- We will explore how policy change and accepting compromises affect citizens' perceptions of political parties

Readings:

1. Tomz, M., & Van Houweling, R. P. (2012). Candidate repositioning. Unpublished manuscript. PDF on Brightspace.
2. Fernandez-Vazquez, P. (2019). The credibility of party policy rhetoric survey experimental evidence. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(1), 309-314. <https://doi.org/10.1086/699915>
3. Krishnarajan, S., & Jensen, C. (2021). When Is A Pledge A Pledge? *British Journal of Political Science*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000284>
4. Meijers, M. & van der Velden, M. Responsive or Responsible? The Reputational Cost of Political Compromises. Working Paper. PDF will follow on Brightspace.

Challenges to Equal Representation

Class 6. Women's Representation: Challenges and Solutions

Date: Oct. 12, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss the concept of descriptive representation and its utility for understanding women's representation
- We will discuss how issues of gender equality relate to women's representation
- We will then discuss how gender bias affects political recruitment, and whether gender quotas can be a remedy

Readings:

1. Mansbridge, J. (1999). "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes". *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647821>
2. Celis, K. & Erzeel, Sl. (2020). "Gender Equality." In: *Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies*. Rohrschneider, R., & Thomassen, J. (Eds.). Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28169/chapter/213016422>
3. Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L. (2010). If Only They'd Ask: Gender, Recruitment, and Political Ambition. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2), 310–326. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609990752>
4. O'Brien, D. Z., & Rickne, J. (2016). Gender Quotas and Women's Political Leadership. *American Political Science Review*, 110(1), 112–126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000611>

Class 7. Project Assignment - Work Session

Date: Oct. 19, 2022

Content:

- You will work on your project in class
- All groups will give mini-presentations of the projects
- This is an opportunity to receive feedback on the project from your peers

Readings:

- None

Class 8. Minority Representation and Intersectionality

Date: Nov. 9, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss under which conditions minority representation can be considered important
- We will discuss how structural conditions in politics inhibit proper representation of minority groups
- From an intersectional perspective, we discuss how representation of citizens from multiple minoritized groups can be realized

Readings:

1. Bueno, N. S., & Dunning, T. (2017). Race, Resources, and Representation: Evidence from Brazilian Politicians. *World Politics*, 69(2), 327–365. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887116000290>.
2. Griffin, John D. 2014. "When and Why Minority Legislators Matter." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17:327–336. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-033011-205028>

3. Mügge, L. M., & Erzeel, S. (2016). Double Jeopardy or Multiple Advantage? Intersectionality and Political Representation. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 69(3), 499-511. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsv059>
4. Mügge, L. M., van der Pas, D. J., & van de Wardt, M. (2019). Representing their own? Ethnic minority women in the Dutch Parliament. *West European Politics*, 42(4), 705-727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1573036>

Class 9. Unequal Representation: Income, Education, and Class

Date: Nov. 16, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss whether all citizens are equally well represented
- From a substantive representation perspective, we compare citizens' representation from different educational groups, income groups, and class groups
- Finally, we will discuss the implications of such misrepresentation

Readings:

1. Schakel, W., & Hakhverdian, A. (2018). Ideological congruence and socio-economic inequality. *European Political Science Review*, 10(3), 441-465. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773918000036>.
2. Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 564-581. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714001595>.
3. Carnes, N. and Lupu, N. (2015), Rethinking the Comparative Perspective on Class and Representation: Evidence from Latin America. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59: 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12112>.

Non-Electoral and Indirect Representation

Class 10. Non-Electoral Representation: Political Protest and Activist Politics

Date: Nov. 23, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss the role of protests in political representation, and how they affect mainstream political representation
- Subsequently, we will discuss representation through claims-making and the representational qualities of non-elected people (e.g., celebrities and activists)

Readings:

1. Wasow, O. (2020). Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), 638-659. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542000009X>
2. Hutter, S., & Vliegenthart, R. (2018). Who responds to protest? Protest politics and party responsiveness in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 24(4), 358-369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068816657375>
3. de Wilde, P. (2020). The Quality of Representative Claims: Uncovering a Weakness in the Defense of the Liberal World Order. *Political Studies*, 68(2), 271-292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719845199>

Class 11. Work and Labour Market Representation: Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (*Guest lecture: Dr. Alex Lehr, Radboud University*)

Date: Nov. 30, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss the role of trade unions and business associations in political representation
- Message from Alex: *"Some of the subject matter, terminology and theories in these articles may be unfamiliar to you. Don't panic if you don't understand everything, we will discuss it in class."*

Readings:

1. Jansen, G., & Lehr, A. (2019). On the outside looking in? A micro-level analysis of insiders' and outsiders' trade union membership. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X19890130>
2. Lehr, A., Jansen, G., and Brandl, B. (2022). All about power after all? A multilevel analysis of employers' organization membership in Europe. Working paper. PDF on Brightspace

Class 12. Representation Beyond the Nation: The European Union

Date: Dec. 7, 2022

Content:

- We will discuss how representation works in the European Union
- We explore how the EU has different channels of representation, which do not always align with their functions
- We discuss the many ways in which responsiveness can work in the EU

Readings:

1. Mair, P. (2007). Political Opposition and the European Union. *Government and Opposition*, 42(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00209.x>.
2. Hobolt, Sara (2020). "Representation and the European Union." In: *Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies*. Rohrschneider, R., & Thomassen, J. (Eds.). Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28169/chapter/213047990>
<https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198825081.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198825081-e-32>.
3. Meijers, M. J., Schneider, C. J., & Zhelyazkova, A. (2019). Dimensions of input responsiveness in the EU: Actors, publics, venues. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(11), 1724-1736. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1668045>.

Concluding Sessions

Class 13. Project Presentations

Date: Dec. 14, 2022

Content:

- Final presentations of the project assignments
- Times are subject to change to accommodate all projects

Readings:

- None

Class 14. Closing Session

Date: Dec. 21, 2022

Content:

- We will review of all themes and topics discussed
- We will discuss the final exam and how to prepare
- We will evaluate the course together

Readings:

- None