

What is political representation?

Class teacher & course convenor

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Language of tuition

English

Teaching hours

Tuesdays, 11:30-14.45, Seminarraum 1 (S1), NIG, 2nd floor A0228

Course content

It is uncontroversial that the quality of democracy is closely bound up with the quality of political representation. But what exactly is political representation? This theoretically-oriented course aims to examine this central question, equipping students with a good sense of the major debates and controversies in the field. The course divides into three parts. The first part looks at how the meaning of the term political representation changed between the early modern period and the nineteenth century. Along the way, students will discover what major political thinkers like Thomas Hobbes had to say about representation, as well as learn why the act of electing representatives was originally regarded as “aristocratic,” rather than democratic, in character. The second part of the course sheds light on how later observers, especially in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, sought to reconceptualise political representation for the age of mass democracy. The course focuses here on what would turn out to be major point of disagreement among scholars: whether democratic representation is an essentially “constructed” relationship that arises from discursive interactions in the public sphere – or whether it exists in some “real” sense, as in the view that increasing the number of women or ethnic minorities in parliament would automatically mean that women or ethnic minorities receive better political representation. Building on these debates, the third and final part of the course explores the most recent theoretical advances. Chief amongst the issues that will be discussed are the implications of intersectionality theory for how we think about the representation of women or ethnic minorities, new ways in which social movement activists frame their claims to represent others, and institutional design strategies for how to connect elected representatives and the represented.

Coursework and assessment

- Attendance and participation (students must not miss more than one session): 10% of the grade
- Three reflection papers on the readings: 12% of the grade. (2-3 short questions on the readings on one topic with an explaining paragraph, to be posted at noon the day prior to the class on Moodle)
- Think piece on the text/theory/problem that students want to write their final paper on (2000-2500 words): 8% of the grade
- Presentation of final paper draft. (Draft paper should at least have a research question, state of the art section, research design section): 15% of the grade
- Discussion of a colleague’s final paper draft: 15% of the grade
- Final paper (6000-7000 words): 40% of the grade. Deadline: 31 August 2024

Please note that written assignments will be checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin software.

SESSION	DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	COURSEWORK
1	19 March, 2024	General Introduction 1.1 The origins of political representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> F.R. Ankersmit, <i>Political Representation</i> (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), excerpts from chapter 4, “On the Origin, Nature, and Future of Representative Democracy.” Deborah Boucoyannis, <i>Kings ad Judges: Power, Justice, and the Origins of Parliaments</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), chapter 1, “From Roving to Stationary Judges.” David Runciman, “Hobbes’s theory of representation: anti-democratic or proto-democratic?” In: <i>Political Representation</i>, eds. Ian Shapiro, Susan C. Stokes, Elisabeth Jean Wood and Alexander S. Kirshner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 15-34. 	
2	9 April 2024	Reading break	
3	16 April 2024	1.2 Representation theory in the twentieth century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hans Kelsen, <i>General Theory of Law and State</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), pp. 284-98. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, <i>The Concept of Representation</i> (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1967), chapter 10, “Political Representation.” Bernard Manin, <i>The Principles of Representative Government</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 6, “Metamorphoses of representative government.” 1.3 Rethinking representation for the twenty-first century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dario Castiglione and Mark E. Warren, “Rethinking democratic representation: eight theoretical issues and a postscript.” In: <i>The Constructivist Turn in Political Representation</i>, eds. Lisa Disch, Mathijs van de Sande and Nadia Urbinati. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 21-47. Andrew Rehfeld, “Towards a Genreal Theory of Political Representation,” <i>Journal of Politics</i> 68/1 (2006), pp. 1-21. 	Reflection paper I
4	23 April 2024	2.1 A “new” paradigm: Constructivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Jane Disch, <i>Making Constituencies: Representation as Mobilization in Mass Democracy</i> (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021), Introduction, “Responsiveness in reverse,” and chapter 1, “In Defense of <i>Mobilization</i>.” 	Reflection paper II

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Saward, <i>The Representative Claim</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter 3, “Mapping the representative claim.” • Lasse Thomassen, “Representing the People: Laclau as a Theorist of Representation,” <i>New Political Science</i> 41/2 (2019), pp. 329-344. • Fabio Wolkenstein, “Revisiting the constructivist turn in political representation,” <i>European Journal of Political Theory</i>, online first. 	
5	30 April 2024	Reading/writing break	
6	7 May 2024	2.2 New conceptual pathways: Unelected and Systemic Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Saward, “Authorisation and Authenticity: Representation and the Unelected,” <i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i> 17/1 (2009), pp. 1-22. • Jonathan Kuyper, “Systemic Representation: Democracy, Deliberation, and Nonelectoral Representatives,” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 110/2 (2016), pp. 308-24. 2.3 Descriptive representation and beyond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes,’” <i>Journal of Politics</i> 61/3 (1999), pp. 628-57. • Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, “Constituting Women’s Interests Through Representative Claims,” <i>Politics & Gender</i> 10/2 (2014): 149-74. • Eline Severs, Karen Celis, and Silvia Erzeel, “Power, privilege and disadvantage: Intersectionality theory and political representation,” <i>Politics</i> 36/4 (2016), pp. 346-54. 	Reflection paper III Think piece
7	14 May 2024	3.1 New social movement practices: Unrepresentative claims and “conscription” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Hayat, “Unrepresentative Claims: Speaking for Oneself in a Social Movement,” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 116/3 (2022), pp. 1038-50. • Wendy Salkin, “The Conscription of Informal Political Representatives,” <i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i> 29/4 (2021), pp. 429-55. 3.2 The limits of unbounded representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard Schweber, “The Limits of Political Representation,” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 110/2 (2016), pp. 382-96. • Raf Geenens, “Political representation: the view from France.” In: <i>The Constructivist Turn in Political Representation</i>, eds. Lisa 	

		Disch, Mathijs van de Sande and Nadia Urbinati. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, pp. 89-103.
8	21 May 2024	3.3 Alternatives to elected representation: Sortition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arash Abizadeh, “Representation, Bicameralism, Political Equality, and Sortition: Reconstituting the Second Chamber as a Randomly Selected Assembly,” <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 19/3 (2021), pp. 791-806. • Samuel Bagg, “Sortition as Anti-Corruption: Popular Oversight Against Elite Capture,” <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 68/1 (2024), pp. 93-105. • Stefan Rummens and Raf Geenens, “Lottocracy Versus Democracy,” <i>Res Publica</i>, online first.
9	28 May 2024	Workshop I: Finding your topic
10	4 June 2024	Individual consultations
11	11 June 2024	Reading/writing break
12	18 June 2024	Workshop II: Paper workshop
LECTURE	19 June 2024	IPW-Lecture by Samuel Hayat, 17:00 Konferenzraum, NIG, 2 nd floor
13	25 June 2024	Concluding session: open questions, revisiting texts, etc.