

POLS 626: COMPARATIVE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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Thursdays, 1:10 - 4:00.
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Course Description

A general and broad course on comparative political institutions should address at least three questions: What are the institutions we should be comparing across countries? What are the effects that these institutions are expected to have? Why do we observe institutional variation across countries? The list of institutions that we can think of as potential causes of similar outcomes is large. So is the list of outcomes that can be potentially caused by institutions. And, of course, the number of reasons why we think that institutions cause something and are themselves caused by other things is also large. For this reason, a course such as this one is by necessity limited. We should think of it as a tasting menu, rather than a full meal.

It is a tasting menu, but of only one kind of food. We will focus on three broad institutions of democracies: executives and their relations with legislative bodies in parliamentary and presidential systems, electoral systems, and legislative bodies. Political parties will loom behind in every week's discussion as they are relevant for each of the topics.

Ultimately, thus, in this course we examine work that focuses on the effects of executives, elections and legislatures. We want to understand the arguments that are made about them, reverse engineer the research, and evaluate the conclusions. In the process, we will have touched several areas that are still in need of substantial work. These are the areas where interesting research questions are likely to be found.

Course Requirements

Attendance is, of course, the first and most basic requirement. Classes should not be missed, unless there are special circumstances preventing you from being present.

Everyone must come to class prepared and ready to participate in the seminar. This is a graduate seminar and it is important that you get actively involved for it to work well.

Being prepared means that you read all the required readings and, if possible, some of the suggested ones. Additionally, it means that you have actively reflected on these readings. I strongly suggest that you do your readings on a desk and able to take notes that summarize and express your reactions to them.

Students will be required to make two (short) presentations during the semester. For each, the student must consider *at least* two of the papers listed in the relevant week. Since the assumption is that everyone will have read the paper, no detailed presentation of the paper is necessary. Students should raise critical points, make relationships between the two papers (or with other papers in the course and elsewhere), pose questions for discussion, raise questions of understanding and, whenever possible, contextualize the papers and/or its topic. Although not necessary, it is preferable to connect the two papers from the week's list. We will decide in class how to allocate the presentations.

Each student will also write a short paper reacting to the readings for a particular week. Your paper must have a point: it must aim at conveying one or two ideas about the week's topic. I am leaving the format wide open so that **you** define what you want to write about. But I want to see critical thinking and true intellectual engagement with the subject of your choice. The paper should be no longer than 1,500 words, although I am not usually particularly when the limit is not strictly respected in either direction.

Finally, in the course of the semester you will develop a paper that can take one of the following forms:

- A research proposal on a topic relevant to the material covered in the course. After identifying a substantive area of research on political institutions and an open question in that area, you will clearly state your research question, situate your question in the existing literature, and outline what you think your answer will be. You should provide a clear statement of the argument you want to develop and, if appropriate, of the empirical strategy you will adopt.
- A replication of either a paper in the syllabus or some other paper closely related to one of the weekly topics. If you choose to do this, you must have it clear what the purpose of the replication is, that is, what is it that we will learn with your exercise. For that, you should think about the kind of test around which you will structure the replication.
- An original paper. If you choose this option, you should discuss it with me within the first four weeks of the course. A two-page (maximum!!) description of your proposed topic is due on March 2nd.

Grade weights:

- Questions and/or reflections: 40% (3% each).
- Reaction Paper: 25%
- Final paper: 35%

Diversity Statement

The Department of Political Science supports the Texas A&M University commitment to diversity, and welcomes individuals from any racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and nationality (See <http://diversity.tamu.edu/>). In the spirit of this vital commitment, in this course each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to all discussions. Everyone is expected to respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by fellow students and the instructor, and will engage in reasoned discussion that refrains from derogatory comments about other people, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. We will always treat each other with respect and utilize respectful language.

Schedule and Readings

* = Required reading.

WEEK 1: January 19

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2: January 26

DEMOCRACY AND AUTOCRACY

Defining and observing political regimes: definitions of democracy; definitions of autocracy(?); Procedural vs. substantive measures; Different sources: objective (observables) vs. subjective (opinion); Development and democratization.

- * Przeworski, Adam. 2009. "Self-Government in Our Times." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:71-92.
- * Svoblik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read pp. 1-17.
- * Cheibub, José Antonio and James R. Vreeland. 2011. "Economic development and democratization." In: Nathan J. Brown, ed. *The Dynamics of Democratization: Dictatorship, Development, and Diffusion*, pp. 145–182. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- * Coppedge, Michael et al. 2022. "V-Dem Codebook v12." *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project*. [You should peruse the codebook to get a sense of the dataset. Read with some attention pages 43-45 and Appendix A (particularly pages 380-382)]
- * Goldring, Edward. 2022. "Before Categorising Autocracies, We Need to Count Them Accurately." *The Loop: ECPR's Political Science Blog*. August 12. <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/>.
- Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2010. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143 (1-2):67-101.
- Munck, Gerardo and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1): 5-34.

WEEK 3: February 2

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY What differentiates parliamentary and presidential democracies? Is semi-presidentialism a regime form?

- * Shugart, Matthew Soberg and John M. Carey. 1992. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-27.
- * Strøm, Kaare. 2000. "Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies." *European Journal of Political Research* 37 (3): 261–290.
- * Linz, Juan J. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1): 51–69.
- * Cheibub, José Antonio. 2022. "Why change the form of government?" *Texas International Law Journal* 57 (3): 365-380.
- Samuels, David. 2007. "Separation of Powers." In: Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, pp. 703-726.
- Scott Mainwaring. 1993. "Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination." *Comparative Political Studies* 26 (2):198-228.
- Ganghoff, Steffan. 2021. *Beyond Presidentialism and Parliamentarism: Democratic Design and the Separation of Powers*. Oxford University Press.

WEEK 4: February 9

TYPES OF AUTOCRACY

Differentiating autocracies; "Seemingly democratic institutions" in autocracies: what do they do?; Institutional theories of autocracies?

- * Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization and Collapse*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2.
- * Svolik, Milan. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- * Meng, Anne. 2021. "Ruling Parties in Authoritarian Regimes: Rethinking Institutional Strength." *British Journal of Political Science* 51(2): 526-540.
- Meng, Anne. 2019. "Accessing the State: Executive Constraints and Credible Commitment in Dictatorship." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 33(4): 568-599.
- Gandhi, Jennifer and Jane Lawrence Sumner. 2020. "Measuring the consolidation of power in nondemocracies." *The Journal of Politics* 82 (4): 1545-1558.
- Gehlbach, Scott, Sonin, Konstantin and Svolik, Milan W. 2016. "Formal models of nondemocratic politics." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 19: 565-584

WEEK 5: February 16

EXECUTIVE POWERS

Measuring executive powers; are presidents stronger than prime ministers?; interaction around presidential powers: vetoes and decrees; how do powers cooperate in separation of powers systems?; explaining variation in executive powers. Executives and agenda setting.

- * Cameron, Charles M. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapt. 4 (pp. xxx).
- * Negretto, Gabriel L. 2004. "Government Capacities and Policy Making by Decree in Latin America: The Cases of Brazil and Argentina". *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (5): 532-562.
- * Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1998. "Calling out the tanks or filling out the forms?" in J. M. Carey and M. S. Shugart, eds. *Executive Decree Authority*, pp. 1-32. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- * Strøm, Kaare and Stephen M. Swindle. 2002. "Strategic parliamentary dissolution." *American Political Science Review* 96 (3): 575-591.
- Becher, Michael and Flemming Juul Christiansen. 2015. "Dissolution threats and legislative bargaining." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 641-655.
- McGrath, Robert J., Jon C. Rogowski, and Josh M. Ryan. 2018. "Veto override requirements and executive success." *Political Science Research and Methods* 6 (1): 153-179.
- Koß, Michael. 2020. "Executive prerogatives in the legislative process and democratic stability: Evidence from non-presidential systems." *[Political Studies Review]* 18 (1): 71-86.
- Huber, John D. Huber, John D. "Restrictive legislative procedures in France and the United States." *American Political Science Review* 86 (3): 675-687.
- Lowande, Kenneth and Jon C. Rogowski. 2021. "Presidential Unilateral Powers." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 21-43.
- Barber, Michael, Alexander Bolton and Sharece Thrower. 2019. "Legislative Constraints on Executive Unilateralism in Separation of Powers Systems." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44 (3): 515-548.

WEEK 6: February 23

GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Models of coalition formation in parliamentary democracies; coalition formation in presidential democracies? Empirical patterns in government formation.

- * Strøm, Kaare, Ian Budge and Michael J. Laver. 1994. "Constraints on Cabinet Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (2): 303-335.
- * Martin, Lanny and Randy T. Stevenson. 2001. "Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (1): 33-50.

- * Cheibub, José Antonio, Adam Przeworski, and Sebastian Saiegh. 2004. "Government Coalition and Legislative Success under Presidentialism and Parliamentarism." *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (October): 565-587.
- * Tsebelis, George and Eunyong Ha. "Coalition theory: A veto players' approach." *European Political Science Review* 6 (3): 331-357.
- Alemán, Eduardo and George Tsebelis. 2011. "Political Parties and Government Coalitions in the Americas." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 3(1): 3-28.
- Glasgow, Garrett, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2012. "New Empirical Strategies for the Study of Parliamentary Government Formation." *Political Analysis* 20 (2): 248-70.
- Savage, Lee. 2016. "Party System Institutionalization and Government Formation in New Democracies." *World Politics* 68(3): 499-537.
- Golder, Matthew., Sona N. Golder, and David A. Siegel. 2012. "Modeling the Institutional Foundation of Parliamentary Government Formation." *Journal of Politics* 74(2): 427-45.
- Martin, Lanny W. and Georg Vanberg. 2014. "A Step in the Wrong Direction: An Appraisal of the Zero-Intelligence Model of Government Formation." *Journal of Politics* 76(4): 873-879.
- Laver, Michael and Norman Schofield. 1990. *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

WEEK 7: March 2

LEGISLATIVE ORGANIZATION

Models of legislative organization; Types of legislatures; Role of legislative institutions on coalition formation and durability; Role of opposition in legislatures: what does it mean?.

- Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions Author(s): Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1994. "Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19 (2): 149-179.
- Dion, Douglas. 1997. *Turning the Legislative Thumbscrew: Minority Rights and Procedural Change in Legislative Politics*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1-2 (pp. 3-40), chapter 8 (pp. 189-244).
- Wegmann, Simone. "Policy-making power of opposition players: a comparative institutional perspective." *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 28 (1): 1-25.
- Koß, Michael. 2018. *Parliaments in time: The evolution of legislative democracy in Western Europe, 1866-2015*. Oxford University Press.
- Gamm, Gerald and John H. Huber. 2003. "Legislatures and political institutions: Beyond the contemporary Congress." Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. APSA.
- Weingast, Barry. 1989. "The political institutions of representative government: Legislatures." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 145 (4): 693-703.
- Lanny W. Martin and Georg Vanberg. 2014. "Legislative institutions and coalition government." In: *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies*, Shane Martin, Thomas Saalfeld, and Kaare W. Strøm, eds, pp. 436-454.

WEEK 8: March 9

BICAMERALISM

Topics ???

- * Tsebelis, George and Jeannette Money. 1997. *Bicameralism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. pp. 13-109.
- * Heller, William B. 2007. "Divided Politics: Bicameralism, Parties, and Policy in Democratic Legislatures." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10:245-269.

- * Druckman, James N., and Michael F. Thies. 2002. "The importance of concurrence: The impact of bicameralism on government formation and duration." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (4): 760-771.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, and Michael M. Ting. "Bargaining in bicameral legislatures: When and why does malapportionment matter?." *American Political Science Review* 97 (3): 471-481.
- Diermeier, Daniel, and Roger B. Myerson. 1999. "Bicameralism and Its Consequences for the Internal Organization of Legislatures." *American Economic Review* 89 (5): 1182-1196.
- Ganghof, Steffen. 2014. "Bicameralism as a form of government (or: Why Australia and Japan do not have a parliamentary system)." *Parliamentary Affairs* 67 (3): 647-663.

WEEK 9: March 23

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: FORMULA

Components of electoral systems. What are the main effects of electoral formulas? Mechanical and Strategic effects. Do formulas matter for policies? Provision of public, broad vs. private, narrow goods; what kinds of goods are these? Formulas and redistribution.

- * Persson, Torsten and Guido Tabellini. 2004. "Constitutional rules and fiscal policy outcomes." *American Economic Review* 94 (1): 25-45.
- * Iversen, Torben, and David Soskice. 2006. "Electoral institutions and the politics of coalitions: Why some democracies redistribute more than others." *American Political Science Review* 100 (2): 165-181.
- * Hays, Jude C. 2022. "Taxing the tails in a global economy: How electoral, party and wage bargaining systems interact to determine the taxes paid by the poor and rich." *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (3): 1276-1295.
- * Gagliarducci, Stefano, Tommaso Nannicini and Paolo Naticchioni. 2011. "Electoral rules and politicians' behavior: A micro test." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3 (3): 144-174.
- Carey, John M, and Simon Hix. 2011. "The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 383-97.
- Hömann, Daniel and Tobias Tober. 2017. "Electoral rules and partisan control of government: A replication study." *Journal of Politics* 80 (1): 342-347.
- Carey, John and Simon Hix. 2013. "Policy consequences of electoral rules. In Mala Htun and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., eds. *Political Science, Electoral Rules, and Democratic Governance: Report of the Task Force on Electoral Rules and Democratic Governance*, pp. 46-55. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- Acemoglu, Daron. 2005. "Constitutions, politics, and economics: A Review essay on Persson and Tabellini's *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*." *Journal of Economic Literature* 43: 1025-48.

Background readings:

- Rae, Douglas W. 1967. *The political consequences of electoral laws*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Taagepera, Rein and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1989. *Seats and votes: the effects and determinants of electoral systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1994. *Electoral systems and party systems: A study of twenty-seven democracies, 1945-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WEEK 10: March 30

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: BALLOT STRUCTURE

Personalism and its consequences: Weak political parties? Corruption? Low provision of public goods?

- * Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to cultivate a personal vote: A rank ordering of electoral formulas." *Electoral Studies* 14 (4): 417-439.

- * Swindle, Stephen M. 2002. "The supply and demand of the personal vote: Theoretical considerations and empirical implications of collective electoral incentives." *Party Politics* 8 (3): 279–300.
- * Persson, Torsten, Guido Tabellini and Francesco Trebbi. 2003. "Electoral rules and corruption." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1 (4): 958–989.
- * Chang, Eric C. C. and Miriam A. Golden. 2007. "Electoral systems, district magnitude and corruption." *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (1): 115–137.
- Leongómez, Eduardo Pizarro. 2006. "Giants with Feet of Clay: Political Parties." In: Scott Mainwaring, Ana María Bejarano and Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez, eds. *The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes*, pp. 78–109.
- Buisseret, Peter, Olle Folke, Carlo Prato, and Johanna Rickne. 2022. "Party nomination strategies in list proportional representation systems." *American Journal of Political Science* 66 (3): 714–729.
- Holtyer, James R., Marko Klačnja, and Rocío Titiunik. "Parties as disciplinarians: Charisma and commitment problems in programmatic campaigning." *American Journal of Political Science* 66 (1): 75–92.
- Kellam, Marisa. 2015. "Parties for hire: How particularistic parties influence presidents' governing strategies." *Party Politics* 21 (4): 515–526.

WEEK 11: April 6

POLITICAL PARTIES

Are parties different in parliamentary and presidential democracies? What are the consequences? Parties as formal institution: how can they be shaped? "Permissiveness" of party legislation and electoral volatility.

- * Samuels, David J. and Matthew S. Shugart. 2010. *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-161).
- * Laver, Michael, and Kenneth A. Shepsle. "How political parties emerged from the primeval slime: party cohesion, party discipline, and the formation of governments." *Party discipline and parliamentary government* (1999): 23-48.
- * Salas, Christian, Frances Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro. 2020. "Political parties and public policy." *NOMOS LXIII: Democratic Failure* 63: 154–179..
- Pasquino, Gianfranco. 1986. "The impact of institutions on party government: Tentative hypotheses." In: Francis G. Castles and Rudolf Wildenmann, eds. *Visions and Realities of Party Government*, pp. 121–142. de Gruyter.
- Katz, Richard S. 1986. "Party government: A rationalistic conception." In: Francis G. Castles and Rudolf Wildenmann, eds. *Visions and Realities of Party Government*, pp. 31–71. de Gruyter.
- Stokes, Susan C. 1999. "Political parties and democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 243-67.

WEEK 12: April 13

CONSTRAINTS ON THE EXECUTIVE AND SECURE PROPERTY RIGHTS

- * Cox, Gary W. and Barry R. Weingast. 2018. "Executive Constraint, Political Stability, and Economic Growth." *Comparative Political Studies* 51(3): 279–303.
- * Acemoglu, Daron and Simon Johnson. 2005. "Unbundling institutions." *Journal of political Economy* 113 (5): 949-995.
- * Abramson, Scott F. and Carles Boix. 2019. "Endogenous parliaments: The domestic and international roots of long-term economic growth and executive constraints in Europe." *International Organization* 73 (4): 793–837.
- North, Douglass and Barry Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and commitment: The evolution of institutions governing public choice in Seventeenth-century Britain." *Journal of Economic History*. 49: 803-832.

- Chemin, Matthieu. 2021. "Can judiciaries constrain executive power? Evidence from Judicial Reforms". *Journal of Public Economics* 199.
- Weingast, Barry R. 1993. "Constitutions as governance structures: The political foundations of secure markets." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 149 (1): 286–311.
- Ferejohn, John, Frances Rosenbluth and Charles Shipan. 2007. "Comparative judicial politics." In: Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, pp. 703–726. Oxford University Press.
- Bernholz, Peter. 1993. "Constitutions as governance structures: The political foundations of secure markets: Comment." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 149 (1): 312–320.
- Ricciuti, Roberto, Antonio Savoia, and Kunal Sen. 2019. "How do political institutions affect fiscal capacity? Explaining taxation in developing economies." *Journal of Institutional Economics* 15 (2): 351–380.
- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James Robinson. 2005. "The rise of Europe: Atlantic trade, institutional change, and economic growth." *American Economic Review* 95 (3): 546–579.

WEEK 13: April 20

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

- * Van Zanden, Jan Luiten, Eltjo Buringh and Maarten Boskera. 2012. "The rise and decline of European parliaments, 1188–1789." *Economic History Review* 65 (3): 835–861.
- * Stasavage, David. 2016. "Representation and consent: Why they arose in Europe and not elsewhere." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19: 145–62.
- * Boucoyannis, Deborah. 2021. *Kings as Judges: Power, Justice, and the Origins of Parliaments*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 (pp. 3–27) and 4 (pp. 87–105).
- * Blaydes, Lisa and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The feudal revolution and Europe's rise: Political divergence of the Christian west and the Muslim world before 1500 CE." *American Political Science Review* 107 (1): 16–34.

WEEK 14: April 27

SUPERMAJORITARIANISM Are anti- or super-majoritarian institutions necessary for the protection of minorities? Are majoritarian institutions always oppressive?

- * McGann, Anthony J. 2006. *The Logic of Democracy: Reconciling Equality, Deliberation, and Minority Protection*. University of Michigan Press.