

**Political Science 4331:
The Two Dimensions of Electoral Politics**

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00 to 2:20

Course Description

The electoral systems used to select legislative bodies around the world vary dramatically. We will begin this course by defining the individual electoral rules that go into creating every electoral system. We will then flesh out the conceptual dimensions along which the incentives created by combinations of electoral rules can vary. We will locate all of the most widely used (and even some pretty rare) electoral systems in a two-dimensional space based on the incentives they create for the behavior of voters, candidates, party leaders, and elected representatives. With this framework of expectations in place, we will then systematically study the impact of electoral incentives on many aspects of democratic politics that we care about --- including the choices voters are offered, the strategies that elected officials follow to seek reelection, and, ultimately, the kind and quality of representation voters receive. We will conclude the semester by considering the question of what reformers can hope to achieve when changing electoral rules.

Electoral systems are made up of rules that govern a host of issues related to how elections work, including rules about how candidates get access to the ballot; the extent to which voters can *disturb* the ballot presented to them; to what level voters votes will be pooled before seats are awarded; how many votes each voter gets to cast and whether they can select individual candidates or just party banners; how seats are allocated within a district or tier once all the votes are counted; and whether certain thresholds must be met before a seat can be won.

As we will discuss in great deal over the course of the semester, these rules have effects on *interparty* politics and *intraparty* politics. Aspects of intraparty politics we will explore include the relationship between supporters and a party and the relationship between party leaders and rank-and-file politicians. Aspects of interparty politics we will explore include the number of political parties that exist, their relative size, and their position in a policy space.

Most fundamentally, you should think of electoral rules as formal institutions that incentivize certain behaviors. If voters, candidates, or members of parliament want to achieve certain outcomes, they must develop a strategy for making that outcome most likely. The strategy one chooses must take into account the rules about how the political game is played. For example, how a voter who wants policy to move in a different direction should cast her vote will be affected by the rules regarding district magnitude (the number of seats awarded in each district). An incumbent candidate who wants to win reelection may vote very differently on which proposed bills should become law depending on whether his re-nomination is controlled by a handful of party leaders or by voters in a primary. Whether the executive has to compromise on the ideological content of her preferred bills in order to get legislative support for them will be affected by whether legislators running for reelection are primarily concerned about their individual, personal reputations or the collective reputation they share with other members of their party.

Team

This course will be co-taught with Mr. Patrick Cunha. He can be reached at pcunhasilva@wustl.edu. You are welcome to contact either of us (via e-mail) about the course. Depending on the issue, one of us may refer you to the other.

Course Readings

Daily topics are listed below followed by relevant readings. The readings will be made available via Canvas.

Course Requirements

Daily Preparedness

I am assigning far less reading than I typically do, but I am raising my expectations about how carefully you will have done the reading. We will regularly have very brief quizzes that you should be able to complete successfully if you have spent the appropriate amount of time with the reading. A few weeks into the course we will introduce you to a template for taking notes while you read. I will regularly ask you to submit your note-taking guides for evaluation. Combined, your quiz responses and your note-taking guides will be worth 25% of your total grade.

Midterm

We will have an open-note, open-readings midterm after completing two major sections of the course. The midterm will have questions in a variety of formats: true/false, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short essay, long essay. I have set aside a class period where we can review for the midterm together and where you will have an opportunity to help write the exam. The midterm will be worth 25% of your total grade.

Bibliography

As noted above, we will be using electoral incentives to explain aspects of interparty politics and aspects of intraparty politics. We will show you one way to search the scholarly literature for recent research being conducted on specific topics. You will be assigned two-dozen or more scholarly articles which you will peruse lightly. We will give you a series of questions that you must answer about each article. This will be completed via an app called Zotero. You might want to start experimenting with it if you have not used it previously. This assignment will be detailed in a separate handout. You will work in small groups on this assignment. The bibliography will be worth 25% of your total grade.

Evaluating Reformers

Also noted above, electoral rules can be thought of institutionalized incentives. They provide the rules under which voters, candidates, elected officials pursue their preferred outcomes. Obviously, if “reformers” want to change behaviors, they can change the rules in an effort to encourage those new behaviors. You will identify an instance of electoral reform and assess whether it successfully achieved the goals of reformers. This assignment too will be detailed in a separate handout. Again, you will work in small groups on this assignment. The bibliography will be worth 25% of your total grade.

Course “Policies”

One-on-One Consultation. I strongly encourage you to get in touch with me frequently about the course. Staying engaged with the course materials and getting informal feedback at regular intervals will have a big impact on your performance on the required assignments. In the Zoom section of our Canvas page, you will find a link to regularly scheduled office hours, however, you must register in advance. If no one is registered by 9:00 a.m. of that day, it is unlikely I will be available.

Attendance. I highly recommend it! It can directly and indirectly impact your grade. We will record our sessions and make them available via Canvas. If you would like to participate (and I really hope you will) use the hand-raised function in Zoom. Please plan to have your video on (and your audio muted) unless there are extenuating circumstances that prevent this.

Technology. Please try to abstain from extraneous activities during our class meetings. Students who are repeatedly disruptive to my train of thought or the focus of their fellow students will be administratively dropped from the course without credit.

Due Dates. Due dates are detailed in the syllabus. If you foresee a conflict with some due date, contact me immediately to talk about options, if I can offer any. I do not grant last-minute exceptions, and I will penalize any late work severely.

Special Accommodations. If you require any, set up a time to meet with me early in the semester so that I can make sure your needs are met.

Academic Integrity. Plagiarism, misrepresenting one's identity, cheating, etc. will not be tolerated. Please review the university's policies in this regard at:
<http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>

Course Schedule

Tuesday, January 26: Course Overview
No Readings

The Rules of the Game

Thursday, January 28: Electoral Rules
Crisp et al. Chapter 1

Tuesday, February 2: Electoral Systems
Crisp et al. Chapter 2

Thursday, February 4: Interparty and Intraparty Politics
Crisp et al. Chapter 3

Tuesday, February 9: Simulating Electoral Incentives
Crisp et al. Chapter 4

Thursday, February 11: Complex Interactions of Electoral Rules
Crisp et al. Chapter 5

Tuesday, February 16: From a Simulated World to the Real World
Crisp et al. Chapter 6

Thursday, February 18: Study Break (no class)

Interparty Politics

Tuesday, February 23: The Effective Number of Parties
Crisp, Potter, and Lee 2012

Thursday, February 25: Party Locations
Dow 2011

Tuesday, March 2: Wellness Day (no class)

Thursday, March 4: Note-Taking Guide
Dow 2011

Tuesday, March 9: Congruence
Golder and Stramski 2010

Midterm Exam

Thursday, March 11: In-Class Exercise/Write Midterm Exam

Tuesday, March 16: Midterm Exam

Course Schedule Continued

Intraparty Politics

Thursday, March 18: Campaign Content
Sudulich and Trumm 2017

Tuesday, March 23: Constituency Service
Andre, Depauw, and Martin 2015

Thursday, March 25: (Kind of Like) Campaign Content and Constituency Service
Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005

Tuesday, March 30: In Class Exercise

Thursday, April 1: Cameral Rules
Martin 2011

Tuesday, April 6: Party Discipline
Carey 2007

Thursday, April 8: Policy or Pork
Stratmann and Baur 2002

Tuesday, April 12: No Tests or Assignments Due

Thursday, April 15: Policy or Pork
Crisp et al. 2004

Tuesday, April 20: In-Class Exercise

Bibliographies

Thursday, April 22: Zotero Bibliographies Due

Electoral Reform

Tuesday, April 27: Reform on the Interparty Dimension
Becher and Menéndez González 2019

Thursday, April 29: Reform on the Intraparty Dimension
Crisp et al. 2021

Final “Exam”

Tuesday, May 4: Reform Evaluation Due