

# Do Institutions Matter?

## Section 11

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Sima Biondi

Fall 2024

Gov 20: Foundations of Comparative Politics

# Overview

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1 Reminders

2 What is an institution?

3 Types of rules

4 Discussion

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  - Norris and Inglehart

# Roadmap

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Last week: we talked about ethnicity and ethnic conflict

In this section, we're talking about **electoral** and **constitutional** systems, in particular:

1. What is an institution?
2. Electoral rules and their implications

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## What is an institution?

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# What is an institution?

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Rules and procedures that constrain or enable actors' behavior to shape political, economic, and social outcomes.



Figure 1: SCOTUS

## Types of institutions

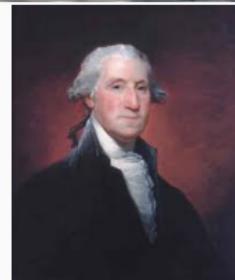
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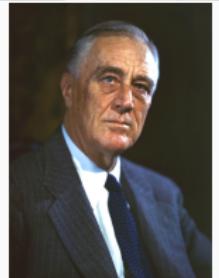
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# Types of institutions

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- Formal: laws, constitutional rules
- Informal: customs, traditions, taboos



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## Types of electoral systems

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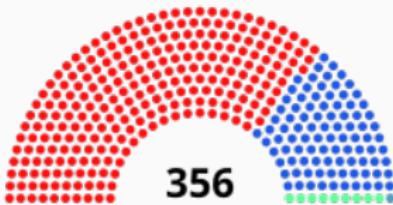
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# Types of electoral systems

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What are its variants?

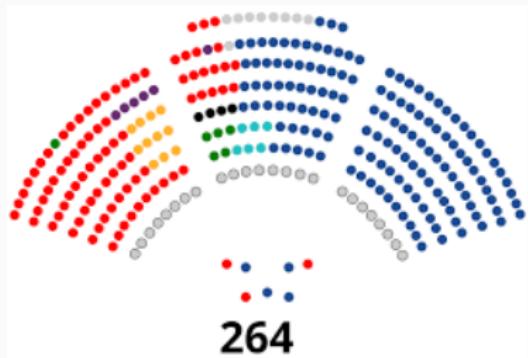
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- Proportional representation
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- Proportional representation
- Multi-member districts
- Party lists

# Types of electoral systems

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Are there other electoral systems?

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Are there other electoral systems? Yes, mixed plurality/PR



Figure 2: Japan is an example

What is district magnitude?

# Types of electoral systems

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Figure 2: Japan is an example

What is district magnitude?

- of reps elected from a district

# Types of constitutional systems

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What are the salient features of...?

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Presidentialism?

- Separation of power
- Fixed terms

Parliamentarism?

- Single-body
- No fixed terms

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What is the Westminster system?

## Recap: 3x2 of electoral + constitutional systems

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Test yourself! Fill in the blank table with cases

	Constitutional system	<i>Presidential democracies</i>	<i>Parliamentary democracies</i>
Electoral system			
	<i>Plurality</i>		
	<i>PR</i>		
	<i>Mixed plurality + PR</i>		

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# Build-a-democracy!

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Split into groups and choose a: (1) constitutional and (2) electoral system.

How does each institutional choice affect:

- Representation?
- Efficiency?
- Potential for ethnic conflict?

Info sheet: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/18TDprVMfcob\\_UoRpx0GpuXZT3-00WtovoQrauebbJvY/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18TDprVMfcob_UoRpx0GpuXZT3-00WtovoQrauebbJvY/edit?usp=sharing)

## Representation and efficiency

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Lijphart: “[p]roportionalists tend to attach greater importance to the **representativeness** of government, while plurality advocates view the **capacity to govern** as the more vital consideration.” (pp. 166).

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Lijphart: “[p]roportionalists tend to attach greater importance to the **representativeness** of government, while plurality advocates view the **capacity to govern** as the more vital consideration.” (pp. 166).

Which do y'all think is more important for democratic stability?  
Ethnic conflict?

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