

POLI 220B—Comparative Politics: Institutions

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Course description

This class investigates the origins, operation, and consequences of political institutions. Institutions are generally thought of as the “rules of the game” insofar as they set the parameters within which political actors function and strategize. More pragmatically, we will be examining the structures—mostly formal—that give order to the state and everyday political life: constitutions, parliaments, political parties, electoral systems, and so forth. The class focuses on democratic institutions, but there will also be a consideration of the role played by institutions in non-democratic systems. Toward the end of the quarter, we will dip into the large literature on institutions’ social and economic effects.

The class is geared toward PhD students in political science, and especially those preparing to take the comprehensive examination in comparative politics. While we cover significant ground, it is worth emphasizing that graduate students sitting for this exam will need to read beyond the syllabus provided here. For additional material, students should consult Professor Strom’s [excellent reading list](#).

There are no prerequisites, although familiarity with the basic concepts of game theory and econometrics will be helpful.

Expectations and grading policy

1. **Reading and participation (10%).** There are five readings for each class session. Come to class prepared to discuss, critique, and defend *all* of the readings, and do so actively. Be willing to ask simple questions—usually others will want to know the answer too. Be respectful and wary of interrupting; don’t monopolize the discussion.
2. **Presentation (15%).** You will be paired with another student at the start of the quarter. For one class in the quarter, your pair will be assigned to present. The presentation should do the following:
 - Briefly motivate the topic: why does it matter?

- Establish the principal research questions behind the assigned readings. Don't present one question per reading; rather, gather readings together and organize the debates they speak to.
 - Summarize the readings' main claims in response to those questions. Again, draw linkages across readings wherever possible ("One set of texts addresses the moral hazard wrought by these institutional arrangements; the other set. . ."). The goal here is to tease out the positive contributions the readings make in driving forward the literature.
 - Pinpoint some salient critiques. These may center on internal inconsistencies within a theory, flaws in research design, interpretation of results, unarticulated assumptions, scope conditions, etc. Be judicious and measured. Avoid hyperbole. Try to propose ways ahead.
 - Conclude the presentation by offering four "big picture" questions to guide subsequent class discussion.
 - The best presentations will lay out an incisive, analytical summary of the material, call attention to its principal shortcomings, and set the agenda for the remainder of the class.
 - The presentation must be strictly no longer than 20 minutes; a timer will be set.
 - You should prepare no more than 10 slides.
 - Coordinate with your assigned partner well in advance. Practice the presentation together to hone the flow. Both members of the pair need to speak for roughly 10 minutes each.
3. **Writing I, II, III (75% total; 25% each).** Over the quarter you will write three short exam-type papers. Some instructions:
- 48 hours before the deadline, I will email a set of questions. These will relate directly to the topics covered in the recent weeks' class sessions.
 - Pick ONE question.
 - Answer that question in strictly no more than 1,500 words. Longer papers will be returned for revision and incur a late penalty.
 - You should engage in depth with the relevant class readings. Citing a couple of outside readings is fine, especially if they are canonical or well-cited pieces. But citing other texts is not necessary to receive a top grade.
 - There should be a thread running through the paper; it must make an argument. Use signposts to help the reader understand how each paragraph adds to the larger point you want to make. A good idea is to state your thesis in bold terms very near the start of the paper ("In this paper, I argue that. . .").
 - Bring in empirical examples, but don't present tables, figures, or discuss cases at great length. The emphasis should usually be on grappling with the theoretical claims. In this context, cases are best used to illustrate your points instead of being a hard test of them.
 - You may include up to three short footnotes; fewer is better. These are included in the word count.
 - Use the Harvard citation style: "The sky is blue (Green 2012)."
 - Don't include a bibliography.
 - Write the paper in [LaTeX](#) or—even better—[R markdown](#). If you haven't yet mastered these tools, now is the time.
 - The assignments are open-book and open-note.

Academic honesty

You are expected to do your own work, and to properly attribute ideas, quotations, and sources. Please consult the university's [website on academic integrity](#).

Electronics policy

Laptops and phones are not allowed in class, except for students with disabilities by prior agreement of the instructor. Evidence suggests that students learn better when they take handwritten notes in class. The absence of laptops and phones makes for better class discussion.

Disabilities policy

Students with disabilities should please inform the instructor of any accommodations you may need. We will do everything possible to facilitate your full participation in the class.

Email policy

I will reply to emails within two business days.

Class Schedule

Wednesday, 2018-10-03—Introduction: studying institutions

- North, Douglass C (1991). “Institutions”. In: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5.1, pp. 97–112. [Link](#).
- Thelen, Kathleen (1999). “Historical institutionalism in comparative politics”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 2.1, pp. 369–404. [Link](#).
- Grossman, Guy and Laura Paler (2015). “Using field experiments to study political institutions”. In: *Routledge Handbook of Comparative Political Institutions*. Ed. by Jennifer Gandhi and Rubén Ruiz-Rufino. Routledge. [Link](#).
- Pierson, Paul (2000). “Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics”. In: *American Political Science Review* 94.2, pp. 251–267. [Link](#).
- Hall, Peter A and Rosemary CR Taylor (1996). “Political science and the three new institutionalisms”. In: *Political Studies* 44.5, pp. 936–957. [Link](#).

Wednesday, 2018-10-10—Democracy: origins & types

- Acemoglu, Daron and James A Robinson (2005). *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 2 and pp. 80–87](#).
- Geddes, Barbara (1999). “What do we know about democratization after twenty years?” In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 2.1, pp. 115–144. [Link](#).
- Przeworski, Adam (2005). “Democracy as an equilibrium”. In: *Public Choice* 123.3-4, pp. 253–273. [Link](#).
- Ziblatt, Daniel (2017). *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy in Modern Europe, 1848–1950*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 2](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 1–3](#).

Wednesday, 2018-10-17—Democracy: presidentialism & executives

- Linz, Juan J (1990). “The perils of presidentialism”. In: *Journal of Democracy* 1.1, pp. 51–69. [Link](#).
- Cheibub, José Antonio (2007). *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 6](#).
- Shugart, Matthew S and John M Carey (1992). *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 3](#).
- Samuels, David J and Matthew S Shugart (2010). *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1–2](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 7](#).

Wednesday, 2018-10-24—Democracy: legislatures & parliamentary democracy

- Cox, Gary W (2005). *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 6 & 13](#).

- Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov (2013). “Empowering women through development aid: Evidence from a field experiment in Afghanistan”. In: *American Political Science Review* 107.3, pp. 540–557. [Link](#).
- Strøm, Kaare (2000). “Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies”. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 37.3, pp. 261–290. [Link](#).
- Tsebelis, George (1995). “Decision making in political systems: veto players in presidentialism, parliamentarism, multicameralism and multipartyism”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 25.3, pp. 289–325. [Link](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 11](#).

Wednesday, 2018-10-31—Democracy: federalism & power sharing

- Rodden, Jonathan A and Jonathan Rodden (2006). *Hamilton’s Paradox: the Promise and Peril of Fiscal Federalism*. Cambridge University Press. [pp. 1–23 and Chapter 3](#).
- Wibbels, Erik (2006). “Madison in Baghdad? Decentralization and federalism in comparative politics”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, pp. 165–188. [Link](#).
- Roeder, Philip G (2009). “Ethnofederalism and the mismanagement of conflicting nationalisms”. In: *Regional & Federal Studies* 19.2, pp. 203–219. [Link](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (1996). “The Puzzle of Indian democracy: A consociational interpretation”. In: *American Political Science Review* 90.2, pp. 258–268. [Link](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 10](#).

Wednesday, 2018-11-07—Democracy: electoral rules & party systems

- Boix, Carles (1999). “Setting the rules of the game: the choice of electoral systems in advanced democracies”. In: *American Political Science Review* 93.3, pp. 609–624. [Link](#).
- Horowitz, Donald L (1992). *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. University of California Press. [Chapter 5](#).
- Cox, Gary W (1997). *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World’s Electoral Systems*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 8](#).
- Shugart, Matthew S and Rein Taagepera (2018). “Electoral system effects on party systems”. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*. Ed. by Erik S Herron, Robert J Pekkanen and Matthew S Shugart. Oxford University Press, pp. 41–68. [Link](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 8](#).

Wednesday, 2018-11-14—Democracy: political parties

- Aldrich, John H (1995). *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 1–2, e-reserves](#).
- Shefter, Martin (1977). “Party and patronage: Germany, England, and Italy”. In: *Politics & Society* 7.4, pp. 403–451. [Link](#).
- Stokes, Susan C (2005). “Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina”. In: *American Political Science Review* 99.3, pp. 315–325. [Link](#).

- Katz, Richard S and Peter Mair (1995). “Changing models of party organization and party democracy: the emergence of the cartel party”. In: *Party Politics* 1.1, pp. 5–28. [Link](#).
- Chandra, Kanchan (2007). *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2–5, e-reserves.

Wednesday, 2018-11-21—Bureaucracy, markets, and law

- Huber, John D and Charles R Shipan (2006). “Politics, Delegation, and Bureaucracy”. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. Ed. by Barry R Weingast and Donald Wittman. Oxford University Press, pp. 256–72. [Link](#).
- Desposato, Scott W, Matthew C Ingram and Osmar P Lannes Jr (2014). “Power, composition, and decision making: the behavioral consequences of institutional reform on Brazil’s Supremo Tribunal Federal”. In: *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 31.3, pp. 534–567. [Link](#).
- Shleifer, Andrei and Robert W Vishny (1993). “Corruption”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 108.3, pp. 599–617. [Link](#).
- Bates, Robert H (1981). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press. [Link](#).

Wednesday, 2018-11-28—Non-democratic systems

- Svobik, Milan W (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1–2](#).
- Magaloni, Beatriz (2006). *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge University Press. [Introduction and Chapter 1](#).
- Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski (2007). “Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats”. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 40.11, pp. 1279–1301. [Link](#).
- Blaydes, Lisa (2010). *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 3](#).
- De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, Alastair Smith, James D Morrow and Randolph M Siverson (2005). *The Logic of Political Survival*. MIT press. Chapter 2, e-reserves.

Wednesday, 2018-12-05—Social & economic effects of political institutions

- Olson, Mancur (1993). “Dictatorship, democracy, and development”. In: *American Political Science Review* 87.3, pp. 567–576. [Link](#).
- Alesina, Alberto and Dani Rodrik (1994). “Distributive politics and economic growth”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 109.2, pp. 465–490. [Link](#).
- Hainmueller, Jens and Dominik Hangartner “Does direct democracy hurt immigrant minorities? Evidence from naturalization decisions in Switzerland”. In: *American Journal of Political Science*. [Link](#).
- North, Douglass C and Barry R Weingast (1989). “Constitutions and commitment: the evolution of institutions governing public choice in seventeenth-century England”. In: *The Journal of Economic History* 49.4, pp. 803–832. [Link](#).
- Lijphart, Arend (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press. [Chapter 15–16](#).