

Political Consequences of Electoral Systems

POLI 124A Spring 2012

Professor Matthew Shugart

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:15 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., SSB 390

Course meeting times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.; RBC Gardner Room (IR/PS)

Course Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/poli124a/home>

Democracy, being a system of under which those who govern are those who win elections, requires a set of rules to determine who “wins.” It is not as straightforward as it may seem to determine winners, as there are many variations in how voters cast votes, how votes are counted, and how votes are translated into seats in legislative and executive institutions. The set of rules that structure this process of voting and representation are what we mean by “the electoral system” for a given political jurisdiction. In this course, we will analyze and compare electoral systems, according to different categories (e.g. proportional and majoritarian) and in a wide range of democratic countries around the world.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is only an outline of the course, and not any sort of contract from which you can claim rights. If deviations from the syllabus are required for any reason, they will be announced in class. Such announcements always trump this document.

Books: There are two books that you should acquire for your use during the course.

Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell, eds., *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Referred to in the schedule below as “PES” with the corresponding chapter (usually identified by the country that it covers)

There will be copies at the bookstore, and on Reserve.

See “Reading Suggestions” in an appendix to this syllabus.

International IDEA. *Handbook of Electoral System Design*.

The IDEA Handbook is available on line, for free! <http://www.idea.int/publications/esd/>

Course requirements

You are expected to keep up with assigned readings and to attend class. There will be two in-class examinations. There are also writing requirements; for information about the response/discussion papers and election analysis, see the section of this syllabus following the schedule of topics. The components of the grade will be weighted approximately as follows:

21%	Short response or discussion papers (minimum 3 during quarter)
20%	Midterm examination
20%	Final examination
25%	Election analysis paper
14%	Participation (explained near the end of this syllabus)

No student will receive a passing grade without turning in every assignment on time, and taking each exam at the mandated time. No make-up exams will be offered, except in the event of dire emergency (for which proper documentation will be required).

Schedule of topics, readings, and assignments

Week 1

April 3 (session 1)

Introduction and Overview

IDEA Handbook, pp. 1-8.

April 5 (session 2)

Building blocks I: District magnitude, assembly size, number of parties

IDEA Handbook, Chapter 2 (pp. 27-34)

Rein Taagepera, "Electoral Systems," in Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006. (*This item will be posted on the course website--see URL at beginning of syllabus.*)

Week 2

April 10 (session 3)

Building blocks II: Plurality vs. Proportional Systems; Electoral systems in presidential and parliamentary democracies

IDEA Handbook, pp. 35-90 & 130-37

--you can skip the case studies, because we will come back to them; however, reading them now would not hurt, and might help you understand the different systems.

April 12 (session 4)

Discussion of paper topics and research resources; Continuation of "Building Blocks" themes

Visit by Annelise Sklar, Librarian for Political Science

Week 3

April 17 (session 5)

Plurality (FPTP) in two parliamentary democracies

PES Canada
PES UK

April 19 (session 6)

PR, party lists, and proportionality I

PES appendices B, C, and D
PES Israel

Week 4

April 24 (session 7)

PR, party lists, and proportionality II

PES Spain
PES South Africa

April 26 (session 8)

PR with open lists

PES Finland
PES Chile
IDEA Handbook Case Studies: Chile (pp. 78-81) and Brazil (pp. 86-89)

Due April 26: One paragraph proposal for your Election Analysis paper

Week 5

May 1 (session 9)

Two-round rules

PES France

Note: The French presidential election, first round, is May 6 (legislative first round is June 10).

May 3 (session 10)

Midterm review

Bring your questions and we can discuss anything related to the course so far!

Week 6

May 8 (session 11)

*******MIDTERM EXAMINATION*******

May 10 (session 12)

PR with flexible lists

PES Netherlands
PES Denmark

Week 7

May 15 (session 13)

Ranked-choice ballots

PES Ireland
PES Australia
Also recommended: IDEA Handbook Case Study: Ireland (pp. 72-74)

May 17 (session 14)

Mixed-member systems

PES Germany

Week 8

May 22 (session 15)

Other electoral systems and the question of electoral reform

IDEA Handbook, pp. 90-91, 95, 103-104, 112-113, 117-120
IDEA Handbook Case Studies:
British Columbia (pp. 17-19), Japan (pp. 114-116), New Zealand (pp. 100- 103), and
Mexico (pp. 96-99)
Also recommended: Case Studies on Lesotho and Thailand

May 24 (session 16)

PES New Zealand

Week 9

May 29 (session 17)

PES Japan

Back to plurality systems: India and the USA

May 31 (session 18)

A “Surprise” Case of Multipartism and a case study in electoral coordination
India uses FPTP, so you might expect it to have a small number of parties. Wrong! Why?

PES India

Also recommended: IDEA Handbook Case Study on India (pp. 39-42)

Week 10

June 5 (session 19)

United States

PES USA

Some *required* items about electoral systems and electoral reform in the USA will be posted

June 7 (session 20)

Conclusions and re-cap

Bring your questions!

******DUE JUNE 7: FINAL VERSION OF RESEARCH PAPER******

Finals week

According to Triton Link, the final examination will be Tuesday, June 12, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Response or Discussion Papers

Three times during the quarter, each student must submit a *response paper* or a *discussion paper*. These are short papers (3-7 pages, double-spaced) which must do at least one of the following: (1) Offer a critical review of the day's reading; or (2) Pose some well thought-out question that would be valuable for discussion and somehow relevant to the topic of the day's class.

One model (but not the only one) for these papers is to respond to events in the news--based on research about some current event--that are related to the day's topic. For instance, you could research events in one of the countries we discuss on a given day, and say something about how what you know about the electoral system (from the required reading) may be shaping the events you have read about in the news. Such events could be an election (which could be from any year after 2005, the last year covered in the book), a change of government, or a current policy or reform debate.

At least one response/discussion paper must be turned in on a date of your choosing before the midterm exam, and at least one on a date after the midterm exam.

Election Analysis Paper

As part of your requirements for this course, you will prepare an *Election Analysis*. It should be about 5-10 pages, double-spaced. It will take a specific election in some country, and discuss the outcome, including how the electoral system shaped the outcome.

You may do any election in any democracy, except for an election that is included in the PES volume. In addition, you may not use the UK 2010 election (because it will be discussed extensively in class). The case study that you will use must be approved by April 26.

For this paper, you must consult a minimum of four sources. There must be at least one academic source, by which I mean a peer-reviewed journal article or a book published by a major press. (We will discuss what these limitations mean in class.) You also should consult web-based sources, such as newspapers or data archives (e.g. Lexis-Nexis or Keesing's). In addition, it would be helpful to consult primary sources (e.g. government, NGO, or international organization publications about electoral systems or elections).

Your Election Analysis paper should have a clear thesis statement and your argument should be carefully developed with supporting evidence. That is, the point of an analysis is to advance an argument that helps the reader understand what was significant--in your considered judgment--about the election and the electoral system. Topics may include such questions as: how it was that the electoral system shaped the conduct of the campaign and/or the outcome of the election; how some party or minority group was advantaged or disadvantaged by the electoral system that the country uses; whether a reform of the electoral system in a given political jurisdiction would help resolve some problem (where the problem is something, identified in your paper, to do with the current electoral system). If you need help narrowing your topic, or if you run into problems finding information on the topic you've chosen, please consult me, your TA, a reference librarian, or the political science research librarian at Geisel, Annelise Sklar.

Maintaining Academic Integrity. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Class Participation:

This is an upper division political science course, and so you are expected to come to class meetings having done the reading and prepared yourself to discuss central questions, puzzles and concerns that arise from readings assigned for that day, or current events that are related to course topics. Ideally, 15–20 minutes of most 80 minute class sessions will be devoted to questions and discussion, although some days, especially earlier in the quarter, may be more heavily tilted towards lecture.

The portion of your grade that is based on participation can only help your final course grade, as long as you are attentive, raise questions once in a while, and respond to questions that I may direct your way. The participation component of your grade will lower your course grade (i.e. what it would be based on exams and the writing requirements) only if you are frequently absent, nearly always silent, or you are regularly unable to answer any questions posed to you.

Please try to come to office hours at least once (preferably more!) to discuss your research projects, course readings, current events related to the course, etc. I look forward to getting to know and learning from each of you!

Appendix 1: Reading Suggestions

The country-specific readings from the book, *The Politics of Electoral Systems* (PES), are very detailed, but you should focus on situating each case into a larger conceptual context. Each country's electoral system is part of a larger family. Think about what defines the family, whether this case has unique characteristics within the family, and how this family relates to other families. Each family has attributes that lead to generalizations regarding inter-party and intra-party politics. You should focus on these types of cause-and-effect relationships.

Some of the readings come from the IDEA Handbook, *Electoral System Design*, and these are of two types:

- (1) Overviews of choices and key rules of electoral systems; these will help you make sense of the "families" of electoral systems.
- (2) Case studies of experiences with specific electoral systems; these are much shorter than the case studies in PES.

For some class sessions, there are also news readings about recent politics in one of the countries being covered that day. The purpose of these is to bring the political context up to date. Do not neglect these! They will help you make sense of how electoral systems shape politics. There is also always some chance that I will ask you in class to interpret the events covered in the news in light of what the PES chapter says about the same country.

In thinking about the broader political process in any country (or state, province, etc.), we can posit that various actors have political preferences, meaning outcomes they would like to see come to fruition, goals they would like to achieve, etc. "Actors" here may mean voters, political parties, individual candidates, and sitting legislators, among others. Electoral systems are in a sense the "rules of the political game." Therefore, we need to think in terms such as:

- If a group of voters want a particular policy outcome, how should they proceed given how the electoral system works?
- How might their best strategy change if the electoral system was different?

We will be deducing hypotheses about how we expect electoral systems to influence behavior and we will be looking at the empirical record, as related in the relevant PES chapter, IDEA case study, or news readings, to determine the extent to which our expectations hold.

The main text for the class – *The Politics of Electoral Systems* – is divided into conceptual and country-specific chapters. In the latter set of readings, each chapter is further subdivided into:

- (1) Historical background to the country's political system
- (2) Origins of the current electoral system
- (3) The electoral system as it stands today
- (4) Political consequences of the electoral system
- (5) The politics of electoral reform

Sections 1, 2, and 5 of each chapter can be thought of jointly (and read relatively quickly). When thinking about the origins of systems it is important to remember that electoral systems are adopted by the very actors – namely, politicians and parties – whose behavior they are supposed to constrain. Ask yourself who stood to benefit from the adoption of certain rules and who were the major players in these deliberations?

Sections 3 and 4 should be read very carefully. Their focus is more central to the subject matter of this

course. (Except in some latter course sessions, we will typically assume that the electoral system is a given, rather than something that is subject to significant change). Pay attention to the critical electoral variables in section 3. When you are done reading you should be able to answer the following types of questions (this list is not exhaustive):

- How do parties choose candidates?
- What is the ballot's structure (does it allow for intraparty competition)?
- How many votes does each voter get and are they cast at the party or subparty level?
- When the election is over to what level do votes "pool" (can votes for one candidate help another)?
- How many seats are allocated in each district? By what formula?

I would suggest that you make notes on each country, trying to answer these questions. You should be able to use abbreviated versions of your answer to create a comparative table of electoral systems.

Section 4 will help you think about the theoretically relevant ramifications of these rules on important dimensions of the political system: how political parties interact with their (potential) supporters; the activities in which candidates engage; how campaigns are conducted and what parties talk about; the degree of legislative voting cohesion shown by members of a partisan bloc; the number and type of bills members sponsor (and their likelihood of passing); the role of committees and members' committee careers; the process of government formation (coalitions, cabinet posts); and the legislature's interactions with other branches.

In sum, while you read, focus on getting the basics of the rules correct and how those rules help determine what behavior makes the most sense. This is best done by putting each system in a larger context (think about how it is similar to or different from other systems). *Please be ready at each class to ask questions about the readings or by raising a topic for discussion.*

There may be periods in each class when what I'm talking about seems to have no relationship to what you have read for the day! If this occurs, please raise your hand and ask me to make the connection more explicit. The chances are that I will be trying to show how some characteristic of an electoral system – in a country *not* covered by the day's readings – encourages voters, candidates, or representatives to behave in a certain way, and I will have chosen this country as an example because it is strikingly like or strikingly unlike the case(s) about which you read for the day. I will try to be explicit about making the connection between the readings and our discussions, but if I am not, please ask for clarification (sooner rather than later).

Appendix 2: Elections scheduled for spring or summer, 2012 (selected)

Source: Maximiliano Herrera's Electoral Calendar

<http://www.angelfire.com/ma/maxcrc/elections.html>

April-Greece,Parliament

1 April-Myanmar,Parliamentary by-elections for 48 seats

11 April-South Korea,Parliament

22 April-France,President 1st round (Lionel Jacquemin 11/5/11)

May-Bahamas,Parliament

May-Lesotho,Parliament

May-Madagascar,Parliamentary,Senatorial and local elections

4 May-Palestinian Territories,Presidential,Parliamentary and local elections (Lionel Jacquemin 29/11/11)

6 May-France,President 2nd round (Lionel Jacquemin 11/5/11)

6 May-Armenia,Parliament (News.az 3/11/11)

10 May-Algeria,Parliament (setif-dz.org 16/1/12)

16 May-Dominican Republic,President

June-Egypt,President

June-Mongolia,Parliament

June-Timor Leste,Parliamentary and municipal elections

June-Congo Brazzaville,Parliament

June-Papua New Guinea,Parliament

10 June-France,Parliament 1st round (Lionel Jacquemin 11/5/11)

17 June-Senegal,Parliament (L.Jacquemin 14/1/12)

17 June-France,Parliament 2nd round (Lionel Jacquemin 11/5/11)

23 June (proposed)-Libya,Constituent Assembly election

30 June-Iceland,President

1 July-Mexico,President and Parliament, and several state governors and legislatures