

POLS 385: Comparative Political Institutions

Emory University
Summer 2017

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Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the comparative study of political institutions. The course is framed around two general questions in this field: (1) under what conditions can elections be used to promote core democratic goals, and (2) under what conditions can democratic states be sufficiently empowered to solve the collective concerns of its citizens yet sufficiently constrained so that their leaders respect limits on their power. We address these questions through a study of European politics, focusing on the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany. In these contexts, we will study elections, parties and party system change, decentralization and constitutional review. We devote special attention to independence movements in the United Kingdom and Spain as well as to recent developments in Poland and Hungary, which raise questions about Europe's ability to address democratic backsliding within the European Union.

Grading

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following components:

Participation (10%) Active participation is essential to our course. Class begins in Room 308 of the Instituto Internacional unless otherwise indicated below. I expect you to be present. I expect you to be prepared. Preparation means that you have read the assignment before class and that you are ready to discuss it. In the event that you do not understand all that you have read, you need to be prepared to ask questions.

Two Exams (25% each) You will take two tests in our course. Both exams will be administered electronically. The first will cover all material covered through the end of our time in Spain. It will be due June 26. The second test will cover material across all three classes. It will be due July 15.

Site log (10%) You must prepare questions to ask on our site visits. Your site log will provide a place to store those questions. In addition, please keep a log of your experiences at each of the institutions we visit. After each visit, you should write a summary of the things you learned about the subject of the visit. These are intended to help you compile research for your final paper, so pay particular attention to anything relevant to your topic. Your log is due July 15.

Final paper (30%) You will seek to answer a research question that related to at least one of the three courses you are taking this semester. You may use information derived from site visits (including your site log) course material, as well as outside material, including data that

you uncover from established sources or which you construct yourself. The paper is by July 31. You can submit the paper on Bb.

Readings

Readings are all available either via Dropbox or electronic journals reachable via the Emory library site.

Incomplete Grades

No incomplete grades will be given unless there is an agreement between the instructor and the student **prior** to the end of the course. The instructor retains the right to determine legitimate reasons for an incomplete grade.

Integrity of Scholarship

I will follow the guidelines established by Emory College, which can be found at http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html. In short, don't cheat. The benefits are small. Even if the probability of getting caught is tiny, the costs of getting caught are huge.

Students with Disabilities

Students requiring any type of academic accommodation should consult with the Office of Disability Services (<http://www.ods.emory.edu/> or 404-727-6016) and discuss the issue with the instructor within the first week of class.

Class schedule

Monday, June 5: Program Introduction

10:30 am Orientation at ACCENT Study Center

Tuesday, June 6: Voting as a means of group choice Democratic choice is about finding the group's will by aggregating the preferences of many individuals? What are the properties of this process? Do particular rules for aggregating preferences do better than others at finding the group will?

Kenneth A Shepsle and MS Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. New York, 2010.

Notes:

1. Read Shepsle and Boncheck, Chapter 4.
2. Survival Spanish, 10 a.m. at the Study Center

Wednesday, June 7: Voting as a means of group choice Is Arrow's theorem really that big a problem? What if we think of politics on a left-right scale, where individual preferences can be represented with respect to all points on this scale? Are the implications of Arrow's theorem mitigated in this case, and if so, is Arrow's theorem just a peculiar philosophical anomaly?

Kenneth A Shepsle and MS Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. New York, 2010.

Notes:

1. Read Shepsle and Boncheck, Chapter 5.

Thursday, June 8: Visions of Democracy Political scientists have devoted considerable attention to two visions of democracy both of which highlight the role of elections. In this class, we will consider generally how electoral rules advance or undermine proportional or majoritarian visions of democratic representation? We will also consider alternative visions of democracy and study how these visions are currently being studied.

G Bingham Powell. *Elections as instruments of democracy: Majoritarian and proportional visions*. Yale University Press, 2000.

Staffan I. Lindberg, Michael Coppedge, David Altman, and Megan Elizabeth Reif. V-dem: A new way to measure democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(3):159–169, 2014.

Notes:

1. Read Powell Chapters 1 & 2.

Friday, June 9: Group dinner, location TBA

Saturday, June 10 - Sunday, June 11: Free time

Monday, June 12: The Electoral Sweetspot? We'll start with a brief discussion of the UK election. We'll then consider the main issue of the day. On some accounts, the Spanish electoral system has found the "electoral sweetspot." On this thesis, the Spanish system may be best at balancing pressures to represent diverse interests yet simultaneously ensure accountable governments. In this class, we will consider what this electoral sweetspot is supposed to be and whether recent events in Spanish politics call the thesis into question.

John M Carey and Simon Hix. The electoral sweet spot: Low-magnitude proportional electoral systems. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(2):383–397, 2011.

Tuesday, June 13: Party System Change in Spain Duverger's law, generalized by Cox, gives an upper bound on party systems, yet the Spanish system seems to be adding parties. Why is this?

Jose M Pavía, Anselm Bodoque, and Joaquín Martín. Podemos, a hurricane in the spanish crisis of trust. analysis and characterization.

Survival Spanish, 10 a.m. at the Study Center

Wednesday, June 14: Party System Change in the UK Duverger's law, generalized by Cox, gives an upper bound on party systems, yet the UK party system is not limited to 2 despite having district magnitude of 1. Why is this?

Ron Johnston, Charles Pattie, and David Manley. Britain's changed electoral map in and beyond 2015: the importance of geography. *The Geographical Journal*, 2016.

Nicholas Startin. Have we reached a tipping point? the mainstreaming of euroscepticism in the uk. *International Political Science Review*, 36(3):311–323, 2015.

Check out <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/07/british-euroscepticism-a-brief-history>

Also check out <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/06/06/eu-referendum-remain-lead-one/>

Potential Group dinner with Alumni

Thursday, June 16: Independence in Scotland

Ed Fieldhouse and Chris Prosser. When attitudes and behaviour collide: How the scottish independence referendum cost labour. Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association conference, Chicago, IL., April. 2016.

Survival Spanish, 10 a.m. at the Study Center

Saturday, June 17 - Sunday, June 18: Free time

Monday, June 19: Class with Hallerberg

Tuesday, June 20: Independence in Catalonia

Diego Muro and Martijn C Vlaskamp. How do prospects of eu membership influence support for secession? a survey experiment in catalonia and scotland. *West European Politics*, 39(6):1115–1138, 2016.

Jordi Muñoz and Raül Tormos. Economic expectations and support for secession in catalonia: between causality and rationalization. *European Political Science Review*, 7(02):315–341, 2015.

Survival Spanish, 10 a.m. at the Study Center

Wednesday, June 21 - Friday June 23: Barcelona Trip

Regional Parliament visit, June 22

Saturday June 24: Free Day

First Exam released today. It will be due Saturday July 1

Sunday June 25 - Wednesday, June 28: Edinburgh Trip

Visit to Scottish Parliament, June 27

Wednesday, June 28 - Saturday July 8: Germany Portion We will have two classes in our course on two topics: Europe and Trump and Democratic Backsliding. I am going to choose readings that best match the state of current events when we arrive in Germany. So, please stay tuned. We are also working out exactly when class will meet. We will update the syllabus as soon as know.

Saturday, July 1: Sachsenhausen visit

Monday, July 3: Regional Parliament visit

Saturday July 8: Departure Day

Exam 2 released July 8. It is due July 15

Research paper due July 31