



Course information 2018–19

PS2082 Comparative politics

This course encompasses how we form or develop concepts of democratic political institutions and some of the different ways in which democracies can be organised.

Prerequisite

If taken as part of a BSc degree, courses which must be passed before this course may be attempted:
PS1172 Introduction to political science or
PS1114 Democratic politics and the state or
PS1130 Introduction to modern political thought.

Aims and objectives

The main aim of this course is to enable students to address questions such as the following:

- What are political institutions and how should we study them?
- Why does democracy require institutions?
- How do institutions relate to legitimate political authority?
- How does political culture relate to institutions?

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should have a good understanding of the way in which different democratic institutional systems work. Specifically, students should be able to explain:

- ☑ Why institutional analysis is a key aspect of comparative politics
- ☑ How institutional stability and political legitimisation interact
- ☑ What is meant by political culture and how it influences institutional behaviour
- ☑ How presidential systems differ in key respects from parliamentary ones
- ☑ The relationship between elective and non-elective dimensions of the democratic state
- ☑ The concept of federalism and how it differs from local government.

- What is the relationship between democratic government and legitimate authority?
- How are democracies with presidential systems different from democracies with parliamentary ones?
- How do different electoral systems influence differences in party systems?
- How do different types of legal system influence the working of political institutions?
- How does political culture influence bureaucratic behaviour?
- How do democracies decentralise power to regional or local government?

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three hour unseen written examination.

Essential reading

For full details please refer to the reading list.

Ackerman, B. 'The Rise of World Constitutionalism' *Virginia Law Review*, 83/4 (May 1997), pp.771-797
 Booth J and Seligson M *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America; Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Bowen, J. *Why the French Don't like Headscarves; Islam, the State and the Public Sphere* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006)

Connolly, W. (ed.) *Legitimacy and the State*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) Especially the chapter by Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation' and the chapter by Lipset entitled 'Social Conflict, Legitimacy and Democracy' in the same volume

Dahl, R.A. *Democracy and its Critics*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)

Dahl R.A. *On Democracy* (New Haven; Yale U.P 1998)

R. Elgie, 'The perils of semi-presidentialism: Are they exaggerated?' *Democratization* 15/1 (2008), pp.49-66)

P Lassman and R Speers *Weber's Political Writings* (Cambridge texts in the History of Political thought, 1994) (to be used as an alternative to Connolly 1984)

Linz, J. 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy* 1: 51-69 (1990).

March, J.G. and J.P. Olson 'The New Institutionalism', *American Political Science Review* (September 1984) 73(3): 734-50

Roberts A *The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe; Public Preference and Policy Reforms* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Syllabus

This is a description of the material to be examined. On registration, students will receive a detailed subject guide which provides a framework for covering the topics in the syllabus and directions to the essential reading

This course is concerned mainly with the question of how different kinds of political systems work. It focuses both on the political process and on the role of government. The syllabus considers mainly democratic government and considers the main variations between different kinds of democracy.

The following topics will be examined:

- presidential and parliamentary systems
- legitimacy and political culture
- the nature and role of the state; bureaucracy; the judicial power, the role of the military
- forms of political organisation; parties and interest groups
- electoral systems and party competition
- federal and unitary states.

Students should consult the appropriate *EMFSS Programme Regulations*, which are reviewed on an annual basis. The *Regulations* provide information on the availability of a course, where it can be placed on your programme's structure, and details of co-requisites and prerequisites.