IPS 220: Comparative Political Institutions

Instructor: Kenneth Mori McElwain
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Class Schedule: Office Hours:
Mon 2:15-5:05 Mon 1-2pm, Thu 1-3pm
Bldg. 160 Rm. 321 Encina East, Rm. 103

Objectives
This course examines the origins, functions, and effects of political institutions. We will examine how the behavior of political actors are conditioned and funneled into different policy outputs by the institutional framework they operate in, going from the general – democracies vs. autocracies – to the specific – presidential vs. parliamentary systems or single-member vs. proportional representation electoral rules. In addition to studying the effect of political institutions, we will also explore new research on institutional endogeneity: namely, where institutions come from and how they change over time.

Requirements
You will have two different writing assignments for this class. First, you will write a weekly 1-page paper describing the political institution of two different countries. The institution in question will reflect the reading assignment for that week. You will get to choose the first country to study. I'll assign the second, based on interesting points of similarity and contrast. The papers will be due on Monday before class, at 9AM. Be prepared to discuss the readings in the context of your specialty countries.

Your second writing assignment is a 20 page take-home final / research paper. During the final class, I will describe a country in the process of writing its constitution. I will detail that country’s economic situation, distribution of wealth, ethnic composition, number of political parties, and the like. In your paper, you will outline your plan for that country’s institutional architecture, referencing the readings and using similar countries as points of comparison. You’ll need to weigh feasibility as well as utility: political elites won’t necessarily support “optimal” institutions, so mix what “should” happen with what “would” happen.

Readings
There are three sets of readings for this class: 1) required books, available at the Stanford Bookstore (listed below); 2) journal articles, available through the e-journals section of the library homepage at http://library.stanford.edu/catdb/e_resources/index.html (denoted ONLINE in syllabus); 3) book chapters, available from http://coursework.stanford.edu/ (denoted COURSEWORK in syllabus).
Required Books


Background Reading
(Not Required)


**Week 1: What’s So Different about Democracies?**


Tsebelis, Chpt. 3

Lijphart, Chpts. 2, 3

*Recommended*


Week 2: The Function and Behavior of Political Parties


Lijphart, Chpt. 5

Dalton and Wattenberg, Chpts. 4, 5, 8


Recommended


**Week 3: Electoral Systems, or “Rules that Decide Who's in Power”**

Lijphart, Chpt. 8


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**Recommended**


**Week 4: Partisan Politics and Redistribution**


Dalton and Wattenberg, Chpts. 2, 10

**Recommended**


Week 5: Presidential Systems


COURSEWORK


Cheibub, Jose Antonio. "Presidentialism, Electoral Identifiability, and Budget Balances in Democratic Systems." American Political Science Review 100.3 (2006): 353-68. ONLINE

Lijphart, Chpt. 7

Recommended


Week 6: Parliamentary Systems

Lijphart, Chpt. 6


**COURSEWORK**


**Recommended**


Week 7: Legislative Organization

Lijphart, Chpt. 11

Tsebelis, Chpt. 4, 7


Recommended


**Week 8: Federalism and Decentralization**


Tsebelis, Chpt. 6

Lijphart, Chpt 10


**Recommended**


Week 9: Endogenous Political Institutions


Recommended


