

GOV 357M COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL DESIGN: INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS

Professor Zachary Elkins
Course Unique Number: 38728
TTH 3:30-5:00
PAR 208

Contact Information

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Course Description and Objectives

This course is about the importance of context in constitutional design. The course proceeds with the assumption that constitutional reforms do not spring completely, or even mostly, from the interests and ambitions of a country's "founders." Rather, we assume that founders are responding to the actions of other countries as well as to aspects of the international and regional milieu in which the founders operate. In large part, this premise is based upon a view of human behavior in which one's peers are highly influential in shaping one's preferences. The course surveys important theory and evidence on how, exactly, context shapes behavior and constitutional reform more specifically. Students are expected to read carefully and participate actively in class discussions.

Online Materials

Information for this course will be posted on the class Blackboard site. There you will find updates to this syllabus, electronic copies of selected readings, instructions for uploading assignments, and regular announcements.

If you have any problems with your password or accessing Blackboard, contact ITS. If you can access Blackboard, but cannot access any material from this course, please contact Professor Elkins by email.

Requirements and Grading

This is a seminar for undergraduates who have taken at least six hours of Government coursework or related coursework in other departments. Discussion of the written material is a central component of the course, and the expectation is that you come fully prepared to discuss the readings assigned on any given day. Your grade will be based on the following components:

- (1) *Class Participation (15%)*. The participation score will be based on both attendance and, more importantly, the quality of your contributions to class discussions.
- (2) *Reaction papers (20%)*. For at least six of the sessions, you will be required to respond to the readings in a short reaction paper. You may choose which of the six sessions you turn in papers, except that you must complete three in each half of the course (that is, three before March 3 and three after). Reaction papers are short (roughly 500-word) essays in which you reflect on the readings and address any criticism(s) or reactions to the readings. Some weeks you might be asked to address a particular question, but for most weeks you can address the issues or questions of your choice. For more guidance, see the handout, "How to Write a Reaction Paper," which is available on the course website.

Reaction papers for each week must be posted on the website by **10 PM on the day before class**. See the handout for specific instructions on how to post your paper.

Reaction papers are graded on an acceptable/unacceptable basis. As long as you show that you have read, and reflected on, the reading in a coherent thoughtful fashion, your paper will be deemed acceptable and you will receive full credit.

- (3) *Short Analytical Exercise (15%)*. You will analyze of some aspect of constitutional design and write a brief report of your findings.
- (4) *Exams (50%)*. You will take two in-class exams (a midterm and a final) in which you will be asked to respond to a series of questions testing your understanding of basic concepts and themes in the course..

Grading Scale. Grades will be assigned on a (+/-) basis according to the following scale: 94-100 = A; 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 84-86 = B; etc.

Policy for Missed Deadlines

Reaction papers. The intent of the reaction papers is for you to reflect upon the readings prior to our discussion of them. Accordingly, late reaction papers will not be accepted.

Required Materials

All readings will be made available online.

Accomodations

Disabilities. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/> Please let me know at the beginning of the semester if you will need accommodations of any sort.

Religious Observance. By University of Texas policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Academic Integrity

Students who violate University regulations on academic honesty will receive a failing grade for the course, in addition to University penalties, *which can include expulsion from the University*

Emergency Evacuation Guidelines

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

January 17 **Introductions.** Why this course? What will we learn? How will this course operate and what are the expectations?

PART I: Models of “Contextualized” Behavior

January 19 **Classic Statements on the Diffusion of Innovations**

Rogers, Everett M. 2003. *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th Edition. NY: The Free Press.

Walker, Jack. L. 1969. “The Diffusion of Innovation Among American States.” *American Political Science Review* 63: 880-899.

January 24 **Freakonomics-style Insights**

Schelling, Thomas C. 1978. *Micro-motives and Macrobehavior*. New York: Norton. [selections]

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston, MA: Back Bay Books. [selections]

January 26 **Increasing Returns and Path Dependence**

Arthur, Brian. 1994. *Increasing Returns and Path Dependence in the Economy*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

David, Paul. 1985. “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY.” *The American Economic Review*.

January 31 **Information cascades**

Banerjee, A. V. (1992). “A Simple Model of Herd Behavior.” *Quantitative Journal of Economics* 107(797-817).

February 2 **Social Psychological Models of Conformity**

Aronson, Elliott. 2003. *The Social Animal*. [selections]

February 7 **Benchmark Experiments from social psychology**

Sherif, Muzafer. 1935. “A study of some social factors in perception.” *Archives of Psychology*.

Asch, Solomon. 1951. “Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments.” In *Organizational influence processes*.

February 9 **Learning in Organizations**

March, J. G. and J. P. Olsen. 1984. “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life.” *American Political Science Review* 78.

February 14 World System Theory

Meyer, J. and Rowan, B. (1991) 'Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony' in W. Powell and P. DiMaggio (eds) "The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis", Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press

DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48:147-160.

February 16 TBA

February 21 Density and distribution of organizations

Hannan, Michael T. and Glenn Carroll. 1992. *Dynamics of Organizational Populations: Density, Legitimation, and Competition*. [selections]

February 23 Social network analysis, part I

Christakis, Nicholas and James Fowler. 2010. *Connected: the amazing power of social networks and how they shape our lives*. New York: Harper.

February 28 Social Network analysis, part II

Granovetter, Mark. 1973. *The Strength of Weak Ties*. *American Journal of Sociology*.

Burt, Ronald S. 1987. "Social Contagion and Innovation: Cohesion versus structural equivalence." *American Journal of Sociology* 92: 1287-1335.

Recommended

Duncan Watts

Network methods: e.g., <http://www.pnas.org/content/109/1/68.abstract>

March 1 Agent-based modeling

Axelrod, Robert. 1997. "The dissemination of culture." *Journal of conflict resolution*.

March 6 Review

March 8 Midterm Exam

Spring Break

Part 2 The Special Case of Political Reform

March 20 The Diffusion of Democracy, part II

Whitehead, L. 1996. *International Aspects of Democratization*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. [selections]

March 22 The Diffusion of Democracy, part II

O'Loughlin, John et al. 2004. The Diffusion of Democracy, 1946–1994. *American Association of American Geographers*.

March 27 What does learning look like from the Policy Makers' Perspective?

Bennett, C. (1991). "How States Utilize Foreign Evidence." *Journal of Public Policy* 11: 31-54.

Westney, D. E. (1987). *Imitation and innovation : the transfer of Western organizational patterns to Meiji Japan*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

March 29 International Norms

Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*. International Organization.

Axelrod, Robert. 1986. *An Evolutionary Approach to Norms*. *American Political Science Review*.

April 3 Gravity Models**April 5 IMF Conditionality**

Vreeland, James. 2003. *The IMF and Economic Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

April 10 Introducing constitutional design

Versteeg, Mila. "Transnational Aspects of Constitutional Reform."

Boli, J. et al. *World Polity Sources of Expanding State Authority and Organization, 1870-1970*: 71-91.

April 12 Sharing constitutional interpretations

Epstein, Lee and Jack Knight. 2003. *Constitutional Borrowing and Non-borrowing*. *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 1: 196-223

Choudhry, Sujit. *Migration of Constitutional Ideas*. Cambridge. [selections]

April 17 Coercive Mechanisms of International Design

Elkins, Ginsburg, and Melton. 2008. "Baghdad, Tokyo, Kabul...: Constitution-making in Occupied States." *William and Mary Law Review* 49(4): 1139-1198.

April 19: Colonial Legacies

Go, Julian. 2003. "A Globalizing Constitutionalism? Views from the Post-Colony, 1945-2000." *International Sociology* 18: 71-95.

April 24 Experimental Analyses of Constitutional Design

Elkins, Zachary. 2011. "Tests of Diffusion Premises."

April 26 Constitutional Assistance

Perry. 1991. "Constitutional Johnny Appleseeds."

May 1 Analyses of Constitutions in Press

The Constitution of Egypt; others TBA

May 3 Conclusion

May 9 Final Exam

9-12 noon