Description:

Political institutions are the rules that govern politics. Constitutions, electoral systems, federalism, legislative rules, and laws governing civil-military relations are just some of the examples of political institutions that permeate political systems and thus affect our lives every day. Not surprisingly, the “rules of the game” have important consequences on how politics work and what type of outcomes are produced. Moreover, the impact of rules is surprisingly broad. Scholars have argued that political institutions affect everything from the number of political parties and the proportion of women or minorities in the legislature to the degree of ethnic conflict and the level of corruption.

This course will introduce students to the role of political institutions in comparative politics and international security. The course introduces students to general concepts and theories regarding how institutions affect politics through an examination of specific institutions, most notably electoral systems, presidential versus parliamentary systems, and federalism. In the process, we will examine specific effects commonly attributed to political institutions, especially the type of party system, the election of women and ethnic minorities, ethnic relations and conflict, and the stability of democracy itself.

Prerequisite: upper-division standing and six hours of lower-division coursework in Government.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The written requirements of the course will consist of two midterm take-home essays and two midterm exams. There will be no final exam. Please note the due date of all papers and tests. Make-up exams will be granted only for medical emergencies with a doctor's note. Late assignments will be severely penalized. Those unable to meet the requirements of the class on the dates set should not take the course. Academic dishonesty is taken very seriously and will be dealt with according to University rules. All written work is to be done individually. Grades will be assigned as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Essay #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Essay #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (based on in-class quizzes)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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REQUIRED READING:


Readings marked by an asterisk (*) will be posted on Blackboard.
Grading Policy Percentage

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>60-69%</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Accommodations

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

Academic Integrity

Each student is expected to uphold the University of Texas at Austin Honor Code:

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs. Refer to the Dean of Students Student Judicial Services website or call 471-2841 for the official university policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty.

Religious Holidays

By UT at Austin 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.
Lecture Schedule and Readings

Students should complete the readings in preparation for the lectures on that issue. The reading load averages 75-100 pages per week. Students should also keep track of current events by following a major national newspaper such as the New York Times or Washington Post. Current news items related to issues in class will be posted on Blackboard and should be treated as required course readings. Please arrive to class on time. No use of cell phones allowed in class. No use of laptops other than for taking notes allowed in class.

Week 1 (Aug. 29-31): What are institutions? What are their effects?

** Videos on Effects of Electoral Rules, Friday, August 31 **

Week 2 (Sept. 3-7): Three Institutions in Democracies: Executive Arrangements, Electoral Systems, and Federalism

* A. Lijphart, Patterns of Democracy, Ch. 16.
** No Class on Monday, September 3rd, Labor Day **

Constitutional Frameworks and Democratization:

Week 3 (Sept. 10-14): The Presidential vs. Parliamentary Government debate


Electoral Systems and Inclusion:

Week 4 (Sept. 17-21): Electoral Systems and Women’s Representation

* P. Norris, Electoral Engineering, Ch. 8.
Moser and Scheiner, Rethinking Electoral System Effects, Ch. 8.
Week 5 (Sept. 24-28): Electoral Systems and Ethnic Minority Representation


Week 6 (Oct. 1-5): Electoral Systems, Intersectionality, and the Problem of Competing Goals


**Electoral Rules and Party Systems:**

Week 7 (Oct. 8-12): Electoral System Effects on Party Systems

* Takehome Essay #1 Due in class on Wednesday, Oct. 10th *


Week 8 (Oct. 15-19): Duverger’s Law and Strategic Voting: Translating Votes into Seats


Week 9 (Oct. 22-26): The Limits of Duverger’s Law


Week 10 (Oct. 29–Nov. 2): Review and First Midterm

* Midterm In-Class Exam #1 taken in class on Friday, Nov. 2nd *
Institutions, Democratization, and Ethnic Conflict:

Week 11 (Nov. 5-9): Elections and Ethnic Conflict: A Dangerous Combination?


Week 12 (Nov. 12-16): Institutions and Ethnic Conflict: An Overview

* Takehome Essay #2 Due in class on Monday, Nov. 12th *


Week 13 (Nov. 19-23): Electoral Design as a Means to Manage Ethnic Conflict


Week 14 (Nov. 26-30): Federalism, Secession, and Ethnic Conflict


Week 15 (Dec. 3-7): Conclusions: Can We Engineer Democracy?

Moser and Scheiner, *Rethinking Electoral System Effects*, Ch. 9.

* Midterm In-Class Exam #2 taken in class on Friday, Dec. 7th *