POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

CEU, Budapest, Hungary

PhD Course, Winter 2020

Instructors

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Classes

One seminar of 100 minutes during each of the 12 weeks of the winter semester. Time and place TBA.

Office hours

Please check with profs. Bogaards and Moles.

Credits

4 CEU credits, 8 ECTS credits
Course description
It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the study of institutions forms the core of political science. The principal aim of the course is to familiarize students with cutting-edge research on the development and the consequences of political institutions. The course is divided into two parts, each with its own instructor.

In the first part, Matthijs Bogaards introduces students to the various ways in which institutional theory is used to conduct empirical research. In the second part, Andres Moles discusses political institutions, and their justification from the perspective of normative political theory. The justification of political institutions is a core problem in political philosophy. We start by examining to what extent institutions are fundamental by looking at Cohen’s critique to Rawls. Then we examine questions regarding what makes political institutions problematic. For some, it is the coercive restrictions of the freedom of those subject to political rule that call for special justification. For others, it is the distinctive form of inequality associated with the relationship of some people ruling over others that requires justification. Furthermore, there are divergent interpretations of the values of freedom and equality underlying the suggested need for justification. Correspondingly, different analyses of the basis of the requirement of special justification point towards different accounts of the necessary conditions of successful justification. Different accounts of the problem that require a response point towards two distinct though not mutually exclusive political ideals as the basis of justified political rule. Freedom-based accounts of the problem of political rule are associated with the rule of law as a political ideal, whereas equality-based analyses of the problem of rule point towards democracy as a distinctively egalitarian procedure as (part of) the answer.

Course requirements
No prior knowledge is assumed, although students with a solid background in political science will have an easier time than others. Students are expected to be present at all seminars and to come prepared, as the seminars are interactive and based on a collective examination and discussion of the core reading for that session. If you are unable to attend class, please notify the instructor via e-mail prior to the session.

Assignments and assessment (first part, prof. Bogaards)
(1) Students present one reading in class (10%)
(2) Submit written questions or discussion points for two additional readings, for different
sessions (10%)
(3) Write a 2,500-word (maximum) research paper on institutionalism (20%).
(4) Participate actively (10%)

Assignments and assessment (second part, Prof. Moles)

(1) Students present one reading in class (10%)
(2) Submit written questions or discussion points about two additional readings (10%)
(3) A term paper of approximately 2,500 words that critically discusses a particular problem (20%).
(4) Participation (10%)

Learning outcomes and their assessment
The overall grade for the course will primarily indicate the ability of the student to comprehend the ways in which political institutions can be studied in theory and practice. Students will learn how political institutions are constituted, maintained, and transformed. The learning outcomes of the doctoral program are supported and measured by the present course in the following ways: The ability to deploy effective oral presentation and discussion skills is assessed with the help of a presentation. The skills to analyze contemporary events in broader institutional, political and social context, to evaluate political institutions in a comparative perspective, to make policy-relevant conclusions and to employ cutting-edge methods are reflected in the essay. Finally, the seminar discussions (measured by the ‘class activity’ component of the final grade) will show how students can conduct a dialogue employing cross-national perspectives. The expected learning outcomes of the second part of the course include familiarity with the conceptual tools and theoretical approaches to the normative study of political institutions, and with the main normative problems of political rule. Furthermore, the course is expected to enhance analytical skills and skills on normative reasoning.

For more on how to write a philosophy paper check Doug’s Portmore’s ‘Tip on writing a philosophy paper’ at [http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf](http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf) (also available at the e-learning site). See also James Pryor’s guide at [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html), and Jimmy Lenman’s [https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.316711!/file/Crap-Essay.doc](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.316711!/file/Crap-Essay.doc)
Grades mean the following:

**F = Fail.** Poor.

**C+ = Minimum Pass.** Significant confusions; unawareness of some crucial arguments; poor written style.

**B- = Satisfactory.** Struggles to organize main ideas of the paper. Some confusions, but a general sense of the main arguments.

**B = Good.** Covers material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct.

**B+ = Very good.** Covers material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature. Some display of analytical skills.

**A- = Excellent.** Covers material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature; independent reconstruction of arguments; display of good analytical skills; some critical engagement with the material.

**A = Outstanding.** Covers material covered in class, good reconstruction of main arguments, written expression is clear and succinct, plus understanding of subsidiary arguments, familiarity with secondary literature; independent reconstruction of arguments; display of good analytical skills, signals of independent thought, critical engagement with the arguments.

**Reading material**

All the course material is available in electronic form on the CEU E-learning website (Moodle) for the course. The syllabus only contains the required reading. Additional reading is available on request from the instructors.
Week 1: Introduction
This week introduces students to the so-called new institutionalism in the social sciences through a discussion of recent work on “evolutionary institutionalism”.

Reading:

Week 2: Continuity
The main mechanism used to explain institutional stickiness is path dependence. This week we examine how path dependence can be studied empirically.

Reading:

Week 3: Change
This week is devoted to the study of institutional change. The focus is on varieties of incremental, endogenous institutional change.

**Week 4: Authoritarian institutions**
The study of authoritarianism has recently taken an institutional turn with the discovery that institutions matter across regime types.

Reading:

**Week 5: Critics**
This week we discuss two suggestions on how to do institutional analysis better.

Reading:

**Week 6: Informal institutions plus feminist institutionalism**
This week, prof. Bogaards presents his own research on institutionalism. First, through a discussion of his recent publication on informal and formal power-sharing institutions in Lebanon. Second, through a presentation of work-in-progress on feminist institutionalism. This presentation will take place as part of the departmental research seminar series during spring 2019.

Reading:
Bogaards, Matthijs (work-in-progress) Feminist Institutionalism: One or Many?
Week 7 The role of institutions:

Week 8 The role of institutions II

Week 9 State Rule

Week 10 The Rule of Law

Week 11 Democracy I
  • Jeremy Waldron, Law and Disagreement (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 232-254;

Week 12 Democracy II