Seminar: Comparative Political Institutions
Political Science 521.002

Instructor: Juan Pablo Micozzi  
Spring 2013
Office: Social Sciences Building, Room 2046  
R 9:30-12:00
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Goals of the Course
This course covers the effects of varying kinds of institutional designs over political, legislative and electoral behavior. Far from the old legalistic views, the approach highlights the incentives and restrictions offered by different frameworks, and their expected and unpredicted implications. The consequences of relevant concepts such as regime type, electoral systems, term limits, minority representation, redistricting processes and legislative rules will be assessed in a broad comparative. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to broadly recognize the existing variation in institutional designs worldwide, and to have general notions of their expected effects. An explicit goal of the seminar is to foster students’ engagement with empirical research. As a consequence, the main output of the course will be a paper that needs to include data analysis.

Requirements
Class attendance is mandatory and active participation is required. The final grade will reflect the performance in the following instances:

*Class participation: 20%

Students are required to actively engage in discussions, which imply, of course, a careful reading of the weekly materials. Additionally, students might be asked to prepare some of the weekly readings.

*Democracy Analysis and Presentation: 15%*
One or two countries per student will be assigned. Each case must be plotted using the five indicators specified below. A 3000 words (plus figures) report including a general explanation of the variables’ behavior will be complemented with a 10’ presentation, including a Power Point.

*Votes/Seats Allocation Exercise: 15%*

Students will get several electoral scenarios and will have to allocate seats using different institutional combinations. The assignment might be in-class or take home.

*Final Paper Presentation: 10%*

Each student will share a presentation of the theory and the preliminary findings of the paper during the last two weeks of class. Depending on the number of registered students, presentations might take between 10 and 20 minutes.

*Final Paper: 40%*

An original research piece will be required. In order to polish ideas, it is strongly recommended that students think a topic quite early in the semester and consult the instructor’s opinion. A paper prospectus (1-2 pages) must be handed in no later than March 7th.

Additionally, all requirements need to be fulfilled. Failure to comply with any of the requirements will result in a failing grade for the class.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

“Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request.” If you need more information on ADA, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 277-5251.

**Required Books**


**Highly recommended:**


**Schedule:**

**Week 1 (1/17): Introduction**


**Week 2 (1/24): Institutions - Majoritarian vs. Consensual Democracy**


**Week 3 (1/31): Democracy and Empirical Research**


Polity IV Dataset/Codebook: [http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm](http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm)


Vanhanen: [http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Governance/Vanhanens-index-of-democracy/Polyarchy-Dataset-Downloads/](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Governance/Vanhanens-index-of-democracy/Polyarchy-Dataset-Downloads/)

Przeworski et al: [https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/cheibub/www/datasets.html](https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/cheibub/www/datasets.html)

**Democracy Analysis Presentation (with written materials):** One or two countries assigned on 1/24.

*Student Country Power Point: 10 minutes*

*Submission of Written Report:* <3000 words plus figures (due in class after the presentation)

**Week 4 (2/7) and 5 (2/14): Electoral Laws I: The Basics**


*A mid-week lab session may be scheduled to learn some programming skills on votes/seats allocation*

**Week 6 (2/21): Electoral Laws II: Strategic Coordination under Varying Rules**


**Electoral systems’ assignment due**

**Week 7 (2/28): Effects of Electoral Rules**


**Week 8 (3/7): Electoral Rules and Representation: Redistricting**


**Paper Proposals Due!!**

**Week 9 (3/14): Spring Break**

**Week 10 (3/21): Electoral Rules and Representation: Gender**


**Week 12 (4/4): Economic Effects of Institutions**


**Week 13 (4/11): No class (MPSA Annual Meeting)**

**Week 14 (4/18): Term Limits**


**Week 16 (5/2): Paper Presentation II**