

Parties and Party Systems
2020 Fall
Central European University, Vienna

M.A. level course
Credit value: 2 US credits (4 ECTS credits)
Elective course

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Thursdays: 17:20-19:00

Office hours: Tuesdays 11:40-13:20; Wednesdays 15:10-16:30, notify me via e-mail that you are coming.

Course Description

The course is designed to deepen the students' existing knowledge on political parties and party systems. In most democracies political parties are central actors in the mediation of policy preferences and governmental outcomes. Their study can teach us about the nature of power, about the dynamics of collective political action and about the intersections of social conditions and political institutions. The course employs a comparative perspective, and focuses on the most influential theoretical models of the field, presenting socio-cultural, rational choice, historical, institutionalist and agency-focused explanations for various phenomena in the field of party politics.

The topics covered in the course begin with a look at the functions and origins of political parties, the social background of party politics, the institutional incentives that shape party politics, and at the organizational dilemmas of political parties. The second bloc focuses on aspects of party competition and representation: how parties behave in parliaments and governments, and how are they related to each other. We will focus on the stability, fragmentation, representativeness and competitiveness of party systems. In the last section the course examines the role of parties in new and non-liberal democracies and it reflects on the normative aspect of contemporary challenges in party politics. A number of further topics, like the mobilization of voters, the explanation of electoral success, the nature of clientelistic and charismatic appeals, the difference between mainstream and extremist parties, or the ethnic aspects of party politics will also feature in the course but will not be focused upon.

Course requirements

This is a two-credit course. Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot attend the class signal this via an e-mail to the lecturer. Students are expected to read every week the required literature and participate in class discussions. To encourage discussion participation, class discussion will not be graded per se. However, regular participation can be decisive if the final grade is on the cut-off point between grades. To assess the regularity of class participation, students will be asked to sign a discussion list if they took part in the class discussions in a given session. The use of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, e-readers, phones, etc.) is kindly discouraged.

Assessment

30% - Weekly assignment (5 comments on Perusall):

10% - Position paper (500-800 words)

25 - Preparatory steps for the empirical research paper

35% - Empirical research paper (2500-4000 words):

- **30% - Weekly assignments**

- 5 comments on the required literature on the online social learning platform Perusall per week (<https://perusall.com>). Comments include questions, answers to questions posted by others or just a short commentary/opinion. There are no length requirements or restrictions.
- Grading is based on the number of comments. To stimulate natural exchange of ideas and thoughts between students, the content of the comments will not be graded. More than 5 comments in a given week count as 5 comments.
 - A = 54-60 comments;
 - A- = 47-53 comments;
 - B+ = 40-46 comments;
 - B = 33-39 comments;
 - B- = 26-32 comments;
 - C = 19-25 comments;
 - F = <18 comments;
- Deadline for Perusall comments: 15h00 on the session day.
- In addition to the activity on Perusall, you need to upload on Moodle by Wednesday 5 pm, each week one question suggested by that week's readings with a brief explanation. The question should address important substantive or methodological issues that emerge from that week's readings. We will use these questions to guide our discussions in class. This question can be also a question already posted on Perusall by you or your peers.

- **10% Position paper (500-800 Words)**

- You need to submit one 500-800 words-long position paper, excluding bibliography. The position papers should summarize the content of the readings assigned for a particular week and comment on them relying on previous readings and lectures. In the position paper you must refer to at least two academic texts on the topic that are additional to the mandatory readings. The reproductive part (intelligent, selective summary that covers the major claims and techniques of the readings) is supposed to provide about 60 percent of the paper. The rest should consist of original ideas, commenting critically on the readings' concepts, design, methods, or findings. Every student will be assigned to a particular week and needs to submit the position paper by Wednesday 23h59 of this week on Moodle.

- **25 % Preparatory steps for the empirical research paper**

- Research question and literature review (600-900 words) (due in session 8)
- Written peer feedback on 2 research questions (due in session 9)
- Literature search for the research question of your peer (due in session 9)

- Draft paper (1200-1500 words) (due in session 12)
- Written peer feedback on 2 draft papers (23 December 2020)
- **35% Term paper (2500-4000 Words)**
 - Students are expected to write an empirical research paper (2500-4000 words) (not an essay, not a description of political institutions, not a historical account of an event) and submit their progress in stages (research question, theory and literature review, first draft) throughout the seminar with strict deadlines.
 - The empirical research paper should identify a puzzle and pose a research question embedded in the scientific literature, develop theoretical expectations (testable hypotheses) and propose a research design to test the theoretical expectations (see detailed instructions on Moodle). Class participants are NOT required to gather data and analyze it. In essence, the term paper should include a title page, an abstract, an introduction, literature review, theory, a research design section, conclusions, and references, and is practically a half of a standard scientific article.
 - Term paper is due 5.01.2021 23h59.

Learning outcomes and their assessment

With the help of the course the student should acquire the ability to:

1. understand basic concepts used in the comparative party systems subfield;
2. competently describe and discuss key phenomena such as parties, party systems, relationship between voters and political elites, party system stability, etc.;
3. recognize the difference between stable and fragile party systems, especially to understand the difference between institutionalized, consolidated party systems and the ones that cannot be considered consolidated;
4. understand major traditional, mainly theoretical approaches to the study of parties, as well as the more contemporary, empirically-based, data on parties, their development and the dynamics of party systems.
5. see the differences between party systems of the embedded democracies with those of recently democratized countries.
6. practice academic writing

Weekly comments on the online social learning platform Perusall have the goal to facilitate the understanding of students and interaction between peers. Perusall is an online forum, where students can place comments by highlighting the related part of the text and see comments by their peers. This allows reading to become a collective activity where students learn from each other. Besides the learning effect Perusall facilitates student exchange, collaboration and team work. For more information about Perusall, watch some YouTube videos (e.g. "[Why use Perusall](#)" and [Perusall – every student prepared for every class](#)). Perusall will be accessible directly through

Moodle – you do not need a registration code. (Do not use the registration code I shared during the zero week.)

The position paper is expected to improve the ability to identify the most relevant aspects of a scholarly argument, to establish links between different publications, to discriminate between scholarly and unscholarly arguments, and to channel the knowledge one obtained from sources inside and outside of class-work into the criticism of particular articles.

The course requires students to submit an empirical research paper (without actual analyses) in steps throughout the semester with peer feedback. This should encourage students to work together, learn from each other, give constructive feedback and practice empirical research and academic writing.

Class discussions will center on the readings, helping the students to synthesize information, determine focus points, and discern the main line of argumentation.

All aspects of the class contribute to develop the skill of problem analysis in international context: the ability to understand problems in cross-national comparative perspective and to discuss them with students of different cultural background.

Tentative Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to make any changes to this syllabus and alter the course schedule at any time throughout the semester.

Sessions	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Session 1 01.10	Introduction and empirical research	Powner (2015) Chapter 1 & 2
Session 2 08.10	Doing empirical Research	Powner (2015) Chapter 1 & 2
Session 3 15.10	The formation and the functions of political parties	Aldrich (1995) Boix (2006)
Session 4 22.10	The social and historical logic of party politics	Bartolini and Mair (1990) Whitefield (2002)
Session 5 29.10	Parties as organizations	Rahat (2013) Scarrow (2005)
Session 6 5.11	The institutional logic of party politics	Katz (1980) Moser (1999) Tavits (2006)
Session 7 12.11	Party competition	Albright (2010) Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2015)
Session 8 19.11	Party systems and electoral change	Wolinetz (2006) Bardi and Mair (2008)

		Mainwaring et al. (2017) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Research question is due</i>
Session 9 26.11	Parties in the legislature	Bowler (2002) Carey (2007) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Peer feedback on research questions is due</i> • <i>Literature list is due</i>
Session 10 3.12	Parties in government	Volden and Carrubba (2004) Tavits (2008)
Session 11 10.12	Parties and policy-making	Fortunato (2019) Hix (2002) Thies (2001)
Session 12 17.12	New Democracies	Casal Bértoa (2013) Haughton & Deegan-Krause (2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Draft paper is due</i>
23.12.2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Peer feedback on draft papers</i>
5.01.2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Term paper is due</i>

Detailed Weekly Plan

Session 1 & 2: Introduction and empirical research

The first week starts with an introduction and a brief review of scientific writing and empirical research.

Powner, L. (2015) *Empirical Research and Writing. A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*, Los Angeles: Sage, Chapter 1-2.

Session 3: The formation and the functions of political parties

The second week focuses on the ontology of parties, on their historical development and on the fundamental tasks they perform for the society. We will discuss various definitions, and we will examine what is distinctive about parties as compared to other social and political actors.

Aldrich, John (1995) *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 28-50 (51 to 61: recommended).

Boix, Carles (2006) *The Emergence of Parties and Party Systems*, in Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 500-521

Session 4. The social and historical logic of party politics

The third week discusses social cleavages and the way they are translated into political cleavages. We will analyze the impact of social conflicts on political mobilization, party organization, political competition, and political representation, and we will also consider the potential influence of parties on their social environment.

Bartolini, Stefano and Peter Mair (1990) *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability. The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 212-49.

Whitefield, Stephen. 2002. "Political Cleavages and Post-Communist Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 181-200.

Session 5. Parties as organizations

The fourth week looks into the internal organization of political parties. We will differentiate between various party models, and we will discuss temporal tendencies in the style of organization and mobilization. The most important topics of the week include: internal democracy, relations among party units, party membership, candidate selection, the process of program design, party finance, party staff, links to collateral organizations, women's representation, leadership selection, and intra-party referendums.

Rahat, Gideon. 2013. What is Democratic Candidate Selection? In: William Cross and Richard S. Katz, eds. *The Challenges of Intraparty Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scarrow, Susan E. (2005) *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives. Implementing Intra-Party Democracy*. National Institute for International Affairs (NDI), https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/1951_polpart_scarrow_110105_5.pdf, 3-22

Session 6. The institutional logic of party politics

The fifth week will analyze how electoral institutions, the forms of party funding and the format of government (presidentialism vs. parliamentarism) affect party politics. Special attention will be paid to the impact of institutions on the number of parties, on their ideological character and on the structure of competition.

Katz, Richard (1980) *A Theory of Party and Electoral Systems*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 17-34.

Moser, Robert (1999) *Electoral Systems and the Number of Parties in Postcommunist States*. *World Politics*, 51(3): 359-384.

Tavits, Margit (2006) *Party System Change: Testing a Model of New Party Entry*. *Party Politics*, 12(1): 99-119.

Session 7. Party competition

The sixth week is about the study of the competitive configurations of party politics. We will consider the measurement of the ideological positions of parties, and contrast spatial and non-spatial models of party competition.

Albright, Jeremy J. (2010). The Multidimensional Nature of Party Competition. *Party Politics* 16 (6): 699–719.

Green-Pedersen, Christoffer and Peter B. Mortensen (2015) Avoidance and Engagement: Issue Competition in Multiparty Systems. *Political Studies* 63(4): 747–764.

Session 8. Party systems and electoral change

The seventh week will analyze how parties interact to form systems. We will discuss the different classifications of party systems present in the literature, focusing not only on polarization and fragmentation, but also on the mode and style of competition. Furthermore, we will explore models of party system change based on the dynamics of the electoral markets and changing conflict lines in the society.

Bardi, Luciano and Peter Mair (2008) The Parameters of Party Systems. *Party Politics*, 14(2): 147-166.

Mainwaring, Scott, Annabela Espana and Carlos Gervasoni (2017) Extra- and within-system electoral volatility. *Party Politics*, 23(6): 623-635.

Wolinetz, Steven B. (2006) Party Systems and Party System Types. In Richard Katz and William Crotty, eds., *Handbook on Political Parties* (London: Sage, 2006): 51-62.

Session 9. Parties in the legislature

The eight week will focus on the ‘public face’ of political parties, their behavior in office and their ability to maintain unity.

Bowler, Shaun. 2002. “Parties in Legislatures: Two Competing Explanations.” In *Parties without Partisans* (eds.) Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Carey, John M. 2007. “Political Institutions, Competing Principals, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting.” *American Journal of Political Science* 51(1): 92-107.

Session 10. Parties in government

The ninth week deals with the strategies and choices when parties form coalition governments.

Volden, Craig and Clifford J. Carrubba. 2004. “The Formation of Oversized Coalitions in Parliamentary Democracies.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 48: 521-537.

Tavits, Margit (2008) The Role of Parties’ Past Behavior in Coalition Formation. *American Political Science Review*, 102 (4): 495-507.

Session 11. Parties and policy-making

The tenth week will discuss how parties make policies, what challenges they face in coalition settings and what strategies they use to overcome these challenges when they pass policies.

Fortunato, David (2019) Legislative Review and Party Differentiation in Coalition Governments, *American Political Science Review*, 113(1): 242-247.

Hix, Simon (2002) Parliamentary behavior with two principals: Preferences, parties, and voting in the European Parliament. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(3): 688-698.

Thies, Michael (2001) Keeping tabs on partners: The logic of delegation in coalition governments. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(3): 580-598.

Session 12. New Democracies

The eleventh week will discuss the specificities of party politics in new democracies. Most of the attention will be paid to post-Communist party systems, but developing democracies will also be discussed.

Casal Bértoa, Fernando (2013) Post-communist Politics: on the Divergence (and/or Convergence) of East and West. *Government and Opposition*. 48(3): 398-433.

Haughton, Tim and Kevin Deegan-Krause (2015) Hurricane Season: Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics. *East European Politics and Society*, 29: 61-80.