POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

PhD Course, Winter 2017

Instructors

Prof. Dr. Matthijs Bogaards
Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science
Central European University
E-mail: Visbogaards@ceu.edu

Prof. Dr. Zoltán Miklósi
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
Central European University
E-mail: miklosiz@ceu.edu

Classes

TBA

Office hours

TBA

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, prof. Bogaards introduces students to the new institutionalism in political science. Each session has a mix of theory and empirical analysis. This part of the course has two objectives. First, to introduce students to the main types of institutional theory in combination with selected empirical applications. Second, to familiarize students with the various processes that strengthen and transform institutions.

In the second part, prof. Miklosi discusses political institutions from the perspective of normative political theory. Political institutions make rules that they claim to be binding for all persons within their jurisdiction, and they use coercion to enforce those rules. It is generally agreed that political rule is *prima facie* problematic, and stands in need of special justification. However, there are fundamental disagreements regarding not only the necessary conditions of successful justification, but also about what, exactly, makes political rule at least *prima facie* 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. The course will discuss these different accounts and will conclude by bringing these perspectives to bear on the problem of international legal practices and the conditions of their legitimacy.

**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 will present one reading in class (10%)
(2) Submit written questions or discussion points about two additional readings, for different sessions (10%)
(3) Participate actively (10%)
(4) Write a 2,500-word essay (maximum) reflecting on the relevance of the new institutionalism for your PhD project (20%)

Assignments and assessment (second part, prof. Miklósi)

(1) Students will 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 comparative 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.
Reading material

All the course material is available in electronic form. The syllabus only contains the required reading.

Week 1: Introduction

This session introduces students to the so-called new institutionalism in the social sciences.

Reading:

Week 2: The three classic types of institutionalism

This session presents an overview of the main definitions of and approaches to political institutions: rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and historical institutionalism.

Reading:

Week 3: Institutionalization and institutional change

This session looks the processes of institutionalization, or how institutions are established and strengthened over time, as well as institutional change.


Week 4: Discursive Institutionalism

This session looks at discursive institutionalism and aims to assess the added value of this new approach.

Reading:
Week 5: Feminist Institutionalism?
This session looks at the recent attempt to develop feminist institutionalism as a theoretically and normatively distinct approach to the study of political institutions.

Reading:

Week 6: Informal Institutions
The study of institutions outside of established democracies with capitalist economies has raised awareness of the importance of informal institutions. The first session this week examines prominent examples of this new research agenda. In the second session, prof. Bogaards will present his own work in progress on The Power of Informal Institutions: The National Pact in Lebanon.

Reading:

Readings for Second Part (Institutions in Normative Political Theory)

Week 7
I. The state and the problem of rule

Week 8
II. The Rule of Law

Week 9

Week 10
III. Democracy

Week 11

Week 12
IV. International Perspectives