

Western Political Systems
Third Year – Political Science Major
Course Outline
Academic Year 2011-12

Dr. Mazen Hassan

This course is one of the most important for students of political science in general, and of comparative politics in particular. Every student of comparative politics would need to know about the different types of political systems, how the mechanics of such systems differ according to institutions, history, culture and socio-economic conditions of each country. The aim is to increase the student's ability to think critically and comparatively. Getting the information right is important but information retention is not the only objective of the course. Rather, it is the ability to explain events, phenomenon and differences based on the information acquired and knowledge gained.

The course is going to focus on four main case studies through which different models of political systems would be outlined. This real-world oriented approach would help to connect theory with facts on the ground. The four case studies are the United Kingdom, the United States, France and Germany. Each system differs from the other and hence the room for comparison is significant.

Course Objectives:

1. Understanding the dynamics of the political systems studied.
2. Developing the ability to compare between countries' political systems and sub-systems components.
3. Developing the ability to think critically in explaining facts and events, both within and across countries.
4. Developing skills of academic reading.
5. Enhancing your skills of academic writing.

What is required from you:

1. Attend all lectures. This is not a strictly text-book based course. Your attendance will help your analytical skills – which is a skill the course aim at developing and achieving high grades at the course requires.
2. Do the required reading before the lecture. The readings aim at helping you not only to follow what is being discussed in lectures and sections but also will definitely help you in writing your research paper. If you don't read academic articles, you will never be able to write a research paper close to academic standards. Having said that, you don't have to read all recommended readings before the lectures. At least, pick any one you like. If you need to read more on the topic, read the rest and you can even come ask me and I might provide you with an extended list on the topic.
3. Do the research paper on time: the purpose of the research paper is to train you on academic writing which is a skill you cannot graduate from the university without acquiring. You will have

to choose to write something on a topic related to those discussed in the lecture (although of course creative ideas are welcomed and encouraged). Here are some tips:

- a. Choose a country of those four studied and then try to think of an interesting point to research on it.
- b. You will have to get either my approval – or one of the teaching assistants’ approval – of the research paper title first. Preferably it needs to be phrased in the form of a question.
- c. No research paper whatsoever should just include gathering information.
- d. No internet downloads are allowed and they are treated very, very seriously. If a paper or extended text quite similar to your research paper was found on Google, Wikipedia or similar websites, you will get yourself into trouble.
- e. A list of suggested titles will be provided on due time that would help you get an idea of what is required in the research paper. You are free to either choose from those or create your own and negotiate it with me. If you chose a title from the list that will be provided, you don’t have to negotiate it with me of course.

Every day of late submission of the research paper will mean a deduction of 20% of the overall grade. Date of submission will be decided on later in the course. The word limit is 3,500 words, with no lower limit. Students breaching the 3,500 word limit will incur penalties (every 200 more words will mean a deduction of 10% of the overall grade). Footnotes, references and bibliographies do not count towards the word limit.

4. Challenge and speak up in lectures and sections. This helps you understand.

Course Structure:

- Twelve weeks in total; one introductory and one to wrap up.
- Ten weeks (20 lectures) for 4 countries.
- Five lectures for each country; two topics in each lecture and hence a total of 10 topics for each country.
- For each topic, there would be some readings. Each student should pick one reading to read; i.e. two readings before each lecture.

Office hours:

Sunday from 4:30 to 6:30. It is strongly recommended to email if you are planning to come to the office hours.

Evaluation:

Final exam: 20 grades.

Midterm Exam: 4 grades

Research Paper: 3 grades

Sections: 3 grades.

Introductory Lecture (2/10):

What will be discussed in this course and how it will be discussed?

What are these political systems and not others

United Kingdom

Lecture 1 (9/10):

A. The Post-War Consensus: Real or Imagined

1. What created the consensus?
2. What were the limits of consensus?
3. Does the consensus debate matter, and if so, why?

B. Economic and Diplomatic Decline and the Collapse of Consensus? Politics in the 1970s

1. What do we mean by economic decline?
2. Why does economic decline matter?
3. Compare the nature and impact of the two forms of decline: economic and diplomatic.
4. In what ways if at all does diplomatic decline matter?
5. What can a study of the winter of discontent tell us about the collapse of the post-War consensus?

Readings:

A. The Post-War Consensus: Real or Imagined:

Addison, P., (1993), 'Consensus revisited', *20th Century British History*, 4: 1.

Cavanagh, D., 'The post-War Consensus', *20th Century British History*, 3: 2.

Seldon, A., (1994), 'Consensus: a debate too long?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 47.

B. Economic and Diplomatic Decline and the Collapse of Consensus? Politics in the 1970s

Budge, I., (1993), 'Relative Economic Decline as a Political Issue', *Contemporary Record*, 7.

Dahrendorf, R., (1981), 'The politics of economic decline', *Political Studies*, 29 (2), pp. 284-291.

Johnston, J., (1999), 'Britain's economic decline: cultural versus structural explanations', in, Marsh, D., et al., eds. *Post-war British politics in perspective*, Polity Press, pp. 43-65. (Google Books)

Black, L., et al, (2009), 'The Winter of Discontent in British Politics', *Political Quarterly*, 80 (4)

Hay, C., (2009), 'The Winter of Discontent 30 Years On', *Political Quarterly*, 80 (4)

Lecture 2 (13/10):

A. Thatcherism

1. The meanings of Thatcherism: which to use?
2. The origins of Thatcherism
3. Objections to the concept
4. How Thatcherism in practice evolved

B. New Labour

1. The extent of the Thatcherite legacy
2. Mechanisms which might explain this legacy
3. New Labour as more of a moving target than a fixed identity

Readings:

A. Thatcherism

Gamble, A., (1989), 'The Politics of Thatcherism', *Parliamentary Affairs*.

Marsh, D., (1995), 'Explaining Thatcherite policies: beyond unidimensional explanation', *Political Studies*, 43: 4.

Marsh, D & Rhodes, R., (2002), 'Implementing Thatcherism: policy change in the 1980s', *Parliamentary Affairs*

B. New Labour

Cerny, P., et al (2004), 'Globalisation and Public Policy under New Labour', *Policy Studies* 25: 1.

Freeden, M., (1999), 'The ideology of New Labour', *Political Quarterly*.

Klitgaard, M., (2007), 'Why Are They Doing It? Social Democracy and Market Oriented Welfare State Reforms', *Western European Politics*, 31

Lecture 3 (16/10):

The Party System

2. How can we measure the shift away from the two-party system?

3. Significance of these shifts?

4. How does coalition change our view of the party system?

Readings:

The Party System:

Lynch, P., and Garner, R., (2005), 'The Changing Party System', *Parliamentary Affairs*. 58: 3.

Paun, A et al., (2010), 'Hung Parliaments and the Challenges for Westminster and Whitehall', *Political Quarterly*, 81: 2.

Sanders, D., (2005), 'The Political Economy of UK Party Support', *Journal of Elections Public Opinion and Parties*, 15: 1.

Webb, P., (2002), 'More continuity than change', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55: 2.

Lecture 4 (20/10):

The Changing Character of the British Core Executive

1. Processes encouraging Prime Ministerial power concentration

2. Processes moving in the opposite direction, and limits to concentration

3. Is the concept of core executive useful?

4. Can a comparative approach illuminate the office of Prime Minister?

Readings:

Burch, M., and Holliday, I., (2004), 'The Blair Government and the Core Executive', *Government and Opposition*, 39: 1.

Flinders, M., (2002), 'Shifting the balance? Parliament, the Executive and the British Constitution', *Political Studies*, 50: 1.

Heffernan, R., (2005), 'Why the PM Cannot be a President', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58: 1.

Lecture 5 (23/10):

1. The case that Thatcherism fundamentally altered the welfare state
2. The case that she did not, and if so why?
3. How do we measure welfare state change?
 1. How neo-liberal is New Labour policy on welfare state matters?
 2. Hidden re-distribution, and if so why?
 3. Many welfare states not one? A defective concept?

Readings:

Ross, F., (2000), Beyond Left and Right: The New Partisan Politics of Welfare, *Governance* 13 (2)
Wilding, P., (1997), The Welfare State and the Conservatives, *Political Studies*, 45, (pgs 716-726)
Deacon, A., (2000), Learning from the US: The Influence of American Ideas on New Labour Thinking on Welfare Reform, *Policy and Politics* 28 (1)
Page, R., (2001), New Labour, The Third Way, and Social Welfare, *Critical Social Policy* 21 (4).

United States**Lecture 1 (27/10):****The Constitutional Framework & Federalism**

How far was the US Constitution based on normative judgements and how much was imposed by necessity? What is the significance of the separation of powers and the checks and balances within the Constitution? What is the nature of federalism in the United States? Is the current balance between the states and the Federal government appropriate? Has the separation of powers within the federal government and between the federal, state and city political institutions made American politics overly cumbersome? Why has the Constitution endured relatively unchanged for so long and does it still provide an effective framework for government?

Readings:

The Constitution of the United States of America (reproduced in McKay)
D. McKay, *American Politics and Society* Seventh Edition Chapters 3-4
G. Peele et al, *Developments in American Politics* 6, Ch 15: "The American Constitution at the End of the Bush Presidency" by Louis Fisher & Ch 10: "American Federalism in the Twenty-First Century" by Tim Conlan
J. Madison, A. Hamilton and J. Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (Penguin edition), editor Kramnick's Introduction and especially No. 10, 47, and 51.
R. Singh, ed., *Governing America*, Chapters 3-4.

Lecture 2 (30/10):**A. Political Parties:**

What functions do political parties perform within the Constitutional system? What is the nature of the US political party system? What are the substantive differences between the Democrats and the Republicans? To what extent has partisanship returned as a powerful political force in recent years? Does the two party system represent the full diversity of American society? What is the significance of "third parties" in the US? What impact is the "Tea Party" movement having on US politics?

B. The Electoral System

How democratic are US elections? How are US elections structured? What is the nature of congressional elections? Why are there such high levels of incumbency in the US House of Representatives and the US Senate? What are the likely outcomes of the 2010 congressional elections? How does the presidential selection process work? What qualities are necessary for a person to be selected for their party's nomination and then elected President of the United States? What are the problems with the presidential election process?

Readings:

A. Political Parties:

D. McKay, *American Politics and Society* Seventh Edition Chapter 5

G. Peele et al, *Developments in American Politics* 6, Ch 4: "Political Parties and the New Partisanship" by Alan Ware

B. McGrath, "The Movement: The Rise of Tea Party Activism", *New Yorker*, February 1, 2010

R. Singh, ed., *Governing America*, Chapter 5

On the Tea Party Movement

New York Times, Times Topics: Tea Party Movement (Electronic resource)

J.M. O'Hara, *A New American Tea Party: The Counterrevolution Against Bailouts, Handouts, Reckless Spending, And More Taxes*

S. Rasmussen & D. Schoen, *Mad As Hell: How The Tea Party Movement Is Fundamentally Remaking Our Two-Party System*

B. The Electoral System

D. McKay, *American Politics and Society* Seventh Edition Chapter 6

G. Peele et al, *Developments in American Politics* 6, Ch 3: "The Electoral System and the Lessons of 2008" by Bruce E. Cain

W. E. Hudson, *American Democracy in Peril* Sixth Edition, Chapter 5

R. Singh, ed., *Governing America*, Chapter 6

Lecture 3 (3/11):

The Congress

What role does Congress play in the American political system? What is the relationship between the House of Representatives and the Senate? Does the system of Congressional Committees enable effective management of the legislative agenda? How important is partisan politics in the running of Congress? To what extent does re-election dominate the actions of Members of Congress? How can the results of the 2010 Congressional Elections be explained and what are their significance and consequences? How do the 2010 results compare with previous years? How independent and powerful is the US Congress?

Readings

A. The Congress:

D. McKay, *American Politics and Society* Seventh Edition Chapters 8-9

G. Peele et al, *Developments in American Politics* 6, Ch 8 "Congress" by Thomas Mann

L. Dodd and B. Oppenheimer (eds.), *Congress Reconsidered* 8th Edition

R. Singh, ed., *Governing America*, Chapter 10

Lecture 4 (3/11):

The Presidency

What is the role of the President within the American political system? What is the relationship between the President and Congress? How powerful is the President of the United States? What makes a president successful? How important are the president's personal characteristics in determining the direction of policy? Are Americans' expectations of their presidents now too great and the problems they face too intractable for any modern president to be considered a great success?

Readings

D. McKay, *American Politics and Society* Seventh Edition Chapters 10-11

G. Peele et al, *Developments in American Politics* 6, Ch 7 "The Presidency" by J. Roper

R. Singh, ed., *Governing America*, Chapter 9

Lecture 5 (13/11):

Political Participation & Representation:

How representative and participatory has American democracy been historically? How can high levels of non-voting in US elections be explained? To what extent have non-voters felt disenfranchised, disenfranchised or otherwise excluded from the political system? To what extent did the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections signal a return to the ballot box for the American electorate? To what extent, why, and with what consequences did civic engagement decline in the US? What is your assessment of Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone" thesis? Have civic engagement and social and political unity revived since the 9/11 terrorist attacks? How significant has the "Obama effect" been on political engagement and participation in the US?

Readings:

W. E. Hudson, *American Democracy in Peril* Sixth Edition, Chapters 3, 4 & 5.

R. D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1995)

R. D. Putnam, "Bowling Together," *The American Prospect*, Vol.13, No. 3, (2002) pp. 20-22 at <http://www.prospect.org/print/V13/3/putnam-r.html>

T.H. Sander & R.D. Putnam, "Still Bowling Alone?: The Post-9/11 Split," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January 2010, pp. 9-16

M.P. McDonald, "The Return of the Voter: Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election," *The Forum*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2008)

France

Lecture 1 (17/11):

The Presidency & the Constitution

Readings

R. Conley *Presidential Republics and Divided Governments: Policy Making and Executive Politics in the US and France* Political Science Quarterly Vol.122, No.2 (2007)

Bell. D and Criddle. B *Presidentialism Enthroned: The French Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2007* Parliamentary Affairs Vol.61, No.1 (2008)

R. Elgie *Duverger, Semi-Presidentialism and the Supposed French Architype* West European Politics Vol.32, No.2 (2009)

O. Protsyk *Intra-executive Competition between President and Prime Minister* Political Studies Vol.54, No.2 (2006)

R. Elgie *Models of Executive Politics: a Framework for the Study of Executive Power Relations in Parliamentary and Semi-Presidential Regimes* Political Studies, Vol.45, No.2 (1997)

Lecture 2 (20/11) - The French Party System:

Readings:

A. Blais et al *The French Electoral System and its Effects* West European Politics Vol.32, No.2 (2009)

S. Bornchier et al *The Evolution of The French Political Space and Party Structure* West European Politics Vol.32, No.2 (2009)

Blais, André (2010) 'The French electoral and party system in comparative perspective', *French Politics*, 8: 1.

Lecture 3 (24/11) - The French Parliament:

Readings:

Anne Stevens (2003) *Government and Politics in France*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 3 and 4: pp. 63-105.

Lecture 4 (27/11) - The Executive:

Readings:

Anne Stevens (2003) *Government and Politics in France*. Chapter 7: Parliament, pp. 165-189.

Germany

Lecture 1 (1/12) - Why did the Weimar Republic collapse?

Readings:

Berman, S., 'Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic', *World Politics*, **49:3**, 1997, pp. 401-429.

Lepsius, Mario Rainer, 'From Fragmented Party Democracy to Government by Emergency Decree and National Socialist Take-over', in Linz, J. J. and Stepan, A., eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Europe*, 1978.

Needler, M., 'The Theory of the Weimar Presidency', *Review of Politics*, **21:4**, 1959, pp. 692-698.

Lecture 2 (4/12) - The Legislature: "Power sharing"- is that an accurate description of the relationship between Bundestag and Bundesrat?

Readings:

von Beyme, K., 'Interest Groups in Parliamentary Decisions in the German Bundestag', *Government and Opposition*, 33:1, 1998, pp. 38-55.

von Beyme, K., *The Legislator: German Parliament as a Centre of Political Decision Making*, 1998.

Saalfeld, T., 'The German Bundestag: Influence and Accountability in a Complex Environment', in Norton, P., ed., *Parliaments and Governments in Western Europe*, 1998.

Schmidt, Manfred, *Political Institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany*, 2003, chapter 3.
Sturm, R., 'Divided Government in Germany: The Case of the Bundesrat', in Elgie, R., ed., *Divided Government in Comparative Perspective*, 2001. ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE.
Thaysen Uwe, Davidson, Roger and Livingston, Robert eds., *The U.S. Congress and the German Bundestag: Comparisons of Democratic Processes*, 1990, chapters 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15.

Lecture 3 (8/12) - The Executive: 'A Chancellor democracy.' Is this an accurate description of Germany? If so, why?

Readings:

Clemens, Clay, *Introduction: Assessing the Kohl legacy*, 1998, *German Politics*, 7:1.
Cole, Alistair, *Political leadership in Western Europe: Helmut Kohl in comparative context*, 1998, *German Politics*, 7:1.
Goetz, K. H. 2003. 'Government at the Centre', in S. A. Padgett, G. Smith and W. Paterson, eds., *Developments in German Politics 3*, 2003.
Helms, L., 'The Changing Chancellorship: Resources and Constraints Revisited', in Padgett, Stephen and Poguntke, Thomas, *Continuity and Change in German Politics : Beyond the Politics of Centrality?: A Festschrift for Gordon Smith*, 2001.
Johnson, N., 'Kohl's Chancellorship', *German Politics*, **9:1**, 2000, pp. 145-152. 13 Prelims 2009-2010
Mayntz, Renate, 'Executive Leadership in Germany' in Rose, R., and Suleiman, E., eds., *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, 1980.
Pulzer, Peter, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 1995, chapter 3.
Schmidt, Manfred, *Political Institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany*, 2003, chapter 2.

Lecture 4 (11/12) - Parties and Party Systems: A well-upholstered oligarchy.' (Nevil Johnson). Is this an accurate description of German parties?

Readings:

Braunthal, Gerard, *Parties and Politics in Modern Germany*, 1996.
Conradt, David et al eds., *Power Shift in Germany: The 1998 Election and the End of the Kohl Era*, 2000.
Gapper, S., 'The Rise and Fall of Germany's Party of Democratic Socialism', *German Politics*, 12:2, 2003, pp. 65-85.
Padgett, S. A., 'Germany: Modernising the Left by Stealth', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56:1, 2003, pp. 38-57.
Padgett, S., 'The Boundaries of Stability: The Party System Before and After the 1998 Bundestagswahl', *German Politics*, 8:2, 1999, pp. 88-107.
Roberts, G. K., 'Taken at the Flood? The German General Election 2002', *Government and Opposition*, 38:1, 2003, pp. 53-72.
Roberts, G. K., *Party Politics in the New Germany*, 1997.
Saalfeld, T., 'The German Party System - Continuity and Change', *German Politics*, 11:3, 2002, pp. 99-130.
Schmidt, Manfred, *Political Institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany*, 2003, pp. 131-159.
Smith, G., 'Parties and the Party System', in S. A. Padgett, G. Smith and W. Paterson, eds., *Developments in German Politics 3*, 2003.

Final Lecture (15/12):

Final Conclusions – What have we studied and whether it matters?