

Electoral Systems

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1. OVERVIEW

This seminar focuses on the comparative study of electoral systems and their consequences for the way governments are chosen by the mass of citizens. Substantively, the course examines how a range of electoral institutions affect the extent and ease with which party elites and voters can coordinate to provide outcomes or opportunities for transacting that improve on their status quo, but would not happen in the absence of these electoral institutions. For our purposes, the basic idea of a coordination game can be conveyed by considering a classic illustrative game, the Battle of the Sexes.

2. PREREQUISITES

This course strives to give the students a thorough and careful introduction to the essential ideas of electoral systems literature without requiring an extensive background. The prerequisites for the course include an introduction to econometrics at the level of, say, Gujarati's *Basic Econometrics* (McGraw-Hill, 1988) or Dougherty's *Introduction to Econometrics* (Oxford University Press, 2002), and basic research design at the level of, say, King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

3. COMPETENCES TO BE ACHIEVED

The objective of this course is for students to be able to understand how electoral systems works. I hope that student will achieve an understanding of the basic concepts of electoral systems scholarship, some knowledge of the basic models used in the field, and the ability to write a research paper. In particular, some capacities and abilities are crucial in this course. Students should achieve or at least improve competences such as;

Instrumental competences

- Ability to analyse and synthesise
- Planning and management of time
- Basic knowledge of the area of study
- Knowledge of a second language

Interpersonal competences

- Critical and self-critical ability
- Team work
- Interpersonal abilities
- Ability to communicate with people that are not experts in the subject

Systemic competences

- Research abilities
- Ability to learn
- Ability to adapt to new situations
- Ability to generate new ideas (creativity)
- Design and management of projects

4. ASSESMENT

The course requirements include:

Weekly discussion of readings [20 percent of grade]:

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class each week and to contribute to discussion during seminar. Good participation does not presume you understand everything in the reading – good questions make for good participation. The estimated time of dedication to prepare each session should be 1-2 hours.

Presentation [20 percent of grade]: Each week, there will be one or two student presentations on questions that are posed on the syllabus. Topics will be assigned on the first day of class. The presentations should be 20-25 minutes each. Each student must make at least one presentation during the course of the trimester. The estimated time of dedication to prepare each session should be 1 hour, apart from the time invested in reading the papers.

Weak presentations will simply summarize the readings on the question ("Smith says x, Jones says y"). Strong presentations will

- Describe any key conceptual issues that must be addressed by work on the question (e.g., a presentation on inequality might discuss different ways of conceptualizing inequality);
- Describe the central arguments/debates in the literature on the question (e.g., a presentation on corruption might focus on different types of variables – such as regime type, decentralization, level of development -- that influence corruption levels);
- Describe thorny methodological issues that bedevil work on the question (e.g., a presentation on social revolutions might discuss the problems created by the small-n nature of the phenomenon).
- Offer criticisms and/or suggest pathways for future research.

Original research paper [60 percent of grade]. Each student must write an original research paper on some aspect of how electoral systems influence democratic politics. Students should consult with Professor Lago during the course of the term about potential topics. Each student should turn in a research prospectus that states the central question to be examined, and why the question is important and interesting, briefly explains how the proposed research will address the question, and includes a preliminary bibliography of related literature. The estimated time of dedication to write the research paper is 25 hours.

5. CONTENTS

1. Introduction

Basic concepts. Main Debates, Role of elections in modern democracies. Theories.

2. Consequences of electoral laws.

Institutions and cleavages. Number of parties. Partisan effects. Electoral Coordination. Coordination dilemmas. Malapportionment. Partisan effect. Instrumental rationality. Expectations. Electoral systems as independent variables. Strategic voting. Regression.

3. Selection of electoral systems.

Uncertainty. Expectations. Electoral systems as dependent variable..
 Learning. Instrumental rationality. Risk aversion. Electoral reform.
 Interaction effects. Socialist parties.

6. METHODOLOGY

The course is based on a balance between conceptual and empirical approaches.

Session 1: The beginning of the course is designed to ensure a common basis for dealing with theoretical and conceptual issues. The presentation will correspond to the professor.

Sessions 2-7: Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class each week and to contribute to discussion during seminar. Each week, there will be one or two student presentations on questions that are posed on the syllabus. Topics will be assigned on the first day of class. The presentations should be 20-25 minutes each.

Sessions 8-10: The final part of the course will be addressed through lectures and discussions about how to draft and submit the final paper.

7. THE PROGRAMING OF ACTIVITIES

<i>Week</i>	<i>Classroom activity</i>	<i>Activity outside the classroom</i>	<i>Results that are object of assessment</i>
Week 1	Lecture	Required readings 1	Participation
Week 2	Seminar session	Required readings 2	Presentation/Participation
Week 3	Seminar session	Required readings 3	Presentation/Participation
Week 4	Seminar session	Required readings 4	Presentation/Participation
Week 5	Seminar session	Required readings 5	Presentation/Participation
Week 6	Seminar session	Required readings 6	Presentation/Participation
Week 7	Seminar session	Required readings 7	Presentation/Participation
Week 8	Individual tutorial session		
Week 9	Individual tutorial session		
Week 10	Individual tutorial session		Paper

8. STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMMING OF ACTIVITIES

Week	Activity in the classroom			Activity outside the classroom			Assessment activities	
	Learning activities	Didactic resources	Time scheduled	Learning activities	Didactic resources	Estimated time	Items for assessment	Estimated time
1	Lecture: Introduction to electoral systems scholarship	Readings 1	3 hours*		Readings 1	1 hour	Participation	
2	Seminar. Readings 2	Readings 2	3 hours*		Readings 2	1 hour	Presentation/Participation	
3	Seminar. Readings 3	Readings 3	3 hours*		Readings 3	40 min	Presentation/Participation	
4	Seminar. Readings 4	Readings 4	3 hours*		Readings 4	1 hour	Presentation/Participation	
5	Seminar. Readings 5	Readings 5	3 hours*		Readings 5	1 hour	Presentation/Participation	
6	Seminar. Readings 6	Readings 6	3 hours*		Readings 6	30 min	Presentation/Participation	
7	Seminar. Readings 7	Readings 7	3 hours*		Readings 7	1 hour	Presentation/Participation	
8	Individual tutorial sessions		15 min				Paper	25 hours
9	Individual tutorial sessions		15 min				Paper	
10	Individual tutorial sessions		15 min				Paper	

*Break. 15 min

9. SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Classes will take place on Thursdays from 15h to 18h with a break of 15 minutes. **Attendance is compulsory.**

January 11: 1. Introduction: Concepts, Debates and Theories

I will outline the course and give an overview of the topics we will cover. I will discuss three questions: the meaning of the main concepts in electoral studies, the role of elections in modern democracies, and the substantive, methodological and empirical debates in electoral systems scholarship.

Readings:

- Grofman, Bernard. 2004. "Foreword". In Josep M. Colomer (ed.). *Handbook of Electoral Systems Choice*. New York: Palgrave/McMillan.
- Manin, Bernard, Adam Przeworski, and Susan C. Stokes. 1999. "Elections and Representation". In Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin (eds.). *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Additional Readings:

- Colomer, Josep M. 2004. "Glosary and Index". In Josep M. Colomer (ed.). *Handbook of Electoral Systems Choice*. New York: Palgrave/McMillan.
- Penadés, Alberto. 2006. "La difícil ciencia de los orígenes de los sistemas electorales". *Revista de Estudios Políticos* (nueva época): 131: 193-262.
- Colomer, Josep M., José Ramón Montero, and Ignacio Lago. 2005. "Glosario básico sobre sistemas electorales". *Zona Abierta* 110/111: 349-359.
- Montero, José Ramón, and Ignacio Lago. 2005. "La investigación sobre sistemas electorales: cinco debates y una selección de artículos". *Zona Abierta* 110/111: 1-35.

January 18: 2. The political consequences of electoral laws (I)

A classic question in political science concerns what determines the number of parties that compete in a given polity. There are two answers to this question: one that emphasizes the role of electoral laws in structuring coalitional incentives and another that emphasizes the importance of preexisting social cleavages. In this session and the following we will discuss both approaches. The effects of electoral systems on party system fragmentation will be understood as a matter of electoral coordination.

Readings:

- Lijphart, Arend. 1990. "The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws, 1945-1985". *American Political Science Review* 84: 481-496.
- Riker, William H. 1982. "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science". *American Political Science Review* 76: 753-766.

Additional Readings:

- Duverger, Maurice. 1954. *Political Parties*. New York: Wiley [pp. 234-282].
- Nohlen, Dieter. 2004. *Sistemas electorales y partidos políticos*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica [pp. 424-447].
- Rae, Douglas W. 1971. *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*. New York: Yale University Press [chapters 4 and 5].

January 25: 3. The political consequences of electoral laws (II)

Readings:

- Amorim Neto, Octavio, and Gary W. Cox 1997. "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures and the Number of Parties". *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 149-174.

Additional Readings:

- Álvarez, R. Michael, and Jonathan Nagler. 2000. "A New Approach for Modelling Strategic Voting in Multiparty Elections". *British Journal of Political Science* 30: 57-75.
- Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. New York: Cambridge University Press [chapter 4].
- Cox, Gary W. 1999. "Electoral Rules and Electoral Coordination". *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 145-161.

February 1: 4. The partisan effects of electoral laws

Partisan effects or biases of electoral systems are examined in this session. We show that there are different potential sources of partisan bias (malapportionment, district magnitude variation or gerrymandering). They are the consequence of the strategic decisions of elites when they design a specific electoral system.

- Grofman, B., W. Koetzle, and T. Burnell. 1997. "An Integrated Perspective on the Three Potential Sources of Partisan Bias: Malapportionment, Turnout Differences, and the Geographic Distribution of Party Vote Shares". *Electoral Studies* 16: 457-470.
- Monroe, Burt L., and Amanda G. Rose. 2002. "Electoral Systems and Unimagined Consequences. Partisan Effects of Districted Proportional Representation". *American Journal of Political Science* 46: 67-89.

Additional Readings:

- Cox, Gary W., and Jonathan Katz. 1999. "The Reapportionment Revolution and Bias in U.S. Congressional Elections". *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 812-841.
- Samuels, David and Richard Snyder. 2001. "The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective". *British Journal of Political Science* 31: 651-671.

February 8: 5. Coordination Problems in Electoral Systems

Studies of electoral law consequences typically accept that the impact of district magnitude on party system fragmentation takes place as Duvergerian theories predict: the number of parties running in a district decreases (increases) as district magnitude decreases (increases). The four readings here show that the basic story of district magnitude is much more complex: the existence of different coordination dilemmas generates centrifugal forces that increase the number of electoral parties.

Readings:

- Ferrara, Federico, and Erik S. Herron. 2005. "Going It Alone? Strategic Entry under Mixed Electoral Rules". *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 16-31.
- Lago, Ignacio. "District Magnitude Variation in Electoral Systems and Duvergerian Equilibria". Manuscript.

Additional Readings:

- Chhibber, Pradeep, and Ken Kollman. 1998. "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States". *American Political Science Review* 92: 329-342.
- Christensen, Raymond V. 1996. "Strategic Imperatives to Japan's SNTV Electoral System and the Cooperative Innovations of the Former Opposition Parties". *Comparative Political Studies* 29: 312-334.

February 15: 6. The Selection of Electoral Systems (I)

This week and the following we will study electoral systems as dependent variable, namely their origins and the reasons for their changes. We will combine classic references with recent contributions to show how instrumental elites behave when they do not have good electoral expectations.

Readings:

- Boix, Carles. 1999. "Setting the Rules of the Game: the Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies". *American Political Science Review* 93: 609-624.

Additional Readings:

- Colomer, Josep M. 2004. "The Strategy and History of Electoral Systems Choice". In Josep M. Colomer (ed.). *Handbook of Electoral Systems Choice*. New York: Palgrave/McMillan
- Rogowski, Ronald. 1987. "Trade and the variety of democratic institutions". *International Organization* 41: 203-224.
- Rokkan, Stein. 1968. "Elections: Electoral Systems". In D.L. Shills (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York: Macmillan-Free Press, vol. 5, 2nd ed.

February 22: 7. The Selection of Electoral Systems (II)

Readings:

- Andrews, Josephine T., and Robert Jackman. 2005. "Strategic fools: electoral choice under extreme uncertainty". *Electoral Studies* 24: 65-84.
- Blais, André, Agnieszka Dobrzynska, and Indridi H. Indridason. 2005. "To adopt or not to adopt PR: the politics of institutional choice". *British Journal of Political Science* 45: 182-190.

Additional Readings:

- Benoit, Kenneth. 2004. "Models of electoral system choice". *Electoral Studies* 23: 363-389.
- Brady, David, and Mo Jongryn. 1992. "Electoral systems and institutional choice: A case study of the 1988 Korean elections". *Comparative Political Studies* 24: 405-429.

March 1, 8, 15: Tutorial sessions

Students must discuss and consult the topic of his/her paper with Professor Lago in an individual tutorial session. These sessions will be from 15h to 18h.