Introduction to the Practice of Politics

Academic Year 2017-18

Course providers:

(Introduction to the Practice of Politics)
Karma Nabulsi, St Edmund Hall. e-mail: karma.nabulsi@politics.ox.ac.uk

(Methods Programme)
Andrew Eggers, Andrea Ruggeri, Robin Harding, Spyros Kosmidis

Introduction to the Practice of Politics, is composed of:

The Practice of Politics and Political Analysis

The Practice of Politics is taught through departmentally-provided lectures, delivered during Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and college-provided tutorials and classes. It is examined in the First Public Examination for the Honour School in History and Politics.

Political Analysis, which provides an introduction to the methodology of empirical political analysis, is taught in Hilary Term through 8 departmentally-provided lectures and 4 workshops. It does not form part of the First Public Examination, but is assessed by a 2000-word essay to be submitted by 12 noon Tuesday 1 May 2018.

Examination Decrees and Regulations 2017:

The Practice of Politics. Questions will be set on the following topics: (i) regime types; definition and measurement of variations between types of democracy; (ii) political institutions and practice outside the advanced industrial democracies; stability, state capacity and state formation; (iii) the state and its institutions (executives, legislatures, parties and party systems, electoral systems, courts, constitutions and centre-periphery relations); (iv) parties and party systems; political values and identity politics.

Candidates are required to answer THREE questions.
Aims:

These tutorials introduce you firstly to the way government is classified across democratic regimes, and to debates about the merits and drawbacks of each type: particularly the implications for political stability, and for policy performance. In this section of your tutorial work there is an explicit link with the work you will do in the Political Analysis lectures and classes. The next set of tutorial topics considers political institutions under a range of regimes with different governance structures. In this section general questions are asked about the nature of the state: where it comes from, and what determines differences between states – particularly in terms of ‘state capacity’, and stability. The third set considers, mainly in advanced democracies, key government institutions, the debates surrounding each type of institution, and the issues that arise when comparing specific institutions between countries. In this section you look mainly at the key dynamic tension between legislature and executive, though you also consider the operation of counter-powers against majoritarian government (based in the judiciary, direct democracy, decentralisation etc). Finally, the tutorials examine – again mostly in advanced democracies - what determines the shape and operation of political parties and the party system, and the extent to which the values and attitudes on which political preferences appear to be changing, why this is so, and how we might measure such changes. In this section, you consider not only stable attitudes and structured partisan competition, but also more deeply divided and contested politics, and sources of populism and radicalism, and identity politics.

Objectives:

• To introduce you to regime classification and comparison, to develop your understanding of the conditions for democratic government and political stability
• To develop your analytical skills.
• To introduce you to social science methodology in the context of historical explanation and comparative analysis.
Section B Lecture Programme

Introduction to the Practice of Politics, 2017-18

Wednesday and Friday at 10 am

Please see the termly lecture lists for the most up-to-date schedules.

Michaelmas 2017

1. Constitutional Variations under Democracy: parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential government
2. The Range of Regime Types: how do we distinguish democracy from non-democracy?
3. The USA and the Classic Separation of Powers
4. The Westminster Model and Constitutional Change
5. Semi-Presidentialism: the French model
6. Majoritarian and Consensus Democracies: defining the difference and measuring performance (i)
7. Majoritarian and Consensus Democracies: defining the difference and measuring performance (ii)
8. Legislative Politics: what are legislatures for? How much variation between them?
9. Political institutions and practice outside western industrialised countries: The Case of China
10. Conflict over Rules and Regimes: (i) Social Movements
11. Conflict over Rules and Regimes: (ii) Revolution
12. The Modern French State
13. Identity politics (1): value change in advanced democracy
14. Identity politics (2): when, how and why is ethnicity politicised in advanced democracies? (to MT)
15. Executive Politics: the political and administrative dimension
16. Case-studies of the legislative/executive relation: the UK

Hilary Term 2018

1. Case-studies of the legislative/executive relation: President and Congress in the USA
4. The evolution of the multi-party system in the United Kingdom since the 1980s
5. Party politics under complex cleavage patterns: the French case
6. Why the party system in the USA, and why no socialism in the USA?
7. Constitutional counter-powers: how effective in checking majoritarian power?
8. Multi-layered government: purposes and consequences
9. State Formation and State Capacity
10. Are Democracies Different? The democratic peace thesis
11. The politics of populism and radicalism in advanced industrial societies
12. Culture wars: culture as a source of conflict in international relations
13. Globalisation as a constraint on the dynamics of national politics
14. The US Supreme Court
TUTORIAL TOPICS:

*** indicates a basic text.
* indicates a reading that is particularly recommended.

I. Constitutional variations under democracy

1. What is the difference between a presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary system? What other variables does the real-world operation of a regime depend on, besides those found in constitutions?

Why this topic? To enable you to understand basic constitutional differences in the way power is allocated between branches of government. In stable and long-established democratic government, power is often said to derive from a constitutional agreement (usually written down, but, even when written down, qualified by conventions and understandings which may not be written down). Similarly power is said to be allocated to branches of government in patterns that vary from country to country. The topic introduces several long-established concepts: the constitutional allocation of power; the separation of powers between governmental branches and its claimed effects on legislative politics; the fusion of executive and legislature under parliamentary government; the impact of separation or fusion on executive strength; variations in the real meaning of fusion depending on legislative and party politics. In one way this is a sorting and classifying exercise to make sure you use terminology clearly, and to help you understand how political science literature uses it. Your tutor may spend some time simply working through these definitions to be sure you see how they are conventionally used. However, underlying the exercise is an implicit debate about how useful classification is, and if it is useful, what it should be based on. One part of this debate is whether a constitution and its rules are a useful power-map at all, when so much seems to depend on informal and contingent aspects of politics like the nature of party politics, or where a country is in an electoral or political cycle, or how popular a government is at any particular point, etc. If the location of political power can vary so much, do constitutions only serve as background constraints, and if so, are comparisons of how they work only of limited usefulness?

Reading:

2. What claims have been made about the merits and defects of so-called majoritarian and consensus democracies, and how have these claims been tested in scholarly research?

Why this topic? A more advanced part of the debate begun in the first tutorial topic is whether there are better ways of getting at key differences between regime types than by examining constitutional rules. One example of this, which you can only touch on lightly at this stage, is veto-player analysis, which is squarely rooted in rational-choice approaches to political analysis, and which seeks to understand political processes by examining decisions according to the number and strategic location of actors who influence outcomes by their positional or institutional power of veto (and hence their bargaining power). Proponents of this approach observe that formal constitutional power is at times a poor guide to the bargaining power observable using veto-player analysis. A further area of debate relates to assumptions about “how democracy should work” in a more purposeful sense: is democracy there to deliver clear choices between alternatives, or is it there to bargain between, reconcile, and integrate, the wide range of interests and demands that society is composed of? Here we reach the debate between majoritarian democracy and consensus democracy, which forms the empirical background question to much of the work you will do in Hilary Term in Political Analysis.

Reading:

II. Political institutions and practice outside of the advanced industrial democracies

3. Can we draw a sharp distinction between regimes that are democratic and those that are not? If so, what are the criteria? If not, why not?

Why this topic? The concept of democracy is one of the most used in the study of politics and yet there exists enormous scholarly debate over what precisely constitutes ‘democracy’ and symmetrically, how to define non-democratic regimes. This tutorial explores the debate over conceptualizing political regimes and also touches on theories that explain transitions between regimes and variation within them. The tutorial readings begin with the classic distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ conceptions of democracy and the associated debate over measuring democracy. Some scholars argue for a multi-dimensional conception of democracy including contestation, inclusion, the separation of powers, the granting of civil liberties, and the responsiveness of government to demands. Accordingly, fine-grained scales of democracy or ‘polyarchy’ have been created to capture such distinctions. Conversely other scholars have argued that democracy should be considered a ‘bounded whole’ that is a binary ‘either/or’ concept. Still other scholars argue that formal democracy even in paradigmatic cases like the United States might be undermined by socioeconomic inequalities, producing oligarchy rather than democracy. The tutorial then turns to variations among authoritarian and democratic regimes, examining literature that explores the worlds of ‘electoral’ or ‘competitive’ authoritarianism. These works problematize the connection often made between holding elections and being ‘democratic,’ noting the ways in which authoritarian regimes might use elections to underscore rather than undermine their hold on power. Finally the tutorial concludes by examining the prospects of democratic survival and consolidation, also drawing on the literature explaining the origins of democratic transitions. These readings should help students think about which structural or strategic forces hold together political regimes or split them apart.

Conceptualizing Democracy: Thick vs Thin Conceptions


Hybrid and Authoritarian Regimes

- Art, David. 2012. "What do we know about authoritarianism after ten years?" *Comparative Politics* 44.3: 351-373.


**Consolidation**


4. **What is state strength? What determines how strong a state is?**

**Why this topic?** The state is one of the fundamental units of political life in modern politics. Why do states exist? This question has intrigued political theorists, scholars of international relations, and comparative political scientists. Scholars looking at the rise of the state in Europe (and elsewhere), often locate its origins in both the need for decisive action in the face of military conflict and the need for tax revenue to fund it. Yet, we continue to explore the historical origins of the state, in part because we continue to debate both the rationale for the state and what explains variation in state structure. Literature looking at more recent state building, particularly outside of Europe but also in the post-Soviet context, points to quite different constellations of factors affecting the development and structure of states, raising further questions. While states as political units share a number of factors, scholars have pointed to wide variation among states. Political scientists often apply adjectives such as “high capacity” “low capacity” “strong” and “weak” to describe the role of states. This work points to both the institutional and social origins of state variation. States often possess highly varying bureaucratic structures, which are in part the product of their internal structure as well as their relationship to social groups. Can states promote beneficial societal outcomes through the right institutions? Can states withstand lobbying (or corruption) from societal elites without becoming predatory?

**Readings:**

**State formation in Europe:**

***Clark, Golder and Golder. “The Origins of the Modern State” Chapter 4.***


Tuong Vu. 2010. “Studying the State through State Formation” *World Politics*. 62(01)


State formation outside of Europe:


State Capacity – Institutions and Society:


5. What have social movements contributed to modern political practice?

**Why this topic?** Political action such as strikes, demonstrations, and manifestations of civic engagement most often take place outside of traditional political institutions such as political parties. The purpose of this topic is to help understand what drives individuals, groups, and movements to mobilize in this way, and whether these kinds of collective civil practices are different in form and nature; whether they help to bring disadvantaged groups into the political process, or groups which are less inclined to participate; how social movements cut across national boundaries; under what conditions these groups interact with formal institutional processes (for example elections), and with what effects; and some of the conditions under which this kind of collective action may be successful. There are also significant debates about whether these different forms of collective action can be regrouped
under the heading of ‘contentious politics’, and whether they can be defined according to “rational” theories. There are discussions about social movements’ impact and success, and the extent to which they contribute to wider political socialization. The study of social movements is an important prism for understanding how politics is experienced at grass-roots and national levels, and how forms of institutionalized political power— in democracies and non-democracies - may be challenged from below.

Readings:

- Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2007. **

6. How and why do revolutions either succeed or fail?

**Why this topic?** Political orders and regimes are sometimes transformed comprehensively, for example from a monarchy to a republic, or from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. The purpose of this topic is to help understand how, why, and under what circumstances this sort of political change happens, and what it tells us more widely about politics. The important issues addressed are the causes of revolutions (what kind of factors make for their occurrence, and how they are to be prioritized), the processes of revolutions (what happens during the revolutionary moment); and the consequences of revolutions (the nature of the political change - partial change or complete rupture; the type of new political order; its impact on society). In thinking about its consequences, one relevant aspect is time, which can be distinguished between short, medium, and long-term factors. There are substantive contemporary debates in politics about classic historical revolutions (the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian revolution of 1917) and their relation to modern ones. There are different analytical frameworks in the literature on revolutions, which stress the varying importance of structural factors, such as class and material conditions, the role of conjuncture, and the contributions of social actors, ideas, and ideology. Among the main debates around modern revolutions are the identification of the causes, and whether they can
be generalized; the range of factors, and in particular the role of revolutionary ideas and political culture; how and why revolutions succeed or fail, and how this can be assessed.

Readings:

- ** David Armitage “Every Great Revolution is a Civil War”, in Kenneth Baker, Edelstein, eds. Scripting Revolutions, the Comparative Study of Revolutions, Stanford, 2015, pp 57-70.
- **Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge, 1979. (Introduction and Conclusion).

III. The Institutions of the Democratic State

7. “Judgments about the effectiveness of legislatures can only be made in the context of specific political cultures and state traditions. There are no absolute standards of judgment”. Discuss

Why this topic? Elected legislatures at national level are a key part of our understanding of how modern democracies operate, and have made centralized representative government, (rather than direct democracy or highly decentralized systems of government), one of democracy’s key legitimizing components. We have already seen in topic 1, above, that the role of a legislature varies a great deal between presidential and parliamentary systems, with legislatures interacting with both the constitutional structure, and the nature of the party system, to produce different patterns of governance. This has generated a range of concerns about what legislatures “ought” to be delivering in a democracy, as perceptions have ebbed and flowed about their effectiveness in particular contexts. Sometimes the concern has been about the “decline of legislatures” while at other times it has been about “over-mighty” or excessively fragmented legislatures. The central issue is whether a legislature can fulfill a variety of sometimes contradictory tasks at the same time. We think that legislatures should be representative; that they should sustain the executive’s legitimacy, particularly in parliamentary regimes; that they should scrutinise the work of the executive and bureaucracy; they should appropriate resources, especially financial, for the other branches of government to do their work; and perhaps most of all they legitimate the laws of the polity through their internal procedures. So we want them to contribute to cohesive and purposive government (in the case of parliamentary government by creating and sustaining a parliamentary majority; in
the case of presidential government, by retaining sufficient programmatic cohesion to enable a directly-elected executive to do so without the enforcing cohesion provided by a parliamentary confidence-relationship) while at the same time performing the role of holding the executive to account, scrutinizing its performance, and making national political debate meaningful to citizens. The way the two demands are reconciled in any given country will depend on how members of legislatures are socialized into expectations about the roles they are to perform, on the rules governing the legislature and its relationship with the rest of the national institutions, and on the operation of the party system. Even definitions are difficult. What for example does it mean for a legislature to be representative? Geographically, demographically, ideologically, federally…? How is this related to structure? How many chambers should a legislature have for these purposes? Given how differently these factors are configured even in otherwise similar democracies, claims about legislative effectiveness are likely to remain very difficult to confirm or refute. Nevertheless comparative study of their role and operation, helping us understand them in some of the most highly-studied contexts (the USA, UK, France, Germany), is important in understanding where there are common functional imperatives in democracies, and where culture, history and state tradition continue to affect operation.

Reading:

- Kerrouche, E., “Gone with the wind? The National Assembly under the Fifth republic” in S. Brouard et al, The French Republic at Fifty: Beyond Stereotypes, 2009
- 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
- Baldwin, N. Parliament in the 21st Century, 2005
Executive power has a personal quality linked to popular support and party-based authority that sits alongside its formal, constitutionally-derived, qualities. How in practice do the two elements interact in real-world contexts?

**Why this topic?** The role of the executive, especially chief executives, is difficult to compare across countries. How can political science establish grounds for comparison between presidents, prime ministers, chancellors and their subordinates in different regimes? How do chief executives wield power and become effective leaders in different polities? Is this a function of the institutional structure of the executive? Or should we consider contingent factors like the scope for ‘charismatic’ leadership? Some models of executive power consider it to be wielded in a command-and-control way, and judge success by how far the chief executive ‘wins’ in a contest with others. Alternatively, executive power is a bargaining process, acknowledging that the chief executive can only succeed in achieving goals by working collaboratively with others. In newer democracies, problems of winner-take-all executive competition can cause problems with democratic stability.

**Reading:**

- ***Arend Lijphart Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in 36 Countries ch. 7
- ***Giovanni Sartori Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Enquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes (2nd ed.) Part 2
- ***George Tsebelis Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work chs. 1-4
- Peter Hennessy *The British Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945*
- Rhodes & Dunleavy *Prime Minister, Cabinet & Core Executive*
- Martin Smith *The Core Executive in Britain*
- Charles O. Jones *The Presidency in a Separated System*
- Gillian Peele et al. (eds.) *Developments in American Politics* 7 ch. 6
- Robert Elgie ‘Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype’ *West European Politics* 32(2) 2009
9. **Democracies usually provide a range of counter-powers to majoritarian power, including judicial review, decentralisation of power, bi-cameralism, a permanent professionalized bureaucracy, direct democracy, and the media. Consider, in the case of any two, what the effectiveness of such counter-powers depends on, and how we would measure and compare effectiveness.**

**Why this topic?** Democratic government is widely thought to require a balance between **purposive government** that is capable of identifying and addressing policy problems, and **restraints on government**. These restraints seek to ensure that power is exercised within agreed limits, and under agreed rules, that proper deliberation precedes key decisions, that different voices are heard as policy is being made, and that where possible (a big qualification) decision-making power is devolved to levels close to those most affected by it. Such checks and balances supplement the central tension between the executive and the legislature, which is itself potentially (though not always) a check on power. With the exception of the role of the media, the role of these restraints is usually described in a constitution, though they are not all present in every constitution, and the use of the constitution in understanding how power is wielded varies a good deal from country to country. (In rare cases there is no formal constitution at all). They have come to be known in much modern comparative political analysis as **institutional veto players**. The most fundamental restraint on executive power is constitutional: the commitment of government itself to be governed by a set of authoritative rules and principles. Constitutionalism requires a codified constitution that describes both the powers of different branches of government and a bill of rights. It also seems to require an umpire: a constitutional court, though an activist court’s behavior may become so engaged in the political process that it can start to resemble a participant in the policy-making process as well as an umpire. In a federal state, sovereignty is split constitutionally between different levels – usually the federal and state levels – so that each has at least some final authority in given policy areas. Bi-cameral legislatures are those with two distinct assemblies, usually based on the representation of different territorial entities. The actual power of each assembly varies. Less common in constitutions, and in general less dramatic in their effects, are those procedures that bring public opinion to bear on decision-makers through routes other than elected ones. Provisions for referendums and plebiscites are obviously constitutional, while others – for example factors which facilitate a free and pluralistic media - generally have non-constitutional roots. Finally, in advanced democracies, there is the impact of a permanent, professionalized bureaucracy. Since it lacks democratic roots, and is by some regarded as thwarting the effectiveness of policy action, bureaucracy may not immediately seem to fall into the category of a democratic check. However its professional expertise, set against impulsive and inexpert politicians, may allow it to be a type of check and its strategic role in decision-
making certainly makes it a potential veto-player. Given the range of counter-powers to the power exercised through the central institutions of legislature and executive, there are no simple ways of assessing the functionality of checks and balances as a whole. Each particular institution needs first to be understood in its own national context, and comparisons then need to be made across jurisdictions focusing on individual institutions. Conceptually however all these institutions have certain common features and effects, and beyond asking how well each operates in a national context against the purposes set for it, comparative political analysis (in more advanced courses than the Prelim, however) can also assess, through formal veto-player theory, how much concentration or dispersal of power a particular jurisdiction displays.

Reading:

- Sarah Binder “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock”, *American Political Science Review*, 93, 1999: 519-533

10. Is there a distinctively democratic way of waging war?

**Why this topic?** The absence of a world government has led many analysts of International Relations (IR) to believe that all countries exist within a constant state of war and insecurity. As Thomas Hobbes famously put it in Leviathan, ‘in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another’. However, one of the most robust empirical findings of IR scholarship over the last fifty years has been that democracies are different, in that they do not seem to fight wars with other democracies (although, of course, they do continue to fight wars against non-democracies). Many have drawn the conclusion that, while the Hobbesian state of war continues in the rest
of the world, a ‘zone of peace’ now exists among democratic states, and that regions such as the Middle East would be more peaceful if more regimes within them were democratic. This belief has been a major theme within recent US foreign policy: see, for example, George W. Bush’s Second Inaugural Address.

Several controversies remain. For a start, some dispute the empirical claims of the ‘democratic peace thesis’, arguing that it rests on excessively narrow ways of conceptualising democracy, war and peace, or that its findings are statistically insignificant. But perhaps the largest literature has emerged around the question of why the democratic peace exists. Is it a result of the institutions within democratic political systems, such as the publicness of decision-making, or the checks and balances that inhibit the executive? Or is it the result of liberal values and a culture of bargaining and compromise that are unique to democratic states? Or might it even be due to some other factor that has less to do with democracy as such, such as high levels of economic interdependence among liberal democracies, or the hegemonic influence of the United States? There are also disagreements about the conclusion that democratisation will make the world a more peaceful place: perhaps the pacific qualities of democracy in the western world will not travel to new democracies elsewhere, while some believe that newly democratising states are exceptionally belligerent during the unstable process of political transition, which implies that the dangers of promoting democratisation may outweigh the possible benefits of a more democratic world. Finally, the tendency to focus on explaining the democratic peace has attracted criticisms that it has led to the neglect of other important aspects of the relationship between democracies and war: for example, their continuing tendency to make war against non-democracies, or the fact that they mobilise their forces and actually fight their wars in different ways from non-democratic states.

Reading:

IV. Parties, party systems, values, identity politics

11. The determinants of party systems:

a) What are the sociological and institutional determinants of party systems? What are the major weaknesses of these explanations?

b) To what extent are party systems in developing world democracies based on social cleavages?

Why this topic? To understand a key body of literature seeking to explain the sociological determinants of party systems across all democracies, from the emergence of mass democracy to the third wave of democratisation. In addition, to understand how political institutions, particularly the type of electoral system, shape the party system, thereby augmenting the sociological approach.

A key interpretation of modern party systems in the advanced industrial democracies is that parties (thanks also to the freezing effect of strong party organisation) were frozen in the mould established in the late 19th and early 20th century, with the transition to mass democracy, raising the barrier to entry for new parties. From this perspective therefore, parties present in any particular advanced democracy primarily reflect the underlying social cleavages, which were important in the period of mass democratisation. With the third wave of democratization in the early 1980s, we also witnessed the emergence of new democracies from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. While the literature on party systems
in Western Europe sees party competition as programmatic, and the bases for it as social and ideological, work on party systems in other parts of the world often highlight competition, which is not rooted in social cleavages and stress alternatives to programmatic links, in particular clientelism. This topic introduces the concept of a party system, of political cleavages and party organization. It also highlights the differences between party systems in the advanced industrial democracies and newer, developing world democracies.

However, political parties vary a good deal, both within and between countries, across advanced and developing democracies, and in the extent to which they are rooted in strong and distinct social identities. Many look as if they are not built on social identities at all. The rate of formation of new parties in recent decades seems to have increased in several advanced democracies, and their sociological origins are often difficult to pin down. What is more, in developing democracies, party systems often do not appear to reflect social cleavages at all. Since Maurice Duverger’s (1954) seminal work, observers have pointed to the effect of institutions on the shape of the party system, most notably the electoral system and more recently, the format of the executive. This topic introduces the mechanical and psychological effects of electoral systems on party systems. It also contrasts the effect of majoritarian electoral systems and proportional representation on party systems, and examines the interaction of electoral systems and cleavage structures.

The hypothesis that parties in the advanced industrial democracies reflect social cleavages, and that party systems are frozen in time, is much contested on several levels. The thesis of long-term historical continuity in party systems often requires a very stretched interpretation of “continuity”, even across the period from the 1880s to the 1960s, let alone subsequently. Parties vary a good deal, both within and between countries, in the extent to which they are rooted in strong and distinct social identities, and many look as if they are not built on social identities at all. The rate of formation of new parties in recent decades seems to have increased in several advanced democracies, and their sociological origins are often difficult to pin down. Although this does not render the sociological thesis of Lipset and Rokkan redundant, it does raise questions about its utility as an explanation for the contemporary party systems of the advanced democracies.

Secondly, this sociological thesis also struggles as a framework of understanding for party systems outside of the advanced industrial democracies. Party systems in these countries often have not followed the evolutionary development pattern of the Western European party systems described by Stein and Rokkan. Rather the development of party systems outside of the advanced industrial democracies has tended to be discontinuous; reflect divergent responses to expanded political mobilization; or simply reflect long-standing historical elite divisions. In many of these party systems as a consequence, competition, is often not based on programmatic policy proposals, but on catch-all parties cantered upon personality and clientelism.

Finally, while it is widely agreed that the relationship between electoral and party systems is mutual, nearly all work has been focused on the effect of electoral systems on party systems, and a general consensus exists on this topic. However, electoral institutions may shape party systems, but these institutions also emerge from party systems. How party systems shape
electoral systems remains completely underdeveloped and under-theorised and no clear consensus yet exists on this issue.

**Reading:**

**Sociological Determinants**


**Institutional Determinants**

12. Do voters still exhibit stable links to established parties in advanced democracies, and if not why not?

Why this topic?
Perhaps the single most important notion in the study of voting behavior is that of party identification, which denotes an affective orientation towards a political party. It is thus hardly surprising that the observed trend towards weaker party attachments over the last half century has featured as a key issue in the study of voting behavior. Almost any textbook of party politics dedicates a lengthy section to explain the loosening of partisan ties in advanced democracies at least since the 1960s. The stylized picture that emerges from this literature is one of partisan dealignment, whereby party loyalties have eroded, electoral volatility has increased and turnout has decreased. By delving into this literature, this topic allows us to assess the generalizability of these conclusions and unpack the underlying mechanisms of electoral change. Consider, for example, the contrast between this dealigning pattern described above and the pattern of increased partisan polarization and sorting in American politics. What accounts for this divergence within advanced democracies? Why does party seem to be becoming less important in Europe and more important in the US? What are the implications of dealignment for individual voting behavior and party competition? How have parties’ strategies changed as a result of this change? These questions addressed in this topic. We will focus both on top-down factors of political change driven by party competition, and on bottom-up developments from partisan dealignment.

As a way to explain electoral change, it is not always good practice to perceive the electorate as a single homogeneous entity. Electoral change may not therefore be the result of unanimous opinion shifts among the electorate. It may be driven by disproportionate change among specific age groups, which become more influential through generational turnover. The concept of generational turnover enables us to examine more systematically the sources of dealignment and its prospects for the future. In so doing, we will touch upon the distinction between dealignment and realignment and discuss how these concepts help us understand the dynamics of party competition in advanced democracies.

Reading:

*How People become Partisans?*


*Voter Learning and Electoral Change*


**Dealignment (or maybe not?)**


**Realignment (or maybe not?)**


**Realignment vs Dealignment**

Kitschelt, Herbert, Peter Lange, Gary Marks, and John D. Stephens. Convergence and Divergence in Advanced Capitalist Democracies. In Herbert Kitschelt, Peter Lange, Gary Marks, and John D. Stephens (Eds.) Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism, pp. 427-461.


13. What are the causes of populism and radicalism in advanced democracies?

**Why this topic?**

The rise of populism in advanced industrial societies is, in large part, a reaction to the inability of traditional parties to respond adequately in the eyes of the electorate to a series of phenomena such as economic and cultural globalization, immigration, the decline of ideologies and class politics, and the exposure of elite corruption. In Western Europe the phenomenon is also directly connected to the speed and direction of European integration.
One of the important issues to be analyzed is how far the different cases in Europe are comparable, and should be seen as manifestations of the same underlying phenomena; also how far European populisms can be compared to their American counterpart.

More generally, the question of populism opens up a discussion of the current ‘political malaise’ in advanced industrial societies, manifested in steadily falling turnouts across Western Europe, declining party memberships, and ever-greater numbers of citizens in surveys citing a lack of interest and distrust in politics and politicians. This perception has in turn affected electoral behaviour as increasing numbers of de-aligned and disillusioned voters either simply do not bother participating or become available and open to new, and sometimes more radical, alternatives.

This topic seeks to understand the underlying social and cultural sources of these phenomena, and to establish how far populist claims that politics has become more convoluted, distant and irrelevant to people’s lives can be defended. The aim is also to assess how far populist politics represents a serious challenge to established political institutions, and whether populism marks the emergence of a new dimension of politics which transcends the classic Left-Right divide.

Reading

*Albertazzi, Daniele and McDonnell, Duncan (eds), Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008


Radicalism

Political Analysis

Content and Structure

The Political Analysis component of the syllabus develops students’ abilities to assess and critically evaluate assertions, theories, arguments and opinions expressed in the empirical elements of an undergraduate degree course in Politics. Knowledge and understanding of empirical politics is largely contingent upon the confirmation or refutation of claims based on empirical evidence. Tools of research design and statistical analysis are essential in allowing researchers to test their claims quantitatively against empirical evidence. Basic concepts of statistics, especially randomness and averaging, provide the foundations for measuring concepts, designing studies, estimating quantities of interest and testing theories and conjectures.

The Political Analysis component introduces these scientific techniques through an 8-week course. Throughout, it uses as a running example Arend Lijphart’s claim that consensus democracies are a “kinder, gentler” form of democracy (2012, Ch. 16), taking students through the steps that lead from defining a research question to preliminary statistical analysis. The objective is to learn how statistical methods help us address questions of theoretical and/or policy interest. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- critically read and evaluate statements about causal relationships based on data-analysis;
- summarise quantitative information and assess the level of uncertainty accompanying these summary estimates;
- understand the main difficulties in analysing causal relationships: lack of internal validity, unreliability of measurement, spurious causality, endogeneity, and selection effects.

Statistics are understood through practice! The Political Analysis component therefore includes four-weeks of laboratory practice through which students are introduced to the use of a powerful statistical software (R, via the specific environment RStudio). Here the concepts and tools studied in the lectures are combined with data from Arend Lijphart’s (2012) book to assess his claims about the superiority of consensus democracies.

Educational Aims

This course aims to give students:

- an understanding of research methods, using topics and examples from comparative politics, especially relating to Arend Lijphart’s theory about the nature and effects of consensus and majoritarian democracies.
- familiarity with statistical software through the use of RStudio, a widely-used open source package, well-adapted to data management, statistical analyses and data visualisation.

Data

Laboratory sessions (taking place in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8) will use the Lijphart (2012) dataset to explore important research questions in political science relating to institutional design.

The four lab sessions are designed to systematically develop students’ comfort with statistical programming and data analysis, such that by the last session they should be comfortable replicating and extending results from Lijphart (2012) in their essay.
Readings

The main content for Political Analysis is found in these two texts:


The following textbooks provide useful background perspective:


Lectures

**Week 1: Introduction and Research Design**

Researchers in political science and other social science disciplines define research questions, offer hypotheses in response to those questions, and test those hypotheses with data analysis. We will consider where research questions come from, how questions can be categorized, and how different types of research questions correspond to different research designs. For questions about the effect of one thing on another (i.e., causal questions), often we would like to run a randomized experiment. We will discuss randomized experiments and how researchers proceed to answer causal questions in the (very common) situation where we cannot run a randomized experiment. We will primarily make reference to Lijphart's *Patterns of Democracy* as an example of an attempt to answer a causal question when an experiment is impossible.

Readings:

- AL Ch. 1-5 **
- KW Ch 1-4**
- BG, pp. 27-89
- PS Ch.1-4

**Week 2: Concepts and Measurement**

If we hope to use data analysis to assess theoretical claims, we need to define the concepts that make up our theories and develop a way of measuring something that corresponds to those concepts. In the second lecture we will discuss the difficulty of operationalising and measuring political science concepts. Our discussion will highlight important strategies for
critically assessing empirical research, including critiques of concept validity and measurement issues such as validity, reliability, and precision. We will illustrate issues of conceptualization and measurement starting from Arend Lijphart's operationalisation of consensus and majoritarian democracies. Concluding, we will scrutinize the concepts and measurements of “democracy” and “war”.

Readings:
- AL, Ch 7-8**
- KW, Ch. 5**
- PS, Ch.5

Week 3: Descriptive Statistics and Visualization
One important function of data analysis is to summarize complex information in an efficient way. In this lecture, we will discuss both statistical measures (such as mean and standard deviation) and common visualization techniques (such as scatterplots and histograms) that researchers use to communicate about data. Moreover, we will critically think about data visualization in news and policy reports.

Readings:
- AL, Ch 14**
- KW, Ch. 6**
- PS, Ch 8
- AF, Ch. 3
- Silver, Nate. 2012. The Signal and the Noise, Ch. 1 & 3.

Week 4: Case Selection
Empirical researchers hoping to test a theory must choose the cases they will use in their analysis. Will the data analysis encompass all countries, or a subset? If a survey will be used, how will the respondents be selected? Should a study of interstate war include cases in which no war took place? Should the analysis examine a small number of cases in depth, or a larger number of cases in a more superficial way?

Readings:
- AL, Ch 4-5**
- BG, Ch. 3**
- Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge, 1979. Introduction and Conclusion.
- PS, Ch.7

**Week 5: Bivariate Relationships**
How can we summarize the relationship between two variables? We will consider a variety of approaches (including scatterplots, the comparison of means, correlations, smoothed averages, and finally bivariate regression) as a way of characterizing bivariate relationships in Lijphart’s data and other examples.

**Readings:**
- AL, Ch 15-16**
- KW, Ch. 8-9**
- PS, Ch. 9
- AF, Ch. 3 & 7

**Week 6: Multivariate Relationships**
We now move beyond two variables to characterize the relationship among many variables. The most important application is multivariate regression, which is often used to describe the relationship between two variables “controlling for” other variables. We will apply multivariate regression to Lijphart’s data and other examples. The goal is to develop an intuitive understanding of what it means to say that a study “controls for” something, and to better understand how multivariate regression studies can be interpreted and critiqued.

**Readings:**
- AL, Ch 15-16**
- KW, Ch 10**
- PS, Ch.9
- AF, Ch. 10

**Week 7: Inference**
Data analysis typically includes measures of uncertainty: margins of error, standard errors, p-values. Using the idea of repeated sampling, we will help students develop an intuitive understanding of what these measures of uncertainty mean. Without this understanding, it is difficult to speak confidently and fluently about statistical results.

**Readings:**
- KW, Ch. 7**
- PS, Ch.10
- AF, Ch 2 & 4

**Week 8: Synthesis and review**
The previous lectures have introduced many of the most common tools of data analysis in social science. In this lecture we will apply what we have learned to several required readings from Part B of Politics Prelims. The goal is to illustrate how the concepts we have studied can be applied in any setting where one is asked to evaluate quantitative evidence – certainly as a student sitting for prelims exams at Oxford, but also as a civil servant or business analyst making a judgment about a program’s effectiveness or as a citizen assessing claims that appear in the media.

Readings:
To be announced, from among the required readings in Part B.

Lab Sessions

Lab sessions will be held in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8 in the Oxford Q-Step Centre Lab in the Social Science Library (Manor Road Building). You will be contacting about signing up for lab sessions. It is important that you attend these sessions, but also very important that you arrive prepared: the labs build directly on the material in the lectures and required readings, and we will assume you have attended lectures and understood the required reading.

The computers in the lab have the necessary software installed. It is a good idea to download RStudio for your own use here: https://www.rstudio.com/ide/download/
Having the software downloaded to your own laptop will be useful for working on the essay for this course. Alternatively, you can work on your essay by using the computers in the lab outside of class hours.

In the lab sessions you will receive worksheets and revision materials that you should find useful; these materials include interactive tutorials. If you want additional resources to help you learn, there are many available. Here are a few we recommend:

- Nice interactive tutorial: http://tryr.codeschool.com
- Quick R (http://www.statmethods.net)
- Screencasts about R and RStudio by Marco Steenbergen and Christian Müller (http://polmeth.ch)

In the lab sessions we will be using a version of Lijphart’s dataset that is available under Q-Step on the Politics WebLearn page: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site:socsci:politics:students:undergraduat:reading_list

Assessment

The Political Analysis section of first year work is assessed via a single tutorial essay of 2000 words to be submitted in Trinity Term. In this essay students provide an empirical answer to one of possible three questions using Lijphart’s data (which students will have used extensively in the laboratory sessions). The questions are:

1. Does consensus democracy reduce social inequality?
2. Does consensus democracy improve economic outcomes?

3. Does consensus democracy improve the quality of government?

A memo with detailed instructions for the essay will be available on the Q-Step WebLearn site.

The essay must be submitted online via WebLearn by noon on Tuesday of Week 2 of Trinity (1 May 2018).