

# **Elections and democracy**

Elective MA course, Winter 2018  
4 CEU credits, 8 ECTS

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*This is a preliminary outline of a new course that will run in Winter 2018 (last update: 15 August 2017). Its purpose is to give a sense for what topics the course intends to cover and at what length. Some details may change until the final version of the syllabus will be posted in November 2017.*

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## **Course description**

Elections are central to the political process and to legitimating the office-holders that they produce not only in democracies but, increasingly, in contemporary authoritarian regimes too. The course first investigates why elections acquired this important place in modern political systems and what impact they in fact have. Then we move on to survey all major aspects of how elections are regulated, what normative dilemmas the various rules raise, and what practical effect they have. While the course's main goal is to assist evidence-based, normatively informed analytical thinking about institutions, it also introduces a wide range of technical knowledge regarding democratic and authoritarian ways of organizing elections, and how the effectiveness of various tools can be undermined in practice by regime opponents. The course also surveys when and why elections have effects that run against their manifest function, i.e. undermine popular sovereignty in democracies, or lead to a defeat of authoritarian governments in non-democratic regimes.

## ***Learning outcomes***

- Familiarity with theories, concepts, empirical regularities and research strategies regarding rules for elections. By the end of the course, participants should be able to give informed advice to advocacy groups, government agencies, political parties etc. regarding electoral rules, and distinguish likely charlatanry from solid evidence-based knowledge on the topic
- Ability to propose, elaborate and persuasively argue for specific electoral rules tools in response to real world electoral system debates, with reference to the results of scholarly analyses and relevant normative concerns
- Reason analytically, apply abstract models to complex empirical situations and engage with different intellectual traditions, subfields, research designs and methodologies in the social sciences
- Improved ability to design high-quality academic or applied research in a rigorous and consistent manner
- Ability for effective oral presentation of scholarly thoughts, developing listening and discussion skills with initiative and autonomy in various professional contexts
- Improved understanding of the potential and limits of statistical analyses, case studies and experimental research especially with respect to the establishment of causality; improved appreciation of the potential of qualitative research and rigorous description

## ***Requirements***

The classes will always require active participation and careful preparation via reading the required materials and occasional online research. The meetings will typically be of the seminar-type, with multiple shorter presentations followed by Q&A and with discussion about the readings. All participants have to bring a short list of two questions or comments (with a one paragraph exposition for each) regarding each assigned reading to class, which will be addressed during the discussion dependent on their substantive merit. At this point we anticipate that about 35% of the final grade will be based on the quality of in-class contributions to the discussions (including the written questions/comments), 20% on individual presentations, and 45% on a max. 4,000-word long term paper. The topic of the term paper has to be closely related to the topics covered in the course and needs to be agreed upon with the instructors by 10 February. Your paper will address in a novel way a theoretically relevant research question about rules regulating elections. It can, for instance, be an original case study of an electoral system feature in terms of the actors' motivation for its adaptation and/or its (unintended) effects, or a statistical analysis using an appropriate data set (some recommendations are listed below). Regarding plagiarism and attendance, the departmental policies will apply.

## ***Recommended data sets***

Pilet, Jean-Benoit, and Alan Renwick. [no date]. "Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945." Available from <http://www.electoralsystemchanges.eu>

International IDEA. [no date]. "IDEA Data Bases (Direct Democracy, Electoral Justice, Electoral Management Design, Electoral System Design, Gender Quotas, Political Finance, Voter Turnout, Voting from Abroad data bases)." Available from <http://www.idea.int/data->

[tools](#)

- Administration and Cost of Elections Project - Electoral Knowledge Network. [no date]. "Administration and Cost of Elections Project - Electoral Knowledge Network Comparative Data." Available from <http://aceproject.org/epic-en>
- Hyde, Susan, and Nikolay Marinov. [no date]. "National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy." Available from <http://www.nelda.co>
- Norris, Pippa, and Max Grömping. 2017. "Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-5.0), doi:10.7910/DVN/KI5WB4, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:RIRLjEG5jWANoJgXAG7IMQ==." Available from <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/KI5WB4>
- Joel, W. Johnson, and S. Wallack Jessica. 2012. "Electoral Systems and the Personal Vote." Available from <http://hdl.handle.net/1902.1/17901>
- Kelley, Judith. 2014. "Data on International Election Monitoring: Three Global Datasets on Election Quality, Election Events and International Election Observation." Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) [distributor].
- Kollman, Ken, Allen Hicken, Daniele Caramani, David Backer, and David Lublin. 2016. "Constituency-Level Elections Archive." Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan. Available from <http://www.electiondataarchive.org/>
- Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Staffan I. Lindberg, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, M. Steven Fish, Adam Glynn, Allen Hicken, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Joshua Krusell, Anna Lührmann, Kyle L. Marquardt, Kelly McMann, Valeriya Mechkova, Moa Olin, Pamela Paxton, Daniel Pemstein, Josefine Pernes, Constanza Sanhueza Petrarca, Johannes von Römer, Laura Saxer, Brigitte Seim, Rachel Sigman, Jeffrey Staton Natalia Stepanova, and Steven Wilson. 2017. "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v7.1." Available from <https://www.v-dem.net/en/reference/version-7-1-july-2017/>
- Dahlberg, Stefan, et al. 2017. "The Quality of Government Standard Cross-Section Data, version January 2017." Available from <http://qog.pol.gu.se/data>
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2013. "Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project." Available from <https://sites.duke.edu/democracylinkage/data/>
- Popescu, Marina, et al. 2010, 2013. "Expert Survey on European Media Systems." Data set. Available from <http://www.mediasystemsineurope.org>
- Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. [n.d.]. "Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1-4 and Macro Data." Available from [cses.org](http://cses.org)
- Strøm, Kaare W., Scott Gates, Benjamin A. T. Graham, and Håvard Strand. 2017. "Inclusion, Dispersion, and Constraint: Powersharing in the World's States, 1975–2010." *British Journal of Political Science* 47 (1): 165-185.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2015. "Dimension Data Matrix (for Cultures and Organizations 3rd edition, 2010)." Data set. Available from <http://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/dimension-data-matrix/>
- Geddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. 2014. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (2): 313-331.
- Cingranelli, David L., David L. Richards, and K. Chad Clay. 2014. "The CIRI Human Rights Dataset." Available from <http://www.humanrightsdata.com>

### ***Recommended general readings***

- Riker, William H. 1982. *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Rose, Richard, ed. 2000. *International Encyclopedia of Elections*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Reynolds, Andrew, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis, eds. 2005. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Available from <http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-system-design-new-international-idea-handbook>
- Norris, Pippa. 2014. *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2015. *Why Elections Fail?* New York: Cambridge University Press
- Norris, Pippa. 2017. *Strengthening Electoral Integrity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hicken, Allen. 2014. *Building Party Systems in Developing Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suzuki, Jeff. 2015. *Constitutional Calculus: The Math of Justice and the Myth of Common Sense*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hansen, Richard L. 2013. *The Voting Wars: From Florida 2000 to the Next Election Meltdown*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bowler, Shaun, and Todd Donovan. 2013. *The Limits of Electoral Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ahmed, Amel. 2012. *Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice: Engineering Electoral Dominance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fournier, Patrick, Henk van der Kolk, R. Kenneth Carty, André Blais, and Jonathan Rose. 2011. *When Citizens Decide: Lessons from Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Renwick, Alan. 2010. *The Politics of Electoral Reform: Changing the Rules of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dummett, Michael. 1984. *Voting Procedures*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Calvo, Ernesto, and Timothy Hellwig. 2011. "Centripetal and Centrifugal Incentives under Different Electoral Systems." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (1): 27-41.

### **Topics by week**

1. The historical path to parliamentary rule and elected executives. The rule of imperfect evolution for democratic institutions. The shifting meaning of democracy and voting in centuries of political thought. Direct vs. representative democracy. Lottery vs. elections. Political parties and non-partisan institutions
2. What elections are used for and what are their key consequences in democracies and authoritarian systems. Empirical evidence for election-induced responsiveness, accountability, redistribution, and legitimacy in democratic and authoritarian systems
3. How elections induce the consent of the losers and when they fail to. Boycott of elections. Elections and violence. Do elections in authoritarian states advance or hinder democratization? How often do authoritarian leaders lose office because of elections?
4. Voting procedures from unanimity to plurality. Social choice theory and empirical findings about the likely consequences of voting methods

5. The origin, popularity, modern justifications and technical alternatives of majoritarian electoral systems. Why do electoral systems ignore negative preferences? Normative and technical problems in districting and avoiding gerrymandered plans
6. Proportional and mixed electoral systems. The relative significance of choices regarding district size, formula, personal preferences votes, thresholds, ballot format, and bonus seats
7. Candidate selection with primary elections and otherwise. Special arrangements for minority representation and gender quotas
8. Campaigns and engaged electorates. The impact of media pluralism, advertisements, leader debates, manifesto costing, fact-checking organizations, opinion polls, vote advice applications, get-out-the-vote drives and their absence
9. Voting rights of foreigners, expats, prisoners, minors, and people living with disabilities. Compulsory voting and other turnout-enhancing measures
10. Vote buying and its prevention. Ballot types from secret to open, partisan to non-partisan, and traditional to voter-friendly
11. Election fraud and fraud detection. Independent election commissions and appeal procedures. The know-how and impact of election observation missions, norm diffusion, democratic conditionality and international sanctions
12. The funding and costs of elections: can we tell apart worthy spending and waste? The clash of egalitarian, free speech, and citizen engagement considerations. The impact of small vs. large donations

Readings by topic: TBA (approximately 50 pages a week plus recommended readings)