

# **What is Political Science?**

## **The Study of Political Theories, Institutions and Actors**

Course syllabus, Fall 2014

Department of Political Science  
Central European University

Lecturer: Robert Sata

Classes: ???

Office hours: Tue/Thur: 10:30-12:30 via email appointment

The purpose of the remedial course for MA students is to serve as an introduction to key concepts, theories, institutions and actors, as well as research methods of political science. It is a remedial course that aims at providing foundations to regular classes for students coming from fields different than political science.

### **Goals and learning outcomes**

The course focuses on the key aspects of studying political science. It aims at reviewing some important theoretical controversies present in the academic literature, introducing key aspects of the present-day discipline. Topics include political theory and history, ideologies, the state and civil society, different forms of governance, political movements, and domestic and international politics as well as main approaches to the study of political science. While the content of this course is about politics, more importantly it is a means toward helping the following, more important, ends:

- Ability to understand both theoretical and empirical texts of political science using basic tenets of the discipline.
- Learning how to think about and reflect upon important political ideas and events with a critical eye;
- Developing the skills that allow you to effectively express your views and opinions in writing on a series of political subjects, and;
- Providing you with the opportunity to speak about important political issues in an informed manner, and engage others in public discussion.

The topics will be explored both by lectures and seminars discussing the mandatory readings of the week. We will combine readings, lectures, and class discussions. Students' active participation in the course is a requirement. The lectures will touch on the readings, but they will not always use the required reading materials. In order to facilitate a dynamic classroom, students should have finished the reading prior to class.

### **Requirements**

- 1) You are expected to be actively present at all lectures and seminars. More than two unexcused absences will have consequences on the final grade. During the seminars you are expected to reflect critically on the mandatory readings and the topics covered. The central consideration in evaluating your contributions will be their quality, and not their length or frequency. Questions stimulating interaction during the lectures will be positively evaluated.

- 2) Each student will have to do one 15 minutes presentation on the assigned mandatory readings. Each presentation needs to be accompanied by a 1-page handout. Structure, content, and function of this handout will be discussed in the beginning of the course.
- 3) In the last weeks of the course, you will have to choose a topic on which you will write a final paper and make a workshop presentation during weeks 9-11. We will discuss the papers one by one. All participants in a workshop will have to send their comments and questions about all research papers – except their own – before the day when we discuss the given proposal. More details will be discussed in class.
- 4) Each of you will have to submit a short research paper at the end of the semester, in which you address a typical study on a topic of your choice using the insights on methods and theories commonly used in political science.

### **Evaluation:**

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|------------------------|-----|
| (1) In-class activity: | 20% |
| (2) Presentation:      | 20% |
| (3) Workshop comments: | 20% |
| (4) Research paper:    | 40% |

### **About the readings**

The readings are listed below after the title of the respective week's lecture and seminar. The course reader including all mandatory readings is available from the secretariat of the Political Science department via the common network drive.

You will find these books useful throughout the course.

- Almond, Gabriel A., Russell J. Dalton, and G. Bingham Powell eds. (2001). *European Politics Today*. New York: Longman.
- Dahl, Robert (1989). *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gallagher, Michael and Paul Mitchell, eds. (2005). *The Politics of Electoral Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, Michael, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair (2011). *Representative Government in Modern Europe*. McGraw Hill.
- Goodin, R. E. and Klingemann, H. D. eds. (1996). *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Knight, Jack (1992). *Institutions and Social Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend (1994). *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mahler, Gregory S. (2000). *Comparative Politics: An Institutional and Cross-National Approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Ragin, Charles C. (1987). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman, eds. (2006). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shapiro, Ian (2003). *The State of Democratic Theory*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

- Shively, W. Phillips (2001). *Power and Choice: An Introduction to Political Science*. 7th ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Taagepera, Rein and Matthew Soberg Shugart, (1989). *Seats and Votes. The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Taras, Raymond. ed. (1997). *Post-Communist Presidents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Evera, Stephen (1997). *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wittman, D. A. and Weingast, B. R. eds. (2009). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Readings and topics by week

### Week 1: Course introduction

No readings.

What is a good research proposal? How to choose a research question? Issues in case selection, measurements.

### Week 2: Political theory vs. empirical research. How to read theory. Laws, hypotheses and empirical tests in comparative research

Readings:

John Stuart Mill (1859). *On Liberty*. London: Longman, Roberts & Green, Ch 1.

Van Evera, Stephen (1997). *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 7-14, 17-39.

### Week 3: Theoretical and conceptual preliminaries

Readings:

Schmitter, Philippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl (1991). "What Democracy Is... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (Summer): 75-88.

### Week 4: Comparative historical studies

Readings:

Page, Edward C. (1995). Patterns and Diversity in European State Development. in: Jack Hayward and Edward C. Page (eds) *Governing the New Europe*. Oxford: Polity.

### Week 5: Theoretical organization of the state

Readings:

Lijphart, Arend (1999). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven, CT ; London: Yale University Press, pp. 185-215.

*Only recommended:* Gallagher, Michael, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair (2011). *Representative Government in Modern Europe*. McGraw Hill. Ch 3. Parliaments. pp. 43-83.

### Week 6: Electoral systems and their likely effects

Readings:

Duverger, Maurice (1984). Which is the best electoral system? In Lijphart, Arend and Bernard Grofman. *Choosing an Electoral System. Issues and Alternatives*. New York et al.: Praeger, pp. 31-39.

Lijphart, Arend (1984). Trying to have the best of both worlds: semi-proportional and mixed systems. In Lijphart, Arend and Bernard Grofman. *Choosing an Electoral System. Issues and Alternatives*. New York et al.: Praeger, pp. 207-215.

Week 7: Doing comparative political research

Readings:

Motyl, Alexander J. (1999). "Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 31: 127-46.

Week 8: New institutionalism vs. rational choice

Readings:

Dowding, Keith (1994)./ The compatibility of behaviouralism, rational choice and 'new institutionalism'. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 6, issue 1, pp. 105-117.

Hall, P. A. and Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies*, XLIV: 936-957. Especially: pp. 942-946

Weeks 9-12: Student workshops on research proposals and final papers

Present your own work and comment on your peers. Details will be discussed in class but you are to submit a 2,000-3,000 word draft of your paper. Each student will present and serve as discussant. Discussants will have to prepare a 300-500 word commentary in advance.