Legislative Politics

Instructor: Tamás Meszerics

Room FT

AIMS OF THE COURSE
The course will acquaint the students with the functions and working of legislative bodies and would offer both theoretical and practical insights into legislative politics. It will deal with the internal structure of legislatures, committees and committee power, house rules and voting procedures, deliberative functions and legislator accountability. It will draw examples from the U.S. Congress, the House of Commons, the European Parliament, the German Bundestag and the Hungarian Parliament. Students will contribute with experience from their home legislative bodies.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
• Higher order thinking skills: see patterns, recognize hidden meanings, generalize from facts, ability to understand and contrast different theoretical approaches etc.
• Informed, reasoned judgment: make well-reasoned judgment, recognize subjectivity, etc.
• Ability to comprehend and critique advanced political science texts.
• Analytical writing: ability to generate logical, plausible and persuasive arguments, connect, compare and contrast, ability to identify logical relations and mistakes of argument, ability to make appropriate analytical distinctions etc.;
• Ability to analyze contemporary events in broader institutional, political and social contexts and to make policy-relevant conclusions

REQUIREMENTS:
Since the course consists of one lecture and one seminar on the same topic every week, it is essential that the participants read the compulsory literature as preparation for the seminars. To help this preparation students are required to submit at least two short questions on the compulsory reading(s) on the day before the seminar. The questions should be uploaded to the e-learning site of the course 12 hours before the seminar the latest.

Each student is expected to write two in-class examination papers. Students can choose to submit a short research paper covering one of the topics raised in the course on the basis of empirics from the legislature’s of their home countries. The research paper would count as a substitute for one (and only one) of the in-class examination papers if and only if it is uploaded to the e-learning site of the course before the examination questions
are made public on the site.

The instructor will take every effort to screen out cases of plagiarism. These will be dealt with according to university regulations. For definitions please consult the academic honesty section of the relevant university policies.

The final grade will be a composite of the following values:

**In-class examination papers** - 70 % (35% each)
The research paper counts as equal to one of the in-class examinations (i.e. 35 %)

**Questions and comments** - 20 %

**In-class activity** - 10 %

Within the last component 7% is assigned automatically for regular presence and participation in discussions, the remaining 3% reflects the general quality of individual contributions.

**SYLLABUS**

1. **The Setting I: Legislative-Executive Relations**
   Division of power, checks and balances and the variations in institutional arrangements; the presidentialism vs parliamentary system debate in comparative politics

   **Compulsory readings**

   **Recommended readings**
   TBA

2. **The Setting II: Comparing Legislatures**
   How to analyze the different institutional settings of different legislatures. Incentives, constraints, spatial models

   **Compulsory readings**

   **Recommended readings**

3. Internal Structure: Committee Power

How do the internal institutional features affect legislative processes and outcomes. The sources of “committee power”

Compulsory Readings


Recommended readings


4. The Importance of House Rules

Rules and voting procedures as constraining and enabling institutions. Agenda-control and institutional change

Compulsory Readings


Recommended Readings


5. The British Parliament

Structure and procedures

Compulsory readings


Recommended readings

TBA

6. U.S. Congress I
Legislators, parties, resources

**Compulsory Readings**


**Recommended readings**


**7. U.S. Congress II**

Structure and procedures

**Compulsory readings**


**Recommended readings**


**8. The European Parliament**

Structure and procedures

**Compulsory readings**


Differences and similarities with national legislatures

**Compulsory readings**


**10. Who Are the Parliamentarians?**

The recruitment and sociological composition of parliamentarians. The institutionalist and the historical viewpoint.

**Compulsory readings**


**Recommended readings**


11. Deliberation: The Quality of Discourse

Does it matter what is said in a parliamentary debate? Assessing the quality of deliberation

Compulsory readings


Recommended readings


12. Interest groups, Lobbying and Accountability

Is there any meaningful way to hold representatives accountable to the constituents? To whom do legislators respond?

Compulsory Readings


Recommended Readings