

The Politics of Electoral Systems: Political Conflict and Representation

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Course Content

Electoral systems have increasingly received attention during the last years. Most recently, the election of Donald Trump, despite losing the popular vote, has created considerable debate about the representativeness of the US electoral system. In Austria, the social democratic and the conservative parties have repeatedly proposed to introduce majoritarian rule. In contrast, the electoral systems of Swiss cantons Zug, Schwyz and Nidwalden have recently been declared unconstitutional by the Swiss federal court, which has led to the adoption of biproportional apportionment. However, similar problems also occur outside the Europe and the US. For instance, Lebanon's last election dates back to 2009. Even though MPs are elected on a four-year basis, new elections have been delayed because Lebanese parties failed to agreement on a new electoral law.

The examples show that the questions of electoral systems choice and political representation are of great importance. However, why do have countries different electoral systems? Why do debates about electoral systems center around the representation of minority groups in some countries whereas other countries prefer majority representation? What political and social consequences are linked to different electoral systems?

The course is designed to introduce students to the comparative electoral systems literature. By reviewing the current literature, we address topics such as the origins of electoral systems, how electoral systems incentivize strategic voting and affect party system fragmentation and cohesion, the voting behavior of members of parliament, redistribution, corruption, and the political representation of women and minorities. In every session, multiple papers with different, sometimes opposing views are discussed. Participants learn to critically evaluate different

studies based on the stringency of the argumentation and methodological rigor. In addition, students will gain a better understanding of different research designs to study political phenomena by discussing micro and macro approaches, concept formation, and measurement issues. After participation in the course, students are able to engage critically and informed in debates on electoral systems.

Examination

Examination Time and Form

- One presentation (25%)
- Three term papers (each 25%)

Remarks

Term papers:

- Participants are required to write three 5-Page term papers individually.
- The seminar consists of three parts, focusing on different aspects of electoral systems. Participants have to choose one topic of every part.
- For every paper, the literature is summarized (max. 50% of the paper) and followed by a critical discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing research. The papers should be based on the literature outlined in the syllabus. Optionally, additional literature can be consulted.

19.02. Introduction

For each session, up to three papers are listed. All participants are required to read the literature marked with a * prior to the lecture. For presentations, all papers have to be read in order to discuss opposing views about a subject as well as the strength and weaknesses of the current literature.

*Norris, P. (2004). *Electoral engineering: Voting rules and political behavior*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39–65

Bormann, N.-C., & Golder, M. (2013). Democratic Electoral Systems around the world, 1946–2011. *Electoral Studies*, 32(2), 360–369

The Origins of Electoral Systems

26.02 The Socialist Threat, Electoral Geography, and Co-Specific Assets

*Boix, C. (1999). Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 93(3), 609–624

Cusack, T., Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2007). Economic Interests and the Origins of Electoral Systems. *American Political Science Review*, 101(3), 373–391

Calvo, E. (2009). The Competitive Road to Proportional Representation: Partisan Biases and Electoral Regime Change under Increasing Party Competition. *World Politics*, 61(2), 254–295

05.03 Microfoundations

*Leemann, L., & Mares, I. (2014). The Adoption of Proportional Representation. *Journal of Politics*, 76(2), 461–478

Emmenegger, P., & Walter, A. (2017). A Disproportional Threat. Redistricting as an Alternative to Proportional Representation. under review

Emmenegger, P., & Petersen, K. (2017). Taking history seriously in comparative research: The case of electoral system choice, 1890–1939. *Comparative European Politics*, 1–22

Electoral Systems, Parties, and MPs

12.03 Strategic Voting

*Cox, G. W. (1997). Making votes count: Strategic coordination in the world's electoral systems. *Political economy of institutions and decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 69–122

19.03 The Number of Parties

*Norris, P. (2004). *Electoral engineering: Voting rules and political behavior*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 81–95

Milazzo, C., Moser, R. G., & Scheiner, E. (2017). Social Diversity Affects the Number of Parties Even Under First-Past-the-Post Rules. *Comparative Political Studies*, 1–37

Clark, W. R. (2006). Rehabilitating Duverger's Theory: Testing the Mechanical and Strategic Modifying Effects of Electoral Laws. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(6), 679–708

26.03 The Left-Right Divide

*Döring, H., & Manow, P. (2017). Is proportional representation more favourable to the left? Electoral rules and their impact on elections, parliaments and the formation of cabinets. *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 149–164

Golder, M. (2003). Explaining Variation In The Success Of Extreme Right Parties In Western Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(4), 432–466

Arzheimer, K., & Carter, E. (2006). Political opportunity structures and right-wing extremist party success. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(3), 419–443

16.04 Voting Behavior of MPs

*Hix, S. (2004). Electoral institutions and legislative behavior: Explaining voting defection in the European Parliament. *World politics*, 56(2), 194–223

Sieberer, U. (2010). Behavioral consequences of mixed electoral systems: Deviating voting behavior of district and list MPs in the German Bundestag. *Electoral Studies*, 29(3), 484–496

Olivella, S., & Tavits, M. (2014). Legislative Effects of Electoral Mandates. *British Journal of Political Science*, 44(2), 301–321

Electoral Systems, Voters, and Societal Outcomes

23.04 Participation in Elections

*Endersby, J. W., & Kriekhaus, J. T. (2008). Turnout around the globe: The influence of electoral institutions on national voter participation, 1972–2000. *Electoral Studies*, 27(4), 601–610

Sanz, C. (2017). The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1–22

Cox, G. W., Fiva, J. H., & Smith, D. M. (2016). The Contraction Effect: How Proportional Representation Affects Mobilization and Turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(4), 1249–1263

30.04 Congruence between Voters and Legislators

*Blais, A., & Bodet, M. A. (2006). Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policy Makers? *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(10), 1243–1262

Golder, M., & Stramski, J. (2010). Ideological congruence and electoral institutions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(1), 90–106

Bingham Powell, G. (2009). The Ideological Congruence Controversy: The Impact of Alternative Measures, Data, and Time Periods on the Effects of Election Rules. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(12), 1475–1497

07.05 Government Spending

*Bawn, K., & Rosenbluth, F. (2006). Short versus long coalitions: Electoral accountability and the size of the public sector. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(2), 251–265

Blais, A., Jiyoung Kim, & Foucault, M. (2010). Public spending, public deficits and government coalitions. *Political Studies*, 58(5), 829–846

Martin, L. W., & Vanberg, G. (2013). Multiparty government, fiscal institutions,

and public spending. *The Journal of Politics*, 75(4), 953–967

14.05 Corruption

*Persson, T., Tabellini, G., & Trebbi, F. (2003). Electoral rules and corruption. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 1(4), 958–989

Chang, E. C. C., & Golden, M. A. (2007). Electoral Systems, District Magnitude and Corruption. *British Journal of Political Science*, 37(1), 115–137

Kunicová, J., & Rose-Ackerman, S. (2005). Electoral Rules and Constitutional Structures as Constraints on Corruption. *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(4), 573–606