



Politicians at work: Parliaments and elections

Instructor Info —



Or Tuttnauer



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Course Info —



Weekly, Mondays



13.45-15.15



SOWI-ZOOM-10

Course description

This course will review the various activities in which legislators partake, both in parliament and outside of it, and the electoral incentives that shape their behaviour. Students will become familiar with institutional and party-specific factors influencing legislators, such as candidate selection methods, parliamentary organization, the electoral system, *et cetera*. We will also discuss several consequences of legislators' behaviour, such as public spending, public attitudes, and electoral outcomes.

Learning outcomes

After completing this course, students will be:

- Familiar with the most important parliamentary activities carried out by legislators
- Knowledgeable about the primary institutions incentivizing parliamentary activity (e.g. party leaderships, the electoral system, *et cetera*)
- Able to hypothesize how different institutions influence the actions of legislators, and how these actions may affect society at large
- Able to critically evaluate theoretical arguments and empirical analyses in the field

Teaching in an online environment

We'll use Zoom to have synchronous online classes on a weekly basis on Mondays 13.45-15.15 in SOWI-ZOOM-10 ([click here](#)). To enter, please find the password in the course's ILIAS page, or connect via Portal2.

In addition, we'll be using the collaborative reading platform Perusall developed by Gary King to asynchronously discuss the readings before class. Go to the following [link](#) and create an account using your email address. Select "I am a student" and enter the course access code: TUTTNAUER-VWVHG.

For each reading, you'll find my comments and annotations. You'll be able to anonymously post your own comments or questions. You can also anonymously respond to other people's comments and up vote helpful comments or suggestions. Of course, you are more than welcome to access the reading materials independently, annotate them offline etc. if that is what you prefer (but see the *Active Seminar Participation* subsection below).

Requirements - overview

In order to receive credit for this course, students will need to fulfill the following requirements: Active seminar participation (*Mitarbeit*), two weekly reading assignments, and the completion of a term paper. Please note only those students who have successfully completed both the participation and weekly reading assignment requirements are eligible to receive credit for their term paper. Seminar participation and weekly reading assignment are thus prerequisites (*Studienleistung*) for registering and receiving credit for the term paper (*Prüfungsleistung*). Only the final paper is graded.

FAQs

? What prior knowledge do I need?

! Basic concepts in comparative politics such as regime types, party systems, electoral systems, etc. If you want to attend the course but worried that you may not have the required knowledge, please contact me *ahead of time* and I will send you further reading materials.

? Why is the seminal work X by Y is not in the syllabus?

! I tend to prioritize articles over books; newer over older research; studies on parliamentary systems over studies on presidential systems; comparative designs over case-studies; works that focus on the legislators and their behaviour over works on institutions; works that I find interesting. Exceptions apply.

? Does that mean I cannot write a term paper which is a case study / on presidential systems?

! No, it does not mean that! Case studies and works extending the theories/findings reviewed in the course to other systems are VERY welcome.

? Do I have to write a quantitative paper?

! Well, it is Mannheim... but seriously - methods are secondary. The main thing is to match the right method to your RQ. As long as you have a (somewhat) interesting RQ, and apply an adequate method to test it, you're good to go!

Course achievement (Studienleistung)

Active seminar participation. There is no compulsory attendance in the zoom meetings. However, we will use the Perusall system to jointly read and discuss the weekly reading materials. Students are therefore expected to actively participate in the zoom meetings or, at least, comment and discuss other students' comments in Perusall. When participating in Zoom meetings, the students are requested (not mandated) to keep their cameras on as much as possible, and at minimum when they speak, to facilitate the discursive nature of the seminar.

Weekly reading assignments. Each student must write two assignments during the semester. Each assignment will be maximum 800 words long and will focus on a chapter/article from that week's reading material. There are two types of assignment, and each student will submit one assignment of each type:

- An exposition of the primary theoretical argument of the paper, followed by a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. What parts of the argument do you find convincing? What parts are unconvincing? Is the argument based on hidden assumptions which you may or may not accept? Students are encouraged – but do not need to – contrast the paper's argument with those of other texts in the reading list or outside of it.
- An exposition of the empirical strategy of the paper, followed by a critical assessment of it. Is the case selection justified? Does the research design fit the research question? Is the interpretation of the results correct? What would you do differently?

Allotment of the assignment slots among the students will be done digitally, with consultation with the instructor. Changes in that allotment can be made, as long as no student submits both assignments in the same week, and as long as submissions are not condensed into too few weeks. Submission deadline for each assignment is the start of the respective weekly zoom meeting.

Written assignment (Prüfungsleistung)

A paper of maximum 6,000 words (including footnotes and endnotes, excluding bibliography) on an agreed research question. The paper must be written in English, spellchecked and with proper citations. The paper should be sent as a single PDF file by 23:59 on July 18th, 2021. A doctor's note is required in case of illness or injury. Students bear responsibility for timely submission. Early submission is possible and encouraged. There is no possibility to revise the term paper after submission. There is no resit.

During the semester, students will receive a research proposal form, which they can use to plan and construct their term paper. Submission of the form is not mandatory but is highly encouraged. In any case, the term paper's research question must be approved by the instructor by the end of the semester at the latest.

Academic integrity

All students in this course are expected to strictly adhere to the University Code of Academic Integrity (Richtlinie zur guten wissenschaftlichen Praxis). Students are expected to be independently familiar with the Code and must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other severe academic misconduct (see https://www.uni-mannheim.de/media/Universitaet/Dokumente/Richtlinie_gute_wissenschaftliche_Praxis_en.pdf for additional information).

Schedule and assigned readings

Session 1
(1/3)

Organizational meeting

- > *Who am I? who are you?*
- > *What is this course about? perhaps, also, what is it not about?*
- > *What are all the logistical and technical details we need to know before we begin?*

Session 2
(8/3)

Introduction

- * Martin et al. [2014]
- * Carey [2007]

- > *Why do legislatures matter? Why study them, and how?*
(We'll also jump straight into a seminal work on the "competing principals" model)

Main actors and explaining factors

Session 3
(15/3)

Electoral Systems

- * Carey and Shugart [1995]
- * Bol et al. [2020]

- > *How do electoral systems influence whether candidates cultivate their own "personal vote" vs. the party's?*
- > *How does such "personal vote" cultivation manifest in actual parliamentary behaviour?*

Session 4
(22/3)

Parties and candidate selection

- * Hazan and Rahat [2006]
- * Itzkovitch-Malka and Hazan [2017]
- Shomer [2017]
- Sieberer [2015]

- > *How do different selection methods affect the "principal" to which elected politicians are accountable?*
- > *How does this effect manifest in the cohesion of a parliamentary party group?*
- > *Is there an interaction effect between the electoral system and candidate selection methods?*

29/3 - Easter Break

Session 5
(12/4)

Roles and careers

- * Strøm [2012]
- * Bailer and Ohmura [2018]
- Searing [1995]

- > *What are parliamentary roles? how do they relate to behaviour?*
- > *How do the activities of legislators change over the course of their careers?*

Session 6
(19/4)

Government vs. opposition

- * Hix and Noury [2016]
- * Louwerse and Otjes [2019]
- Tuttnauer [2018]
- Louwerse et al. [2017]

- > *How does the government-opposition divide define parliamentary activity?*
- > *What makes opposition parties/legislators behave as they do?*

Parliamentary activities

Session 7 (26/4)	Committees	* Mickler [2018] * Cirone and Van Coppenolle [2018] Martin [2011] Raymond and Holt [2019]
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- > *What do politicians get from working in committees?*
- > *How are they allocated to the various committees, and why?*

Session 8 (3/5)	Speeches	* Proksch and Slapin [2012] * Bäck and Debus [2019] Fernandes et al. [2020]
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- > *Why, and to whom, do legislators speak when they give parliamentary speeches?*
- > *Who determines who speaks in parliament and how much?*

Session 9 (10/5)	Legislation	* Williams and Indridason [2018] * Bräuninger and Debus [2009] Bräuninger et al. [2012] Louwerse and Otjes [2015]
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- > *Why do legislators bother tabling hopeless private-member bills?*
- > *Can the opposition (and individual legislators) affect the legislative agenda at all?*

17/5 - Term paper consultation

Session 11 (31/5)	Parliamentary questions	* Bailer [2011] * Zittel et al. [2019] Fernandes et al. [2018]
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- > *How are parliamentary questions used by politicians to cultivate a personal vote?*

Consequences of Parliamentary activity

Session 12 (7/6)	Electoral outcomes and public attitudes	* Sheafer and Tzionit [2006] * Salmond [2014] Däubler et al. [2016] GRIMMER et al. [2012]
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- > *Does being active help MPs get re-elected or promoted?*
- > *How do politicians make the public be aware of what happens in parliament?*

Session 13 (14/6)	Public policy and corruption Also: conclusion	* Hicken and Simmons [2008] * Golden [2003] Chang and Golden [2007]
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- > *How do incentives to cultivate a personal vote affect the efficiency of public spending?*
 - > *How are corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency connected to politicians' incentives?*
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