Understanding Changing State Structures in Western Europe

Module convener

Dr Paolo Dardanelli

Syllabus

Autumn 2016
Description

Over the last thirty years a regional level of government has become an increasingly important feature of European politics. All large states, and several smaller ones, now have some form of regional government and in a number of cases the latter is poised to increase its prerogatives vis-à-vis central governments. A crucial aspect of this trend is the creation of a ‘third level’ of government within the European Union, with the regional level asserting itself alongside the states and the Union. This module explores the nature of federalism and regionalism in Europe through a theoretical discussion of the concept of regional government, an explanation of its historical emergence in Europe, an in-depth description and analysis of the regional systems of government in contemporary Europe and a critical assessment of the issues raised by regional government in the context of European democracy. Each of these aspects are first described in detail, then analysed from a positive perspective and finally assessed from a normative perspective, drawing on the concepts, theories and approaches developed in contemporary political science scholarship. The module consists of four theoretical sessions and a series of case studies covering Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom.

Lecturer

Dr Paolo Dardanelli, visiting from the University of Kent, UK

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Pre-requisites

There are no formal pre-requisites but the module convener will expect students to have at least a basic knowledge of comparative European politics, acquired through an introductory module such as Introduction to Comparative Politics, Introduction to Comparative European Politics and such like.

Schedule

The module runs over three days in October 2016, as follows:

Friday 21st October

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1A</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>9:30-10:30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1B</td>
<td>Studying state structures</td>
<td>10:45-11:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2A</td>
<td>Belgium – lecture</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
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<td>Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Belgium – seminar</td>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>France – lecture</td>
<td>15:15-16:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>France – seminar</td>
<td>16:30-17:30</td>
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**Saturday 22nd October**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Country/Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Italy – lecture</td>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B</td>
<td>Italy – seminar</td>
<td>10:45-11:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>5A</td>
<td>Spain – lecture</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5B</td>
<td>Spain – seminar</td>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6A</td>
<td>Switzerland – lecture</td>
<td>15:15-16:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>6B</td>
<td>Switzerland – seminar</td>
<td>16:30-17:30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Friday 28th October**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Country/Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7A</td>
<td>UK – lecture</td>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7B</td>
<td>UK – seminar</td>
<td>10:45-11:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Comparative conclusions</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
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</tbody>
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The lectures will give a broad overview of the topic, particularly highlighting appropriate concepts, theories and analytical frameworks and identifying the key issues. It is intended to give you a route map, guiding you through the literature and pointing you in the right direction for further reading and research. The seminars will offer an opportunity for interaction with the lecturer and fellow students, to give you the opportunity to discuss the issues raised in lectures or arising from your own reading and clarify anything you have found difficult or confusing. As the seminars immediately follow the lectures, it is important that you do the required reading before, as well as after, each session so as to be fully prepared to take an active and competent part in the discussions.

**Assessment**

The module is assessed as follows:

Seminar participation: Pass/Fail
Session 1B  **Introduction: studying state structures**

**Outline**

Thinking about state structures – Static and dynamic approaches – The unitary/federal distinction – Mapping state structures in contemporary Western Europe – Explaining patterns and trends – Nationalism and regionalism – The role of political parties – The EU dimension – Ongoing debates on state structures

**Seminar questions**

- How can the unitary/federal distinction be conceptualised?
- How has regional authority evolved in Western Europe over the last 50 years?
- To what extent does European integration affect state restructuring?

**Essential reading**


**Recommended further reading**

Hueglin, Thomas and Alan Fenna. 2015. *Comparative Federalism – A Systematic Inquiry*. 2nd ed. Toronto, On, Canada: University of Toronto Press


Session 2  From Unitary to Federal and Beyond: Belgium

Outline

The original nature of the Belgian state – National and regional identities – Flemish nationalism – Pressures towards reform – The transformation of the state – The Belgian federal system – Towards confederalism or break up? – Prospects

Seminar questions

- What explains the rise of Flemish nationalism in the 19th and 20th century?
- What role have parties played in the process of federalisation?
- To what extent is the Belgian federal system a stable constitutional arrangement?

Essential reading


Swenden, Wilfried and Maarten Theo Jans. 2006. ‘Will it Stay or Will it Go’? Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium. West European Politics 29/5: 877-94


Recommended further reading


Session 3  Transforming the Jacobin State: France

Outline


Seminar questions

- How has the concept of regional autonomy been seen in the French political tradition?
- To what extent were the 1982 reforms successful in creating democratic regional governments?
- What explains the weakness of regional nationalism in France?

Essential reading


Recommended further reading


Session 4  Federalism at last? Italy

Outline
The origins of the Italian regions – Italy unified as a unitary state – The inclusion of regions in the 1948 constitution – ‘Special’ and ‘ordinary’ regions – The development of regional government since the 1970s – The rise of the Northern League and the collapse of the ‘First Republic’ – Federalist reforms of the left and right – Implementing federalism

Seminar questions
- Why did Italy unify as a unitary system in the 19th century?
- Why did Italy establish ‘ordinary’ regional governments in the 1970s?
- What explains the drive towards federalism since the 1990s?

Essential Reading


Recommended further reading


Woodcock, George. 1986. The Idea of Regional Autonomy in Italy from Mazzini to Ambrosini. Il Politico 51/4: 695-710


Baldini, Gianfranco and Brunetta Baldi. 2014. Decentralization in Italy and the Troubles of Federalization. Regional and Federal Studies 24/1: 87-108

Session 5  Federalism or Break Up? Spain

Outline

Historical background to the Spanish regions – Regional government in the First and Second republics – Re-establishment of the regions in the 1978 constitution – Asymmetrical devolution of power to the regions – The current nature of regional government – The special cases of the Basque Country and Catalonia – The reform of the regional statutes – Catalonia’s secessionist challenge

Seminar questions

▪ What explains the strength of regional nationalism in Spain?
▪ To what extent is the ‘state of autonomies’ a successful constitutional set up?
▪ Why has mainstream Catalan nationalism turned secessionist?

Essential reading


Recommended further reading


Conversi, Daniele. 1997. The Basques, the Catalans and Spain. London: Hurst


Session 6  The ‘Sovereign’ Cantons under Pressure: Switzerland

Outline

The origins of the cantons – The confederation of cantons in pre-modern Switzerland – The 1848 constitutional settlement – The role of the cantons in the modern federal system – The policy competences of the cantons – The cantons and the communes – Challenges to cantonal government in contemporary Switzerland – Are cantons a model for the other European regions?

Seminar questions

- Why did Switzerland transformed itself into a federal state in 1848?
- How has Swiss federalism evolved since 1848?
- Why explains Switzerland’s mononationalism in spite of its multilingualism?

Essential reading


Recommended further reading


Session 7  

Asymmetrical Devolution in a Union State: the UK

Outline

The emergence of the UK as a ‘union’ state – The Irish question and the origins of the demand for regional self-government – The rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism since the mid-1960s – The failure of devolution in the 1970s – Scottish and Welsh devolution in the 1990s – Competences and resources – Scottish and Welsh governments in operation – Regional government in England – The rise of the SNP

Seminar questions

- Why was devolution only implemented in the 1990s?
- How should England be governed?
- What explains the rise of the SNP since 2007?

Essential reading


Recommended further reading


