Course description
This seminar is an introduction to the comparative analysis of political institutions exemplified by the case of the Federal Republic of Germany. We will devote the single sessions to explore how formal and informal institutions influence the behavior of actors within a political system. The syllabus covers four major subject areas.
To begin with, we spend some time on electoral systems and voting behavior (I). Amongst other questions, we will examine how and why different electoral systems evolve. In the second part, dedicated to interest aggregation and representation (II), we take a closer look at political parties, interest groups and the media and their relationship with state actors. Coalition and veto player theories are subjects to the third block where we look at political actors governing between conflict and consensus (III). Here we apply the veto player approach to discuss and explain policy evolvement and change. Furthermore, we compare and contrast theories on coalition building and assess, for example, how well they can predict coalition outcomes of national elections. The last part of the seminar, multi-level governance (IV), focusses on interdependences between different levels of political systems. Particularly, we highlight the mechanisms and effects of federal systems.
The aim of the seminar is to gain deeper understanding about essential processes, structures and the behavior of actors within political systems by means of general theories.

Course Requirements
The course concept relies on active participation and in-class discussions. Therefore, I expect you to read and prepare the required literature prior to every session and to come to class ready to contribute. During the semester each student gives an oral presentation (various modes are possible). At the end of the seminar the students hand in a written term paper. The final grade is based on the presentation in class and the term paper.
Please submit an electronic version of your term paper (PDF) no later than August 26 (to my email address). This version will be checked for plagiarism. As well, you should hand in a printed copy of your paper at the CCCP-secretary during the week the paper is
due (please, be aware of the opening hours!). The printed version must contain following signed statement: 
http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/fileadmin/wiso_fak/cccp/Lehre/ErklaerungzuArbeiten.pdf

The general course language will be English. You should be ready to understand and make yourself understood. This does not mean that your English needs to be perfect!

**Literature**
I will upload parts of the literature on ILIAS. The students are expected to access online articles from academic journals via the University Library.

**Basic literature recommendations**


**Please register** for the course via KLIPS, or send me an email in case you cannot access KLIPS!

*** Preliminary Syllabus ***

**Session 1 (13.04.2016)**

**Introduction (course content and academic writing)**


**Leaflet: „Informationen zum Verfassen einer Haus- und Abschlussarbeit“**
(only available in German language, please contact me in case of questions)
I Electoral Systems and Voting Behavior

Session 2 (20.04.2016)
Social cleavages and voting behavior


Session 3 (27.04.2016)
The emergence of the German electoral system


Session 4 (04.05.2016)
The effects of the German electoral system


II Interest aggregation and representation

Session 5 (11.05.2015)
Parties and party systems


No session on 18.05.2016 - Pfingstferien

Session 6 (25.05.2016)
Interest groups, unions and the state


Session 7 (01.06.2016)
The media’s role


III Governing between conflict and consensus

Session 8 (08.06.2016)
Exercise and control of political power


Session 9 (15.06.2016)
Government formation


Session 10 (22.06.2016)
The Federal Constitutional Court


Session 11 (29.06.2016)
Direct Democracy


IV Multi-level governance

Session 12 (06.07.2016)
Joint decision-making


Session 13 (13.07.2016)
German federalism within the European Union


Session 14 (20.07.2016)
Revision, feedback and discussion of termpapers