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 focus on electoral systems and voting behavior (I). Amongst other questions, we 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). We apply the veto player approach to discuss and explain policy evolution 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 political levels. Particularly, we highlight the mechanisms and effects of federal systems.

The overall 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 political theories.

Course Requirements
The course concept relies on active participation and in-class discussions. Therefore, I expect you to complete the reading assignments prior to every session and to come to class prepared and ready to contribute. During the semester each student gives an oral presentation (various modes are possible), which will be graded on a pass-fail basis. At the end of the seminar the students hand in a written term paper (in English language). The final grade is based on the term paper.

Term paper requirements differ with examination regulations:

Bachelor PO 2007: 4 ECTS, 2,500 words, ±10%  
Bachelor PO 2015: 6 ECTS, 3,500 words, ±10%  
(word count without title page, content page and references!)

Please submit an electronic version of your paper (PDF) no later than Friday 1st Sept 2017 (to my email address). This version will be checked for plagiarism. As well, you must hand in a printed
copy 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 non-plagiarism statement¹:  
http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/fileadmin/wiso_fak/cccp/Lehre/ErklaerungzuArbeiten.pdf

I am glad to give you feedback upon your request during the seminar (on your progress) and after you have received your grade (on your final term paper).

The general course language will be English. Perfection is not required - you should be ready to understand and make yourself understood, thus be able to participate actively.

**Literature**  
I will provide 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!

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¹ Please note that this declaration must be given in German even if the rest of the thesis is in English.
+++ Preliminary Schedule +++ Preliminary Schedule +++ Preliminary Schedule +++

**Session 1 (19.04.2017)**  
**Introduction (course content and academic writing)**


**Leaflet:** „Informationen zum Verfassen einer Haus- und Abschlussarbeit“  
(Information on how to write a term paper, only available in German language, please contact me in case of questions)

**I Electoral Systems and Voting Behavior**

**Session 2 (26.04.2017)**  
**Social cleavages and voting behavior**


**Session 3 (03.05.2017)**  
**The emergence of the German electoral system**


**Session 4 (10.05.2017)**  
**The effects of the German electoral system**


**Skills input:** Introduction

**II Interest aggregation and representation**

**Session 5 (17.05.2017)**  
**Parties and party systems**


Session 6 (24.05.2017)
Interest groups, unions and the state


Skills input: Literature review

Session 7 (31.05.2017)
The media’s role


No session on 07.06.2017 - Pfingstferien

III Governing between conflict and consensus

Session 8 (14.06.2017)
Exercise and control of political power


Skills input: Theory

Session 9 (21.06.2017)
Government formation


Session 10 (28.06.2017)
The Federal Constitutional Court


Skills input: Research design

Session 11 (05.07.2017)
Direct Democracy


IV Multi-level governance

Session 12 (12.07.2017)
Joint decision-making


Skills input: Analysis

Session 13 (19.07.2017)
German federalism within the European Union


Session 14 (26.07.2017)
Revision, feedback and discussion of term papers

Skills input: Conclusion