University of Cologne  
Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences  
Cologne Center for Comparative Politics (CCCP)  
Fall Term 2015 / 2016  

**BA Course: “The Political System of the Federal Republic of Germany”**  
**Time:** 14:00-15:30 on Wednesdays, weekly  
**Room:** IBW-Building - S 101, Herbert-Lewin-Str.2, 2nd floor  
**Course duration:** 21.10.2015 -10.02.2016  

**Instructor** Valeria Smirnova  
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To come to my office, please, write an email in advance to valeria.smirnova@smail.uni-koeln.de  

**Course outline**  
The purpose of this seminar is to make students interested in comparative political analysis by providing them with underlying theories in this field, basic methodological tools, and exemplary research papers based on the political system of the German Federal Republic. The seminar is divided into four parts. We start analyzing the reasons to establish a certain electoral system and its effects, as well as examining patterns of electoral behavior. The second part of the seminar discusses ways of interest aggregation and representation as indispensable democratic rules. In particular, we address the relationship between the state and political parties, interest groups, and mass media. Within the third part of the seminar we would study different mechanisms responsible for the balance of power in the political system primarily paying attention to the theories of coalition formation and veto players. The fourth section introduces the multi-level analysis considering the federal structure of Germany and Germany in the context of the EU integration. During the last sessions participants have an opportunity to discuss their term papers in class. To make these discussions most useful all the participants are required to prepare a handout with the relevant information for their term papers. Students will be graded only on the quality of their term paper and on the quality of their oral presentation.  

**Reading of the mandatory literature and active participation in the discussions are required for the attendance of the seminar sessions.** Most of the texts are available on the ILIAS website of the course. The password for this ILIAS-course as well as helpful tools for efficient working with the literature will be provided during the first session.  

**Term paper**  
The term papers have to be written in English (4.500-6.000 words) and downloaded in the folder “Term papers” in the course folder in ILIAS latest March 11, 2016 at 17.59 o’clock (after that time no download will be possible) and also submitted in a hard copy to the CCCP-Secretariat. Please do NOT send your term papers per email. We have to check all the submitted papers for plagiarism (http://www.wiso-it.uni-koeln.de/turnitin.html).  

**Presentation**  
Every student should give an oral presentation of one of the recommended papers within 10 minutes once during the semester. The texts for presentations will be distributed during the first session.
Introductory readings

- The Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany. Available at: https://www.bundestag.de/blob/284870/ce0d03414872b427e57fccc703634dcdbasic_law-data.pdf

Further readings

For the preparation of your term paper, you may be interested in consulting the following journals

- European Journal of Political Research
- German Politics
- Party Politics
- West European Politics

SEMINAR PLAN AND LITERATURE

Session 1  Introduction

I. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR

Session 2  Social cleavages and electoral behavior in Germany
28.10.2015  Mandatory literature:

Session 3  Institutionalization of the German electoral system
04.11.2015  Mandatory literature:

Session 4  Effects of the German electoral system
11.11.2015  Mandatory literature:
II. INTEREST AGGREGATION AND REPRESENTATION

Session 5  Parties and Party system in Germany
18.11.2015  Mandatory literature:

Session 6  Interest groups in the German politics
25.11.2015  Mandatory literature:
• Trampusch; Ch. (2010): Employers, the State, and the Politics of Institutional Change. Vocational Education and Training in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. In: European Journal of Political Research 49(4), 545-573

Session 7  Mass Media
02.12.2015  Mandatory literature:

III. GOVERNING WITHIN CONSENSUS AND CONTROVERSIES

Session 8  Balance of political powers
09.12.2015  Mandatory literature:

Session 9  Coalition Formation in Germany
16.12.2015  Mandatory literature:

Session 10  Direct democracy
06.01.2016  Mandatory literature:

Session 12  German Constitutional Court
20.01.2016  Mandatory literature:
IV A MULTI-LEVEL ANALYSIS

**Session 11**  
**German Federal System**  
13.01.2016  
Mandatory literature:  

**Session 13**  
**Europeanization of the German political system**  
27.01.2016  
Mandatory literature:  

**Session 14**  
**Discussion of the term papers of the participants**  
03.02.2016

**Session 15**  
**Discussion of the term papers of the participants / a wrap-up session**  
10.02.2016