

Winter term 2017-18

University of Cologne
Faculty of Management, Economics and Social Sciences
Cologne Center for Comparative Politics
Chair of Comparative Politics

14335.0106 Ergänzungsmodul Seminar Politikwissenschaft

The Political System of Germany

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Office hours by appointment

General information:

- Thursdays, 16-17.30, 2017-10-12 – 2018-02-01
- Hörsaal des Forschungsinstituts, Gottfried-Keller-Str. 2
- Course language: English (no perfection required – be ready to understand and make yourself understood so that active participation is possible)
- Registration via KLIPS
- ECTS points: Bachelor PO 2015: 6 ECTS, PO 2007: 4 ECTS
- Requirements:
 - o Active participation!
 - o Reading assignments (mostly one assignment per session; will be uploaded on ILIAS or are available online)
 - o Oral presentation (about 10 min)
 - o Term paper (PO 2015: 3.500 words $\pm 10\%$, PO 2007: .500 words, $\pm 10\%$)

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 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.

Moreover, students will get skills input – How to write a term paper – and (tbc!) take part in an excursion to the North Rhine-Westphalian state parliament in Düsseldorf.

General literature recommendations:

- Blum, S. & Schubert, K. (Eds.) (2013). Policy Analysis in Germany. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Newton, K. & van Deth, J. (2005). Foundations of Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Padgett, S., Paterson, W. & Zohlnhöfer, R. (Eds.) (2014). Developments in German Politics Four. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roberts, G. (2016). German politics today (3rd edition). Manchester University Press.
- Schmidt, M. (2009). Political institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Topics to be discussed:

- Electoral systems and voting behaviour
 - o Social cleavages and voting behaviour
 - o The emergence of the German electoral system
 - o The effects of the German electoral system
- Interest aggregation and representation
 - o Parties and party systems
 - o Interest groups, unions and the state
 - o The media's role
- Governing between conflict and consensus
 - o Exercise and control of political power
 - o Government formation
 - o The Federal Constitutional Court
 - o Direct Democracy
- Multi-level governance
 - o Joint-decision-making
 - o Government formation

Detailed syllabus will be available by the end of September.

Please don't hesitate to contact me in case of questions or problems.

2017-09-04