

**Syllabus for  
Selected Topics in Comparative Politics: Legislative Politics  
University of Mannheim, MA/PhD program Political Science, Fall 2014**

**Course:**

Seminar: Tuesday 10:15–13:30pm, 2 Sep–2 Dec 2014

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Legislatures are, at least formally, the key policy-making institutions in modern democracies. They represent and aggregate constituent interests, pass laws and approve government budgets, monitor bureaucracies, and, in European-style, parliamentary democracies choose governments. Yet, any single link in this chain of multiple delegations involves reciprocal dependencies and accountabilities that put constraints on what actors can do and how they do it. Institutions certainly matter but how and when and to what extent do they shape the way legislators feel, behave and act?

The objective of this course is to prepare you for professional research into legislative politics. The course has some breadth in coverage in the sense that it provides a graduate-level overview of different areas such as electoral competition, legislative bargaining, coalition formation, information transmission, agenda-setting, legislative organization, voting and cohesion, delegation to bureaucratic authorities, and seminal models used in these areas. It is also narrow in the sense that the emphasis is on approaches that use and apply formal models in these areas. When do legislatures grants discretionary power to bureaucrats and why should they do that at all? What drives legislators' decisions and how does that vary across different types of electoral and parliamentary institutions? The ultimate goal is to identify interesting and important questions in the field, and to think about the ways in

which research can be designed to get at those questions. Throughout the semester we will meet to pore over a set of seminal papers and important books. The focus here is on the theoretical argument. What is the substantive argument? What do we have to assume to make the argument? What type of model is used and how do we actually arrive at the conclusions? We will also have a look at one or the other piece that exemplifies empirical strategies and evidence.

**Prerequisites:** As most papers and books in this area use formal models to study legislative politics, students are expected to have completed the MA course in game theory or, at least, are willing to work through these models.

**Readings:** Students must complete the required reading by class time each week and come prepared to engage in an in-depth discussion of each text.

**Assessment:** Essay: Students are required to write an essay of journal article length. The essay actually is a research proposal that draws some hypotheses from the theoretical literature and lays out an empirical strategy for testing them. The idea is to pick an interesting question or puzzle from the course material and to propose a research design for answering it. Think of its structure in the following way:

- A description of the "puzzle" that you are trying to solve.
- A clear and succinct statement of a theoretical argument on an important question that you extract from the literature or develop yourself. This will be the main part of your paper.
- An empirical research strategy including: a) a characterization of the population of cases to which the theoretical argument/hypotheses apply, and the description of a sample (or way of sampling) from this population; b) a specification of dependent and independent variables and the form of their relationship, their operationalization; c) A preliminary assessment or 'plausibility probe' based on brief examination of one or more cases from a sample, or a 'quick' coding of variables for a simple descriptive analysis.

Essays are due in January and should be submitted via email. In addition, a hardcopy should be submitted to the political economy main office. Please ensure that your name and course title appear on the first page and the pages are numbered. Do not submit the paper in a plastic folder or binder. A single staple will suffice.

## Course Outline:

### Overview

Laver, M. (2006). Legislatures and parliaments. In Weingast, B. R. and Wittman, D., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, pages 121–140. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Shepsle, K. A. (2009). Rational Choice Institutionalism. In Binder, S. A., Rhodes, R. A. W., and Rockman, B. A., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, pages 23–38. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Shugart, M. S. (2009). Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations. In Binder, S. A., Rhodes, R. A. W., and Rockman, B. A., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, pages 344–365. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Carey, J. M. (2009). Legislative Organization. In Binder, S. A., Rhodes, R. A. W., and Rockman, B. A., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, pages 431–454. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

### Coalition Formation

Overview of standard theories, by and large

Laver, M. and Schofield, N. (2001). *Multiparty government : the politics of coalition in Europe*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

Portfolio allocation model (non-cooperative, 2-dim)

Laver, M. and Shepsle, K. A. (1996). *Making and breaking governments: Cabinets and legislatures in parliamentary democracies*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Bargaining model based on Baron/Ferejohn

Baron, D. P. (1991). A Spatial Bargaining Theory of Government Formation in Parliamentary Systems. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(1):137–164.

Empirical, cross-country, large-N 'test' of standard theories

Martin, L. W. and Stevenson, R. T. (2001). Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(1):33–50.

## **Coalition control and parliamentary oversight**

Overviews

Strøm, K., Müller, W. C., and Smith, D. M. (2010). Parliamentary Control of Coalition Governments. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13(1):517–535.

Saalfeld, T. (2000). Members of Parliament and Governments in Western Europe: Agency Relations and Problems of Oversight. *European Journal of Political Research*, 37(3):353–376.

Committees as screening devices for government bills, simple model & empirical test

Martin, L. W. and Vanberg, G. (2005). Coalition Policymaking and Legislative Review. *American Political Science Review*, 99(1):93–106.

Using junior ministers as watchdogs

Thies, M. F. (2001). Keeping tabs on partners: The logic of delegation in coalition governments. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(3):580–598.

Similar arguments but in a different institutional context and using parliamentary questions

Proksch, S.-O. and Slapin, J. B. (2011). Parliamentary questions and oversight in the European Union. *European Journal of Political Research*, 50(1):53–79.

## **Agenda-setting and Policy-making**

The seminal paper on agenda-setting

Romer, T. and Rosenthal, H. (1978). Political Resource Allocation, Controlled Agendas, and the Status Quo. *Public Choice*, 33(4):27–43.

Pivots (instead of veto players) in a spatial model

Krehbiel, K. (1998). *Pivotal politics: A theory of U.S. lawmaking*. University of Chicago

Press, Chicago.

Agenda-setting in a bargaining model

Austen-Smith, D. and Banks, J. (1988). Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes. *The American Political Science Review*, 82(2):405–422.

### **... and Veto Players**

Tsebelis, G. (2002). *Veto Players. How Political Institutions Work*. Sage, New York.

Tsebelis, G. (1994). The Power of the European Parliament as a Conditional Agenda Setter. *The American Political Science Review*, 88(1):128–142.

### **Opposition politics**

Blurring of Opposition: when the opposition is not really in opposition

Andeweg, R. B. (2013). Parties in Parliament: The Blurring of Opposition. In Müller, W. C. and Narud, H. M., editors, *Party Governance and Party Democracy*, pages 99–114. Springer, New York.

Opposition strategies in elections: evidence from non-Western democracies

Weghorst, K. R. and Lindberg, S. I. (2011). Effective Opposition Strategies: Collective Goods or Clientelism? *Democratization*, 18(5):1193–1214.

Opposition and government cohesion

Dewan, T. and Spirling, A. (2011). Strategic Opposition and Government Cohesion in Westminster Democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 105(02):337–358.

### **Opposition politics, agenda-setting and position-taking**

Setting the Agenda (using parliamentary questions)

Thesen, G. (2013). When good news is scarce and bad news is good: Government responsibilities and opposition possibilities in political agenda-setting. *European Journal of Political*

*Research*, 52(3):364–389.

Taking positions (using roll call votes)

Crisp, B. F. and Driscoll, A. (2012). The Strategic Use of Legislative Voting Procedures. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 37(1):67–97.

Taking positions (using bills)

Bräuninger, T. and Debus, M. (2009). Legislative Agenda-Setting in Parliamentary Democracies. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(6):804–839. (or Bräuninger/Debus/Wüst forthcoming)

## **Legislative Bargaining**

The foundation

Baron, D. P. and Ferejohn, J. A. (1989). Bargaining in Legislatures. *The American Political Science Review*, 83(4):1181–1206.

Possible not doable

Banks, J. S. and Duggan, J. (2000). A Bargaining Model of Collective Choice. *The American Political Science Review*, 94(1):73–88.

## **Information transmission**

Crawford, V. P. and Sobel, J. (1982). Strategic Information Transmission. *Econometrica*, 50(6):1431–1451.

Austen-Smith, D. (1990). Information Transmission in Debate. *American Journal of Political Science*, 34(1):124–152.

Austen-Smith, D. (1996). Information Aggregation, Rationality, and the Condorcet Jury Theorem. *The American Political Science Review*, 90(1):34–45.

Feddersen, T. and Pesendorfer, W. (1998). Convicting the Innocent: The Inferiority of Unanimous Jury Verdicts under Strategic Voting. *The American Political Science Review*,

92(1):23–35.

Austen-Smith, D. (2006). Deliberation, Preference Uncertainty, and Voting Rules. *The American Political Science Review*, 100(2):209–217.

### **Committees and legislative organization**

Shepsle, K. A. and Weingast, B. R. (1987). The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power. *The American Political Science Review*, 81(1):85–104.

Cox, G. W. and McCubbins, M. D. (1993). *Legislative leviathan : party government in the House*. University of California Press, Berkeley and CA.

Gilligan, T. W. and Krehbiel, K. (1987). Collective decisionmaking and standing committees: an informational rationale for restrictive amendment procedures. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 3(2):287–335.

### **Voting, Cohesion, Intra-party and Rebels**

Cohesion and discipline

Kam, C. (2009). *Party discipline and parliamentary politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Institutional devices for disciplining

Huber, J. D. (1992). Restrictive Legislative Procedures in France and the United States. *The American Political Science Review*, 86(3):675–687.

Party discipline or pre-selection? (Also on measuring unity using roll call votes)

Krehbiel, K. (1993). Where's the party? *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(2):235–266.

Snyder, J. M. and Groseclose, T. (2000). Estimating Party Influence in Congressional Roll-Call Voting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(2):193.

Clinton, J., Jackman, S., and Rivers, D. (2004). The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data. *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2):355–370.

When disciplining fails: rebels

Benedetto, G. and Hix, S. (2007). The Rejected, the Ejected, and the Dejected: Explaining Government Rebels in the 2001-2005 British House of Commons. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(7):755–781.

### **Principal-Agency, Bureaucracy (but not exclusively)**

Bendor, J. and Meirowitz, A. (2004). Spatial Models of Delegation. *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2):293–310.

Huber, J. D. and Shipan, C. R. (2002). *Deliberate discretion: The institutional foundations of bureaucratic autonomy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

McCubbins, M. D. and Schwartz, T. (1984). Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms. *American Journal of Political Science*, 28(1):165–179.

Gailmard, S. and Patty, J. W. (2012). Formal Models of Bureaucracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15(1):353–377.

Mueller, D. C. (2003). *Public choice III*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. (Chap. 16)

A. Hindmoor Rational Choice. New York, Palgrave Macmillan (2006). Ch. 6

W. A. Niskanen Bureaucracy and Representative Government. Chicago, Aldine Atherton (1971). Republished as Bureaucracy and Public Economics. Aldershot, Edward Elgar (1994). In particular pp. 3-48.

Dunleavy, P. (1991). *Democracy, bureaucracy and public choice: Economic explanations in political science*. Harvester, New York and London.

### **Representation & Responsiveness**

Campbell, R. 2009. Do Women Need Women Representatives?, *British Journal of Political Science* 40: 171-194.

Jennings, W. and P. John. 2009. The Dynamics of Political Attention: Public Opinion and



the Queen's Speech in the United Kingdom, *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4): 838-854.

Daniel Butler and Eleanor Powell (Forthcoming) Understanding the Party Brand: Experimental Evidence on the Role of Valence. *Journal of Politics*, 76, 2, p. 492-505

Brian Knight (2008) Legislative Representation, Bargaining Power, and the Distribution of Federal Funds: Evidence from the U.S. Senate. *Economic Journal*, 118, 532, p. 1785-1803

Donley T. Studlar and Ian McAllister (2002) Does a critical mass exist? A comparative analysis of women's legislative representation since 1950. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41, 2, p. 233-253

### **Constituency Politics**

Timothy Besley and Steven Coate (2003) Centralized versus decentralized provision of local public goods: a political economy approach. *Journal of Public Economics*, 87, 12, p. 2611-2637

Daniel Butler and David E. Broockman (2011) Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55, 3, p. 463-477.

David Karol (2007) Does Constituency Size Affect Elected Officials' Trade Policy Preferences? *Journal of Politics*, 69, 2, p. 283-594

David Stadelmann, Marco Portmann, Reiner Eichenberger (2014) The law of large districts: How district magnitude affects the quality of political representation. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 35, pp. 128-140