

POLITICAL PARTIES

Course Description

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the fundamental categories, analytical models, and research that have developed over the past twenty years in the field of comparative politics, specifically focusing on political parties, their emergence, development, and functioning.

Political parties are primarily approached as organizations that mediate between the state and society, voters and power, and form the basic elements of the system of democratic competition, participation, and representation. In addition, parties appear as actors in the political process as well as institutions of the democratic order, and the goal of the course is to shed light on all aspects of party activity.

While lectures provide an overview of the basic analytical categories and research findings on individual topics, seminars offer the opportunity to explore the empirical diversity and coexistence of different types and models of political parties through examples of specific political parties and their development.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the basic categories used in the analysis of political parties
2. Become familiar with the main types and classifications of political parties
3. Gain insight into the current debates on political parties
4. Become acquainted with the main directions and approaches in the study of political parties
5. Access and gather information about specific political parties
6. Get to know the key classical and contemporary authors who have researched and written about political parties
7. Develop skills in analysis, writing, and presentation of material

Weekly Course Schedule

1st session: Researching political parties – definitions, functions, classifications, theory

2nd session: Developmental typology of political parties I – elite and mass parties

3rd session: Developmental typology of political parties II – catch-all parties, American exceptionalism

4th session: Contemporary forms of political parties – the professional-electoral party, cartel party, modern cadre party, party as a business firm

5th session: Emergence and development of parties in post-communist contexts

6th session: Ideology and political parties – party families

7th session: First midterm exam

8th session: Parties and society – types of linkages between political parties and society

9th session: Party organization I – membership

10th session: Parties and the state – party financing and the role of parliamentary factions

11th session: Parties at the level of the European Union

12th session: Political parties and contemporary democracy

13th session: Second midterm exam