



## Sommersemester 2017

Hauptseminar (MA)

### Hauptseminar (MA): Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft III

#### Institutional Design and Institutional Change (in English)

Time: Tuesday, 10.00-12.00  
Venue: FMA/01.19  
Start Date: 25 April 2017  
Registration in FlexNow!: 01.04.2017 until 12.05.2017 (Deregistration until 26.5.2017)  
Instructor: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Sieberer

#### **Prerequisites/Zulassungsvoraussetzungen**

BA or equivalent qualification in Political Science.

#### **Assessment/Erwerb eines Leistungsnachweises**

Evaluation will be a combination of one term paper (75%) and oral participation and presentation during the seminar (25%). The entire class, including written work and oral presentations, will be conducted in English.

ECTS credits: 8

#### **Program**

Over the last two decades, a broad new institutionalist literature in comparative politics and political economy has demonstrated that political institutions critically affect political behavior, political processes, and policy outputs. Most studies conceptualize institutions as stable and exogenous constraints on actor behavior, i.e. as independent variables explaining behavior and outputs. More recently, however, scholars have turned increased attention to the question of how institutions are designed and changed, i.e. treat institutions as a dependent variable.

This seminar covers this literature in order to understand why political institutions change over time. Theoretically, we discuss rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism as alternative but often complementary perspectives. The main emphasis is on rationalist theories of institutional design and change. This perspective conceptualizes changes in institutional rules as a strategy of political actors to achieve their substantive interests in political competition. Empirically, the seminar covers changes in the electoral system, the organization of parliaments and the executive branch, federalism, direct democracy, and the role of constitutional courts with a geographic focus on European democracies.

#### **Introductory Readings**

A detailed list of readings will be distributed in the initial session. The following literature provides a first introduction to core themes of the seminar:

Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2006. "Old Questions and New Answers about Institutions. The Riker Objection Revisited." in: Barry Weingast/Donald Wittman (Hg.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1031-1049. [institutional change from the view of rational choice institutionalism]

- Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time. History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, esp. Ch. 4+5. [institutional change from the view of historical institutionalism]
- Benoit, Kenneth. 2007. "Electoral Laws as Political Consequences. Explaining the Origins and Change of Electoral Institutions." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 363-390. [overview of approaches to studying institutional change with regard to a specific set of institutions]