Summer Term 2016

MA Hauptseminar Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft II:
Institutional Design and Institutional Change in Western Democracies (in English)

Time and room
Tuesday, 10:00 – 12:00 in F21/02.18
First session
April 12, 2016

Registration in FlexNow!
01.04. – 18.04.2016 (Deregistration until 25.04.2016)

Prerequisites
For MA Political Science: none
For other degree programs: Vorlesung (BA) Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft and Proseminar (BA), Seminar (BA), or Vertiefungsseminar (BA) in the field Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft

Language
The seminar (including presentations and term papers) is conducted in English.

Grading
Oral presentation (25%) und term paper (75%)
Credit points
8 ECTS

Contents and Goals

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. Methodologically, the seminar focuses particularly on the question of compatibility of different theoretical approaches, the balance of general and case-specific explanations, limited data availability, and the advantages and disadvantages of large-n and small-n research designs. Empirically, it covers changes in the electoral system, the organization of parliaments and the executive branch, federalism, and direct democracy with a geographic focus on European democracies.

Introductory readings


A detailed list of readings will be distributed in the first session.