Political Science 290F  
Comparative Electoral Systems  
Fall 2012  
Wednesdays 3:10-6pm, Kerr 593

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Course Webpage:  http://faculty.psdomain.ucdavis.edu/escheiner/courses/pol290f/pol290f.html

Required Texts:
- Coursepack at Davis Textbooks (236 A St.).
- Some reading (which will be labeled) is listed under the Resources tab at the smartsite for the course.
- Also, much of the reading will be online at JSTOR/scholar.google.com/etc.

Course Summary: This course offers a comparative analysis of electoral rules and has three principal aims.

First and foremost, this course is designed to give students an introduction to the literature on one of the most prominent institutions studied within political science: electoral systems. Electoral rules are critically important to politics. This was most obviously true in the 2000 U.S. presidential election, where one candidate won a majority of the vote but lost the Electoral College, thereby making him the loser of the election. (And this very nearly happened again in 2004!) Electoral rules vary widely outside of the U.S. Proportional representation (PR) is quite common in other countries. In most PR systems, parties are allotted a proportion of the seats in the legislature that is roughly equal to the proportion of the vote they won in popular balloting. However, in Turkey, only parties that win more than 10% of the popular vote are allotted seats. As a result, in the 2002 Turkish election, despite the fact that they together received only 54% of the vote, only two parties won representation. After winning only 34% of the vote, the top party took 66% of all the seats, and was therefore able to dominate the country’s politics.

This course offers an understanding of the way electoral institutions — in particular, those that are used to elect legislators — work, and, most important, looks at the way the political science literature has studied this topic. In the process, we examine electoral rules in countries throughout the world, including the U.S., South America, Eastern and Western Europe, and Asia.
For the sake of better learning the workings of the different electoral rules in the course, I recommend sitting in on POL140A this quarter, but that is by no means necessary.

Second, this course is designed explicitly to help students prepare for the comparative politics written qualifying exam. For this reason, there is quite a bit of reading and I assign a take-home exam that is intended to get you to stay on top of the reading and think about the big questions within the literature. There is additional reading listed at the end of the syllabus. It is not necessary to read this literature for the course, but you’ll be expected to know it for the written qualifying exam.

Third, this course is designed to prepare you to do your own research and increase your general level of “professionalism.” You spend the final few weeks of the course writing a paper on a topic – related to electoral institutions (although there is some flexibility on this) – of your choosing. The central part of this paper is developing your own research design. In addition, we spend considerable time in the course talking about how to do political science analysis and how to present it (both in written and oral form).

**Additional Comment for Grad Students:** The most common characteristic I have noticed among students who are not doing well in graduate school is lack of communication. If you need to turn in something late for my class, please just let me know. And if you are having problems with the program or with class, please come talk with me. There is no shame in any of that!

**Assignments:**

- Weekly reading assignments
- Class participation (10%). Keep this in mind: If the rest of your work is flawless, but you don’t participate in class, the highest grade you can get in the class is an A- (i.e., 90%).
- Take-home midterm that will be assigned at the end of class on 11/7 and due by 11/14 (50%).
- Final paper – due 12/11 by 3pm (30%)
  - An analysis of some feature of electoral rules. However, beyond that, it is up to you as to what to write about.
    - If you have a clearly-established and well-defined interest in a different political institution, you may do an analysis of that institution instead. But in general I will strongly prefer that you do an analysis of electoral rules.
  - Please come see me early and often to talk about what you might be interested in writing about. If you wait until after the midterm, you won’t have time to put together a paper topic and paper.
  - I strongly discourage anyone from taking an incomplete in the course. If you plan to take an incomplete, please have a very good reason and discuss this with me by one week before the final paper due date.
  - The paper should at a minimum include all components of a standard journal article except for the analysis:
    - Intro
    - Literature review
    - Theoretical development
    - Research Design
    - Hypotheses
I would prefer that you also do analysis (preferably quantitative), but this part of the paper will vary by the student’s interests, skills, and experience with political science. Please come see me about this.

- In-class, power-point presentation of your final paper (10%)

**Written Assignments:** All written assignments must be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, have 1-inch margins (not the MS Word default), and be carefully proofread. (I have little patience for typos/missing words/poorly constructed sentences, nouns-pronouns that don’t match, etc.) On a separate title page only, please put your name, course, assignment, and the date. Use page numbers whenever you submit something longer than one page. (Papers without page numbers drive me insane.) And, finally, please stick closely to the prescribed lengths.
1. 10/3: Introduction and Background – **Class will start at 3:30pm today**
   - Cox, Ch3
   - Moser and Scheiner, Ch1 and descriptions of how to compute N and LSq in Ch3. **Page proofs are available at smartsite**

Discussion today will be minimal. Mostly, it will be first be a basic introduction to the class: Who are you? Who am I? What is this class about? What do you need to do in this class?

In general, the class will be much more of a discussion, but today I want to make sure we are all up to speed on the ways different electoral rules work. The most time-consuming part of class today will be a power point presentation by me on the functioning of different electoral rules. Power point slides for today’s lecture are available at the POL290F course site at https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu. I would like to go over this as quickly as possible, so please download the slides prior to class.

Also, we’ll briefly go over issues of how to do social science analysis. (Those of you who took POL242 with me will recognize this stuff.) Included here, we will consider:
   - The importance of theory/model development based on clearly-drawn mechanisms
   - Generating testable implications
   - Linking hypotheses and theory
   - The importance of assumptions
2. 10/10: SMDs, Duverger, & PR

- Cal Tech Rules
- Cox, Ch 2 & 4

**Smartsite**


Class today: In addition to the usual discussion, I will do a short presentation on writing.

Next week, we will not have class. Instead, each of you will come meet with me to discuss your thoughts on what you would like to write for your class paper. It looks like we have too many people to fit everyone into the scheduled class period, so I will probably set up additional time earlier in the day (or Monday) to meet. I will put a sign-in sheet on my office door. Please let me know if no time available works for you.

**Two things to think about as you read:**

1. How can you best skim when reading a lot of work? Look for the following:
   - What is the question that the author is trying to answer?
   - For our class, how does that question relate to electoral rules?
   - How does the author look to answer that question?
     - What is the dependent variable?
     - What are the independent variables?
     - What is the authors’ theory?
     - What are the main hypotheses?
     - How do the hypotheses help address the theory?
     - What is the unit of analysis & what type of data/from where (e.g., what countries) does the author use?
   - What are the findings of the study?
   - What do the findings mean for what we can say about the impact of electoral rules?
   - Is the author saying something very different from previous work or largely just adding on to previous work?

2. Consider how really good articles deal with the following (both in terms of form and substance) – we will discuss this again in Week 6:
   - (1) Generally speaking, what makes for a good topic?
   - (2) What sort of organizational structures do really good articles follow?
What is involved in a good introduction to open an article? What makes an introduction particularly effective?

What features are particularly effective and/or ineffective in the literature review?

Where does theory fit in (both organizationally and substantively) in the article? And what makes for good theory?

What about hypotheses? How do they fit in organizationally? And what makes for good hypotheses?

What makes for a good analysis section?

3. 10/17: Office hours to discuss paper

- In lieu of class today, I will hold office hours at the time class is scheduled so I can discuss your final papers with each of you individually. I will set up a sign-in sheet in advance.

However, because we are cutting out class today, we will double up on the reading for next time. So, please read the following now (which we will discuss next time):

National-Subnational

- Chapters 10-11 in Gary Cox, Making Votes Count

4. 10/24: Electoral System Effects?


Coursepack

Also, please skim


Please remember that for today you are also responsible for the National-Subnational reading.
5. 10/31: No class so that you can work on your papers
5 page (double-spaced) version of your paper is due to me by email by 5pm the day before (today's cancelled) class. I will quickly get you comments on what you write up, so it behooves you to try to give me as much information as possible on your project.

In these papers, please quickly address the below questions. If you can't address all of them right now that is ok, but you will ultimately need to address them in your presentations and in your final papers, so the more you can do now the better.

1. What is your question?
2. Why is this question important?
3. What is the most important literature on the topic right now and what does this literature tell us about the topic?
4. What answer (theory) are you proposing for your question?
5. What are testable implications of your theory?
6. What data do you need to conduct these tests?
7. Are you going to be able to conduct these tests this quarter?
8. If so, what data will you use (and what sort of data analysis - e.g., multivariate quantitative - do you feel capable of doing)?
9. If no, how will/would you plan to conduct these tests in the future?

6. 11/7: Context and Electoral Rules
- Moser and Scheiner, Intro & Chs 2, 4, 6, 8

At the end of class today, I will hand out/post the midterm assignment. It will be due on 11/14 before midnight.

Presentation by me on using Power Point Slides.

As I noted in Week 2, this week we will also discuss:
(1) Generally speaking, what makes for a good topic?
(2) What sort of organizational structures do really good articles follow?
(3) What is involved in a good introduction to open an article? What makes an introduction particularly effective?
(4) What features are particularly effective and/or ineffective in the literature review?
(5) Where does theory fit in (both organizationally and substantively) in the article? And what makes for good theory?
(6) What about hypotheses? How do they fit in organizationally? And what makes for good hypotheses?
(7) What makes for a good analysis section?
7. 11/14: No class – midterms are due by email tonight by 11:59pm

8. 11/21: No class – you should be working on your papers/presentations.

9. 11/28: Conference Style Presentations I

   Half the class will do power point style presentations today. I will ask the more advanced students to do their presentations today.

10. 12/5: Conference Style Presentations II

   The other half of the class will do power point style presentations today.

December 11, 3pm: Final Paper is due - by email and hard copy in my mailbox. Again, please only place your names on the cover page of the paper.
Other reading you should do for comps

Measuring
  - Ch3 (“Disproportionality, Multipartism, and Majority Victories,” 57-77).

Arrow’s Theorem
  - Preface (ix-xi)
  - Ch2 (10-17)

PR
  - Parts of Ch1 (41-52, 56-76)
  - Parts of Ch 2 (77-83, 97)

Mixed-member systems

Ballots

President-Parliament

**Choices of electoral rules and reform**
• Andrew & Jackman. “Strategic Fools.” *Electoral Studies*.

**Minority Representation**