Political Competition in Multilevel Systems: Political Parties, Citizens and Elections

ECTS: 5
September-December 2012 (Academic Year 2012-2013)

Pfr. Francesc Pallarés
Office: 20.129
Email: francesc.pallares@upf.edu

1. Introduction

The course is designed to study the central aspects of the political competition in modern multilevel systems. Attention is focused on the behaviour of Voters and Political parties as well as the role of the electoral arenas in multilevel political opportunity structures (mainly regional and state/national level). The course aims to develop theoretical and empirical advanced knowledge on these aspects through both, comparative studies and specific case studies.

2. Prerequisites

There is no formal prerequisite for this course other than admission to the UPF’s graduate program. Among general requirements are the following: interest in understanding theoretical concepts, frameworks and empirical knowledge related to the subject; interest in conducting applied social scientific research; analytical and critical oriented thinking. Some specific background will also help: A basic knowledge on Political Behaviour (Political culture and Public Opinion, Electoral Behaviour) and Political Parties; a basic knowledge on the organization and working of a multilevel systems (regional, federal).

3. Competences to be achieved in the subject

The scientific contents and the organization of the work along the course is oriented to the development of instrumental, interpersonal and systemic competences, mainly:

General competences

- Ability to analyse and synthesise
- Critical and self-critical ability
- Interpersonal abilities: Ability to cooperate and communicate well with fellow students
- Ability to put knowledge into practice: Problem solving, Decision-making
Ability to hold in-class presentations
Ability to generate new ideas (creativity)

Specific competences

Advanced knowledge on Political parties, Electoral behaviour and Political Culture
A good comparative working knowledge on the relationship between the party system and the multilevel institutional system
Advanced knowledge on the dynamics of political competition in multilevel systems
A thorough understanding on the old and new aspects related to the role of the “territorial factor” in political competition.
A thorough understanding of the central topics: Multilevel voting, territorial cleavages, territorial identities, institutional dynamics.
Ability to apply established theories, methods and techniques to the analysis of political competition in multilevel systems (factors, resources, strategies).
Ability to reflect critically on major issues on multilevel political competition
Ability to write well-reasoned critical reflections on selected topics in the field

4. Organization, Requirements and Assessment

Students are expected to attend class sessions, read carefully the required readings, to present the assigned papers for in-class discussion, to send in due time to the teacher the file of the presentation, to participate in the in-class discussion, and to write a final research paper.

4.1 In-Class Sessions

Topics of the sessions:
Session 1. A reminder: Main frameworks in the study of the political process and the electoral competition.
Session 2. Multilevel structure, Political Parties and Political Integration
Session 3. Multilevel systems: The challenges for the State-Wide Parties
Session 4. Multilevel systems and regional interests: The Non State-Wide Parties
Session 5. Multilevel systems: Overlapping Citizen’s Territorial Identities?
Session 6. Multilevel elections: A general framework for electoral competition?
Session 7. Multilevel voting: Facts and Trends; Factors and Incentives
Session 8. Individual Tutorial: Preparing the proposal
Session 9. Research session: Presentation and discussion of the proposals for the research work (I).
Session 10. Research session: Presentation and discussion of the proposals for the research work (II).

The 10 weekly class sessions are scheduled for every Friday (15:00 - 18:00) from September 28th to November 30th, and the two final sessions on Tuesday 4th December (10-13 and 15-18 hours)
- The 1st and 2nd sessions will entirely develop as a Lecture (Teacher) with an open
- The Sessions 3 to 7 will develop in the following way:
Paper’s presentation and discussion. Each of these sessions will develop on the presentation/discussion of two or three papers selected among those recommended for every topic. A general in-class discussion will follow each presentation.

Teacher’s lecture introducing the main aspects of the next session
- Session 8: Individual tutorial (to be scheduled)
- Sessions 9 and 10 will be devoted to the in-class presentation and discussion of the proposals for the final research paper.

Presentations:

Sessions 3rd to 8th will be devoted to presentation and discussion of the previously assigned papers (2-3 papers each of these sessions). Presentations will be prepared and presented by one or two students in order to clearly explain to the class the main aspects (theoretical, methodological, empirical) of the paper assuming the point of view of the author(s) as well as discussing the text, rising critics, problems, questions, thoughts, points of interest for future research, etc. Presenter(s) will have 20-30 minutes to present their work before the group (usual computer programs can be used for presentation). The presentation and questions prepared for class discussion must be sent to the teacher by email not later than 18:00 of the day before the class.
In-class presentations will count up to 35% in the final mark. Accuracy in the understanding of the paper, appropriateness in the selection of the most important aspects and clarity in the exposition, are the main aspects taken into account in evaluating the presentations.
Students are expected to participate in the presentation of 2-3 papers along the course.

Discussion and participation
Papers will be discussed one by one. Each presentation will be followed by a general group discussion (20 minutes)

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class each week and to contribute to discussion during seminar.
In-class participation count up to 25% of the final mark.

4.2 Research Paper

Students have to write an original research paper related to one of the topics discussed through the course. Students have to define a specific research proposal that has to be agreed with the professor.
There are two possibilities for the final research paper:
- An empirically based piece of research using survey data or electoral results
- An exclusively bibliography-based piece of research with a theoretical and comparative perspective based on a selected bibliography.

The research paper has to contain: 1) the central research question, 2) its theoretical and political interest and relevance, 3) how the question will be approached (theoretical framework, methodology, data), 4) development of the empirical or bibliographical analysis and 5) a final conclusion(s).
Along the two last sessions student’s have to present a proposal for their final research work. Each student’s will have 10-15 minutes for the presentation of the proposal (subject, main research aims and questions, interest of the subject, main aspects of the theoretical and methodological approach, feasibility). Other 10-15 minutes will be allowed for questions, suggestions, discussion of each proposal. The proposal (no longer than two pages) has to be sent by email to the teacher no later than noon of the day before the presentation (Monday 3rd December).

Length of the research paper: about 4.000 words.

Research paper counts up to 40% of the final mark.

**SECTIONS, TOPICS AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Session 1. Basic background on Political Behaviour: A reminder.**


**Session 2. Political Integration, Multilevel Systems and Political Parties**

Moreno, Luis (2002) “Federal democracy in plural Spain” (see Aula Global)

**Session 3. The challenge for the State-wide parties**


**Session 4. The Non State-wide parties**


**Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage.**
Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.


---

**Session 5. Multilevel systems: Overlapping Citizen’s Territorial Identities?**


Moreno, Luis. 2010. “Europeanization, mesogovernments and the advancement of social citizenship” Conference paper


Session 6. Multilevel elections: A general framework for electoral competition?


**Session 8. Individual Tutorial**
Preparation the Proposal

**Sessions 9 and 10. Research sessions**
Presentation and discussion of the Proposals for the final research work.