

Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences



ESPO1114 Political Science

[60h] 6 credits

Teacher(s): Amine Ait-Chaalal, Lieven De Winter, André-Paul Frogner, André-Paul Frogner (supplée Jacques Herman), Jacques Herman, Françoise Piérard

Language: French

Level: First cycle

Aims

Part I

The course is intended to enable students on a range of degree courses to become familiar with the perspective and theoretical and conceptual framework adopted within Political Science. This introduction to the main themes in Political Science will examine the concrete questions asked by students and more generally, citizens attempting to understand the organization and structure of the political and civil society in which they live, questions such as:

- What is meant by politics, policies and politicians? What is power? What is the relationship between acting in the public interest and the search for personal power? What is a legitimate power?
- What is a "political system"? What is the relationship between the economic and political systems?
- What is a State? Have there always been States? How did the State come to be? What are the basic principles of international relations, particularly in this era of globalisation? How should one understand the relations between Europe and the States which make it up?
- What is democracy? Where does it come from? What are "direct democracy?" and "representative democracy"? Are new forms of democracy possible, in particular with technological advances in networking?
- Who are the principal collective actors in the political system (parties, special interest groups, etc.) and how do they (inter)act?
- What are citizens' values? Are new values emerging, such as those being termed "postmaterialist"? What is becoming of national identities? Is there a European identity? How are citizens participating within the political system, during elections and at other times? What are the principles determining how people vote? How can one explain the emergence of new parties like the Greens and the extreme right-wing parties? Is there a citizenship crisis? Is there an increasing gap between the political elites and the citizens?

Part II : Modern political regimes.

The aim of this course is to give students sufficient information on the political institutions and systems in a range of countries occupying an important or original place in the world. There will also be opportunity to delve deeper into certain issues in Political Science later on in the course.

Main themes

Part I

1. Introduction to Political Science
 - 1.1. Difficulties of defining the term " political "
 - 1.2. Political Science as a science
2. Political issues
 - 2.1. Aristotle, the " polis " and the public interest
 - 2.2. Machiavelli and the apology for power
3. Power and legitimacy
 - 3.1. Definitions and types of influence in Dahl
 - 3.2. Does the question " Who has power ? " have any meaning ?
 - 3.3. Legitimacy
4. Political functions and systems
 - 4.1. Almond and Coleman's functionalism
 - 4.2. Parsons' structural-functional model
 - 4.3. Easton and de Lapierre's systemic models
5. States, political integration and democracy
 - 5.1. The appearance of the State. Elements of political anthropology
 - 5.2. Forms of state and national political integration in Europe
 - 5.3. The development of the democratic model
 - 5.4. European integration
 - 5.5. States, the international community and globalisation
6. Civil society (1) : parties and pressure groups
 - 6.1. Parties
 - 6.2. Party systems
 - 6.3. Pressure groups
7. Civil society (2) : citizens
 - 7.1. Political values
 - 7.2. Political involvement
 - 7.3. Voting behaviour
 - 7.4. Rebellions and revolutions

Part II

This course on modern political regimes is intended to give students an overview of the principal political regimes of modern states. The decision has been made to examine only those regimes considered democratic.

In its examination of "political regimes", the course both investigates the effective exercise of power resulting from the dominant institutional practice, and gives an overview of the rules, legal and other, organisation and mode of operation of the public authorities and a description of the electoral system, the party system and pressure groups.

Content and teaching methods

In the first part of the course, students will be given several classifications of democratic regimes, some based on legal criteria, others on political criteria. After this, the focus narrows to the political regimes of six democracies, selected because they represent examples which have inspired certain typological models, or because they have striking characteristics: Germany, the United States, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

Method: The course is taught through lectures. Analyses are done vertically, state by state. The national political régimes are taught systematically according to the following plan:

Data on the constitutional system

Political actors and structures (parties, pressure groups)

Summary: operation of the political régime

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Course entry requirements:: Students who have taken the course in Public Law (SESP1234) will find it easier to follow this course.

Evaluation: The examination is written. Students must answer 12 to 20 questions, each calling for precise, relatively short answers

Course materials: Students will receive 2 course handouts. The first, written by L. de Winter, covers the first three countries and also contains a general presentation of the concept of "political régime". The second, written by Y. Lejeune, covers the other three countries.

The first handout includes more or less all the information given in the course. The tables and statistical and descriptive data it contains, illustrate the points made in the course and help students to understand how the systems under examination really work. The second handout is designed as a structured summary, giving in a synthetic way the minimum of basic information: it has to be supplemented with the explanations and comparisons given during the course.

Other credits in programs

HUSO11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences humaines et sociales	(6 credits)	Mandatory
POL21/AP	Première licence en sciences politiques (Affaires publiques)		
POL21/RI	Première licence en sciences politiques (Relations internationales)		
SOCA11BA	Première année de bachelier en sociologie et anthropologie	(6 credits)	Mandatory
SPOL11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences politiques	(6 credits)	Mandatory