I. Course Description

This course provides a systematic analysis of comparative democratic processes with an emphasis on the political determinants and policy consequences of institutions. The course is organized around major themes in comparative institutions literature. We will start with the basic classification of constitutional regimes into parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential systems. We will then examine how the executive comes to power and remains in power, which requires a close study of electoral institutions as well as the dynamics of executive-legislative relations. Finally, we will examine the role played by different government institutions in determining various political outcomes, such as representation, accountability, corruption, growth, and economic policy.

Some of the questions we will address in this course include: How do presidential and parliamentary systems differ and what are the consequences of these differences? How do electoral rules shape party systems and the nature of political representation? Why are some institutions more likely than others to produce desirable social outcomes such as accountability, representativeness, redistribution, and political stability? Where do institutions come from in the first place?

The core theme of the course is that political institutions create incentives that influence the strategic choices made by political actors. By the end of the semester, students should be able to conceptualize the tradeoffs involved in various institutional arrangements and assess them empirically.
II. Course Requirements and Grading

The final grade for this course will have the following components:

*Class participation (20%)*

Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. Students should do the assigned readings *before* the lecture and come to class prepared to participate in discussions.

*Review papers (30%)*

Students are required to write THREE review papers (2-3 pages, single-spaced) on course readings. The review papers are think pieces that critically assess the reading. A good review should: identify the central research question and/or key puzzle, briefly summarize the causal propositions, and critically evaluate the theoretical and empirical strengths and weaknesses (Are the assumptions and the logic behind them reasonable? Are the key theoretical propositions logically persuasive? Are the methods and research design appropriately employed in answering the research questions? Does the evidence fully support the conclusions? What could be improved about the paper? etc.) and discuss potential directions for future research. The review papers are due by *5pm on Tuesdays* before the class. The assignment of the students to the readings will be made on the first class. Students writing a review paper in a particular week are also expected to lead the discussion.

*Final research paper (50%)*

Each student is required to write a research paper limited to 20-25 double-spaced pages (including footnotes but excluding tables, figures, and references) due on *May 9, noon*. The paper will include a statement of a research question or puzzle, a review of the literature related to the topic, theoretical arguments in order to provide an answer to the question, empirically testable hypotheses drawn from these theories, and possibly a description of the data followed by some initial analysis. More information on the expectations will be provided in class. No late submissions will be accepted except for emergency situations, which require documentation.

Students are expected to come up with a topic for their paper and submit a one-paragraph description on *Feb. 28*. A one-page outline, which accounts for 10% of your overall grade, is due in class on *Mar. 28*. This outline will include the research question, a list of hypotheses and the theoretical logic behind each, and a brief description of the data or ideas about methods that will be used.

Students will give a 30-minute presentation of their paper in the last two weeks of the course (*Apr. 25 & May 2*). This is a great opportunity to receive feedback before finalizing and submitting the paper and accounts for 10% of your paper grade.
III. Required Readings

There is no required textbook. The articles and book chapters will be accessible from the class website on NYU Classes.

IV. Class Schedule

Jan. 24: Introduction: Approaches and Topics

No assigned reading.

Jan. 31: Methods in Comparative Politics


Feb. 7: Organization of the Executive I


Feb. 14: Organization of the Executive II


**Feb. 21: Government Formation**


**Feb. 28: Cabinet Governance**


*One-paragraph research proposal is due in class*

**Mar. 7: Government Stability**


**Mar. 14: Spring break**

**Mar. 21: Electoral Systems I**


**Mar. 28: Electoral Systems II**


* One-page outline of the final research paper is due in class *

**Apr. 4: Choice of Electoral Systems**


**Apr. 11: Government Spending and Redistribution**


**Apr. 18: Economic Development and Growth**


**Apr. 25: Student presentations**

**May 2: Student presentations**

* Final research paper is due on May 9, noon *