

Multi-level Government

Code: 101109
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Political Science and Public Management	OT	3
Political Science and Public Management	OT	4
Contemporary History, Politics and Economics	OT	3
Contemporary History, Politics and Economics	OT	4

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

Students are expected to bring a strong motivation and interest in topics such as institutional design, multilevel governance, public policy, and comparative politics. While the Spanish case will be one of the reference points, the course adopts a broader comparative perspective that draws on multiple political systems and international frameworks.

Objectives and Contextualisation

Multilevel government is a defining feature of contemporary political systems, as authority and decision-making are increasingly distributed across multiple levels-local, regional, national, and supranational. Understanding how these levels interact, and how power is coordinated, shared, or contested among them, is essential for comprehending the functioning of modern democracies.

The term *multilevel government* refers to the political and institutional interaction between different levels of authority within compound or territorially complex systems. This course explores the principles, structures, and real-world dynamics of multilevel governance from a comparative perspective.

The course is organized into four interrelated thematic blocks:

- Block I lays the analytical and conceptual groundwork, introducing key distinctions between federalism, decentralization, and other models of territorial governance. It also explores how these systems are classified, measured, and debated in international contexts.
- Block II examines the political and institutional dynamics of multilevel governance, focusing on issues such as intergovernmental coordination, accountability, and the political challenges of managing complex territorial arrangements.
- Block III applies these concepts through comparative analysis of national experiences. Special attention is given to Spain, due to its distinctive and often contested model of decentralization, studied in

comparison with other cases such as Canada, Belgium, India, and South Africa. This block explores both institutional design and practical implementation.

- Block IV addresses cross-cutting and emerging challenges in multilevel governance, including the management of policy areas such as migration, climate change, and linguistic diversity, as well as the role of supranational and international actors like the European Union, the United Nations, and regional organizations.

The course aims to equip students with both a robust theoretical foundation and the analytical tools needed to critically assess how multilevel governance functions across diverse political systems. While Spain serves as a key case study, it is examined within a broader comparative and thematic framework.

Special emphasis is placed on the actual functioning of intergovernmental mechanisms, the distribution of competences, and the patterns of cooperation and conflict. The goal is to provide students with the tools to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and evolving dynamics of multilevel governance-not only in Spain, but in a variety of domestic and international contexts.

Ultimately, the course seeks to bridge conceptual understanding with empirical insight, offering a dual perspective that combines academic analysis with the practical concerns of policymakers and institutional actors.

Competences

Political Science and Public Management

- Applying the knowledge of the Public Administrations on its various levels to practical and professional concrete cases.
- Demonstrating the understanding of intergovernmental relationships and identifying the position of Public Administrations in the political system.
- Describing and understanding the functioning of the Public Administration on a state, sub-state and supranational level.

Contemporary History, Politics and Economics

- Describe and analyse the functioning of public administrations on different territorial scales.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analysing public policies, both in their elaboration and implementation processes.
2. Applying the knowledge of the Public Administrations on its various levels to practical and professional concrete cases.
3. Demonstrate initiative and work independently when required.
4. Demonstrating the understanding of intergovernmental relationships and identifying the position of Public Administrations in the political system.
5. Describing and understanding the functioning of the Public Administration on a state, sub-state and supranational level.
6. Distinguishing the phases of public politics: formulation, decision, implementation and evaluation.
7. Properly explaining and describing main theoretical approaches of the analysis of political sciences: cycle of politics, actor-network, institutional approaches, rational choice theory.

Content

The course is structured into four main thematic blocks, combining theoretical sessions with practical seminars. The theoretical sessions introduce the analytical tools and core concepts of multilevel governance, while the practical sessions include case discussions, debates, and reading-based activities designed to encourage participation and critical thinking.

Block I - Foundations of Multilevel Government

This block introduces the basic concepts, institutional types, and analytical frameworks used to study multilevel governance. Topics include federalism, decentralization, compound states, and the tools used to measure and compare them.

Includes:

- Key definitions and distinctions
- Institutional typologies
- Evolution and objectives of federal and decentralized systems
- Measurement and comparative indicators

Practical sessions may involve case comparisons or guided discussion of selected readings.

Block II - Dynamics and Tensions in Multilevel Systems

This block explores the internal functioning of multilevel systems, focusing on how different levels of government interact, cooperate, or compete. It also addresses political representation, legitimacy, and accountability challenges.

Includes:

- Drivers and limits of decentralization
- Intergovernmental coordination and conflict
- Recentralization and reform
- Political representation in multilevel contexts

Seminars may include comparative analysis, debate, or text-based discussion.

Block III - Comparative Cases and National Experiences

This block applies the conceptual tools to different national cases, with a comparative perspective. The Spanish case is a central example, but other cases (e.g. Canada, Belgium, India) are also considered to explore patterns, differences, and shared challenges.

Includes:

- Spain's institutional design and evolution
- Federalism and identity politics
- Diversity management in non-Western contexts
- Institutional resilience and reform

Practical sessions may focus on comparing specific cases or exploring thematic issues such as language or territorial crises.

Block IV - Emerging Issues and Supranational Multilevel Governance

This final block explores how multilevel governance interacts with global and cross-cutting challenges, including migration, climate policy, and cultural diversity. It also considers how multilevel structures operate at the supranational level, particularly in the EU and other international frameworks.

Includes:

- Multilevel governance in the European Union and beyond
- Policy coordination in areas like migration, climate, and health
- Governance of cultural and linguistic diversity
- Crisis response and post-pandemic coordination

Seminars may include policy simulations, thematic comparisons, or discussion of selected cases or materials.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Autonomous	75	3	2, 3, 4, 5
Directed	50	2	2, 4, 5
Supervised	12	0.48	3

Throughout the course, each thematic block will combine traditional lectures-delivered by the instructor or invited experts-with interactive sessions based on case studies, presentations, debates, short reading assessments, or brief analytical essays. These sessions are designed to encourage students to apply theoretical frameworks to specific cases and to engage in comparative and critical discussion.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Exam Essay	50%	2	0.08	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Seminar Activities	30%	7	0.28	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
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Assessment Continuous Assessment

Student performance will be evaluated through three complementary components, aimed at ensuring ongoing engagement with the course:

1. Seminar Activities
2. Two partial written tests
3. Final written exam (essay format)

This combination ensures that students are assessed continuously throughout the semester. To obtain a final grade, students must complete all three types of assessments: seminar work, partial tests, and the final exam.

Weighting of components:

- Seminar Activities: 30%
- Partial written tests: 20%
- Final exam (essay): 50%

Students who fail the continuous assessment may opt for a compensatory exam.

Final Assessment Option

Students who choose not to follow the continuous assessment path must complete two compulsory tasks:

1. Final written exam at the end of the term (60%)
2. Long essay on an approved topic, to be submitted by the end of the course (40%)

Both components are mandatory and must be passed in order to obtain a final grade.

Non Evaluable Students:

Students will receive a Not Assessed (NA) grade if they fail to complete at least one of the three assessment components (seminar activities, midterm tests, or final exam) in the case of continuous assessment, or if they do not submit either of the two required tasks (final exam and long essay) in the case of final assessment.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is allowed strictly for support tasks, such as bibliographic or information searches, text correction, or translations, as well as for certain seminar activities when explicitly indicated. Students must clearly identify which parts were generated using AI, specify the tools used, and include a critical reflection on how these tools influenced both the process and the final outcome of the activity. Lack of transparency regarding AI use in any assessed activity will be considered a breach of academic integrity and may result in a partial or total penalty on the grade, or more severe academic sanctions in serious cases.

Bibliography

It will be determined at the beginning of the term at CV.

Basic text:

Kincaid, J., & Leckrone, J. (Eds.). (2023). *Teaching federalism: Multidimensional approaches* (Elgar Guides to Teaching). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Software

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Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	English	second semester	afternoon
(TE) Theory	1	English	second semester	afternoon