UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Political Institutions

Code: 106185
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Contemporary History, Politics and Economics	FB	1

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

Most of the subjects are taught in English. A B2 level of English of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is required, although no specific test of English proficiency level is held to access the degree.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course aims at two main goals:

1.- Making students acquainted with the main political institutions in contemporary societies, and the debates around them

2.- Making students familiar with the terminology of political institutions in English language

Competences

- Act with ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights and duties, diversity and democratic values.
- Contrast the main contemporary political theories.
- Describe and analyse the functioning of public administrations on different territorial scales.
- Explain and summarise knowledge acquired in English language at an advanced level.
- Identify the main actors, structure and functioning of political systems in the internal and international sphere from a theoretical or applied perspective.
- Manage and apply data to solve problems.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse and critically evaluate the functions of the different political institutions of the state.
2. Assessing the contribution of movements like feminism, environmentalism or various identity movements.
3. Collect, process and analyse information in a critical manner.
4. Define the concepts of democracy and dictatorship, describe the different models and critically evaluate their functioning.
5. Define the concepts of political science that inform different types of political systems.
6. Demonstrating good writing skills in different contexts.
7. Describe and use the main concepts in the field of the relations between politics and society: regulation of social conflict, political power and legitimation, political system.
8. Describe electoral systems and evaluate the political consequences of putting them in place.
9. Describe political actors and critically evaluate political behaviour in different socio-political and historical contexts.
10. Describe the key elements that explain the appearance of the state and its evolution (the absolute state in the welfare state).
11. Describe the main elements of the political process: socialisation, attitudes and political ideologies.
12. Distinguishing between the analysis of political sciences and value judgements on democracy, human rights, social justice and sustainable development.
13. Explaining the forms of government arising from the different relationships between the powers of the State.
14. Propose projects and actions in accordance with the principles of ethical responsibility and respect for fundamental rights, diversity and democratic values.
15. Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
16. Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
17. Write a review of a publication, documentary video or event (conference or seminar) in English adapted to the content of one or more subjects on this course.

Content

1.- What is politics? Clarifying the vocabulary: State, government, regime, public sector... Structure and actors

2.-v The main political structures of today: democracies and autocracies

3.- Types of democracies..Can we measure democracy?

4.- Democracy, State and Law: the *Rule of Law*. Rights, liberties and political power. The division of powers and the types of democratic regimes: parliamentary and presidential regime.

5.- The institutions of democracy: Parliaments, executives, courts. Public administrations as the tools for institutional action.

6.- How to elect office - holders:types and consequences of electoral systems.

7.- Unitary and plural States: centralization and federation.

8.- Subnational government: regional and local structures.

9.-The actors of politics (1) : the citizens. How do they act and what do they think? Political cultures. Cultural change and the impact of mass - media

10.- The actors of politics (2): political parties. Types of parties and political families. The competition between parties: the party - systems.

11.-The actors of politics (3) : the social interests. Pluralism and social conflict: pressure groups, interest groups, social movements.

12.-The outcome of political action: public policies. The size of government. The Welfare State. Bureaucracy, legality, efficiency.

13.-The creation of economic and political spaces larger than nation - States: the case of the European Union.

14.-Democracies under criticism: citizen disaffection, malfunction of institutions, economic globalization. Rodrik's paradox: democracy, sovereignity, internationalization : you can only have two !

La posta en crisi de les democràcies en el segle XXI : desafecte ciutadà, mal funcionament de les institucions, globalització econòmica. La paradoxa de Rodrik: democràcia, sobirania, internacionalització ...només se'npoden tenir 2 !

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Assessment	7.5	0.3	6, 16, 15
Lectures	30	1.2	1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 8, 7, 12, 10, 13, 14
Type: Supervised			
Individual and group meetings with lecturer	8	0.32	6, 12, 15, 3
Type: Autonomous			
Reading, study and preparation	65	2.6	1, 6, 7, 12, 17, 14, 16, 15, 3

The course will consist of:

- Presentations and discussions in the classroom, led by the lecturer.

- The writing and presentation of two papers by each student (one individual amd one in a group)

- Individual or group discussion meetings

The detailed program for the whole course will be presented in the first session. Communication with the lecturer will take place, essentially, through the Campus Virtual.

During the course an interval of 15 minutes will be allowed for students to answer the teaching assessment questionnaire provided by the University.

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

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes

Classroom participation	10%	3	0.12	2, 6, 12, 14, 16, 15
Final general test	50%	1.5	0.06	1, 6, 16, 15, 3
Group essay and presentation	20%	25	1	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 8, 7, 12, 10, 13, 14, 16, 15
Midterm exam	20 %	10	0.4	6, 9, 12, 17, 10, 16

The course is based on continuous evaluation : the final exam does not allow, on its own, to get a PASS qualification

On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.

Students will obtain a "Not assessed/Not submitted" course grade unless they have submitted more than one - third of the assessment items.

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

In case of not passing the evaluation, the student can give a resit exam. The maximum grade of the resit exam is 5.

According to the regulations of the Faculty, in order to be able to access the resit exam, it will be necessary to have taken tests that are equivalent to a minimum of 2/3 of the grade and to have obtained a minimum average grade of 3.5.

Bibliography

TEXT GENERAL :

J.Mª. Vallès, *Ciencia Política: Una introducción.* Barcelona (Ariel), diverses edicions.

General, English language text-books :

- D.Simon, J. Romance, N.Riemer *The Challenge of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science* (6th Edition) - eBook

- Hague, Rod; Harrop, Martin *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*

(several editions, some of them with other co-authors)

- Colomer, J.M., ed., *Comparative European Politics* (several editions)

TEXT DE LECTURA OBLIGATÒRIA:

Max Weber, *La política como vocación./ Politics as a profession.* Diverses edicions; el professor facilitarà una versió digital en lengua inglesa. Per exemple:

Free on-line English version:
http://fs2.american.edu/dfagel/www/class%20readings/weber/politicsasavocation.pdf

REFERENCES FOR GROUP PRESENTATIONS TO THE CLASS:

Some of the group presentations will be devoted to current facts (such as Spanish General Election 2023, the appointment of the Cabinet, and so, on). Others will be the discussion of a book, to select from:

Norberto Bobbio, *Derecha e izquierda: razones y significados de una distinción política.* Madrid (Taurus), diverses edicions

JM Colomer, A. Beale, *Democracia y globalización: Ira, miedo y esperanza.* Barcelona (Anagrama), 2021

Mudde, Cas; Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal (2019) [2017]. *Populismo. Una breve introducción.* Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

D. Acemoglu, J. Robinson, *¿Por quéfracasan los países*? Ed. Deusto

Levitsky, S. & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *Cómo mueren las democracias.* Ed. Ariel.

E. Ostrom, *El gobierno de los bienes comunes : la evolución de las instituciones de acción colectiva.* Mexico (Fondo de Cultura Económica)

PÀGINES WEB AMB DADES I DOCUMENTS:

Pàgina web de la Unió InterParlamentària: https://data.ipu.org/

Pàgina web de l'Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance" - IDEA: https://www.idea.int/

Pàgina web de la "Comissió de Venècia", del Consell d'Europa ("Commission for Democracy Through Law"):

https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/events

We shall also use the information from websites such as The Economist Intelligence Unit, V - Democracy, Pew Research Center, Eurobaròmetre, CIS …

We'll give additional references whenever necessary

Software

Students are expected to use normally software for text editing, as well as the ability to conduct on - line searches.

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	50	English	first semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	50	English	first semester	afternoon