Since the ancient Greeks, institutions have been central to political analysis. In contemporary professional political science, often under the guise of claims to a “new institutionalism,” research addressed explicitly to institutions and their consequences dominates mainstream debates. This course surveys the leading institutionalist approaches to politics, and examines a selection of the most important research questions in both American and Comparative Politics that institutionalist analyses continue to define. The general aim is understand both the possibilities and the limitations of institutionalist approaches to political science. Our analysis will focus especially on the historical dimension that is critical to institutional analysis, and on the ways that institutions mediate relations between state and society.

The course begins with a survey of recent attempts to sum up and define the new institutionalism. In addition to several general works in this vein, we examine the various approaches to institutions that have emerged from rational choice theory, from sociological and cultural work on institutions and from historical analysis of political development. The course then samples several of the many specific domains of political science where institutionalism has played a crucial role in recent debates.

The first such section examines classic debates that recent institutionalist work has revived about the role of governmental institutions in politics: the different possibilities for crafting constitutional orders, the consequences of the choice of presidential or parliamentary institutions for governmental stability, and the implications of divided government for politics in the United States and elsewhere. In the next section we consider the role of institutions in state-society relations through sessions on working class formation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on contemporary party systems, and on varieties of welfare states and capitalism. The final section of the course turns to the exploding literature on such subjects as federalism, decentralization, and the local logics of governance by means of institutions.
Readings

The following required books have been ordered and should be available at the Bookstore.


Herbert Kitschelt, Peter Lange, John D. Stephens and Gary Marks (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).


All books with required reading will also be on reserve at Leavey Library. We will discuss in the first class section whether the articles and book excerpts besides those in the books listed above will be made available as a reader in addition to copies on reserve in Leavey.

In most of the domains we will cover, the required readings only offer glimpses of a much more extensive body of work. For this reason, the reading list also includes a sampling of additional readings for those interested in exploring the issues raised in required readings further.

Assignments

Requirements for the course, in addition to responsibilities for leading discussion of part of the readings, will center around two short reviews of readings for separate weeks (5-6 pages) and one final paper of 10-12 pages.

Each review should develop a critical analytical perspective on part the readings for the relevant week. You will also be required to give your analysis orally in a 15-minute class presentation. The presentation and written analysis should pose general questions for seminar discussion as well as specific questions about each reading, and presenters will be expected to lead discussion on those questions. Initial sign-ups for topics will take place in our first session. These papers will be due **no later than 24 hours in advance of the seminar meeting time.** By this time, in addition to leaving a copy in the instructor’s mailbox, you will be expected to post
the text of your paper electronically for the other seminar participants at the Blackboard website for the course (accessible using your Unix ID and password (same as for your USC e-mail) at http://learn.usc.edu). If seminar enrollment requires students to prepare more than two such analyses, only two (of your choice) will be graded.

The final paper will consist of a research proposal, and will be due at the close of business on the first day of exam period (April 30). In this assignment, applying literature and concepts from the course as well as additional research, you will develop and justify a project. You will not be expected to carry out the project, but to design a project that you would carry out with the appropriate resources and time. A handout will be distributed with further specifics about this assignment, and each student will be expected to meet with the instructor to discuss the proposal.

Weighting of assignments will be as follows:

First review: 20%
Second review: 20%
Class discussion: 20%
Final paper: 40%

This list of assignments is based on the assumption that all students will do all the required reading, attend all classes and participate regularly and constructively in discussions. Failure to do any of these tasks will be considered just cause for lowering of your final grade.

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Reading List
(With examples of questions for each week)

January 9: Introduction

PART I: WHAT IS THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM?

January 16: Is There a Core?

1. How does institutionalism differ from other approaches to political and social science?
2. Is there a common set of concerns, issues or arguments in institutionalism?
3. What is new about the new institutionalism?
4. How does institutionalism in different social sciences differ?


*Further recommended reading:*
Other essays in Skocpol, Rueschmeyer and Evans.

January 23: **Rational Choice and Institutionalism**

1. How do models of rational choice theory (cycling, structure-induced equilibrium, transactions costs, veto players) seek to explain political processes?
2. What role do institutions play in these explanations? Why do students of this tradition set forth their own version of new institutionalism?
3. What makes rational choice arguments more, or less, persuasive?
4. What are the weaknesses of rational choice approaches? What aspects of institutions do they neglect?


*Further recommended reading:*

January 30: **Sociological and Culturalist Variants of Institutionalism**

1. What does the new institutionalism mean in sociology? How does it differ from previous study of organizations?
2. What does it mean to view states and other institutions in terms of culture? How can this approach go beyond previous ones? Where does it require us to look to explain politics?
3. What are the weaknesses of culturalist and sociological approaches to institutions?
4. What lessons does institutionalism hold for the Law and Society tradition? How can Law and Society add to the understanding of institutions?


Further recommended reading:
Other essays in DiMaggio and Powell.

February 6: **History and Institutionalism**

1. Is historical institutionalism distinct from rational choice, sociological and culturalist variants? If so how?
2. What role does time play in institutions and their effects? Does studying institutions and their effects historically make a difference in our understanding of how they operate?
3. What types of historical institutional processes should comprise the main focus in studies of development: stability or change?
4. What kinds of evidentiary demands does historical institutionalism make? How do these differ from those in other approaches?


Further recommended reading:

PART II: PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

February 13: Constitutional Orders

1. How does Lijphart develop his institutional typology? What ties the institutional attributes of democracies together? How does his analysis compare with earlier philosophical accounts of Aristotle, Montesquieu or Madison?
2. What are the most fundamental lines along which modern democratic political systems differ? What difference do those differences make?
3. How does the rational choice (North and Weingast) and culturalist (Sohrabi) analyses of constitutional orders differ from that of Lijphart in modes of analysis, in use of evidence, and in conclusions?
4. Is democracy a matter of institutional design?


Further recommended reading:
*The Federalist*
February 20: Presidentialism, Parliamentarism and Divided Government

1. How does the distinction between presidential and parliamentary government affect Lijphart’s typology and the conclusions he draws?
2. Does Presidential or Parliamentary government undermine the stability of democracies more? Why?
3. Does divided government under U.S. presidentialism undermine the effectiveness of policymaking and legislation?
4. How do Mainwaring/Carey and Linz go about arguing whether either of these forms of government is best? What else could explain the differences that presidentialism and divided government seem to make?

Lijphart, 116-142.

Further recommended reading:
Other articles in Governance 4 (1991) issue on divided government.
David Mayhew, Divided We Govern (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

**PART III: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY**

February 27: *Parties and Working Class Formation*

1. Does the Marxist account of working class formation stand up to empirical testing?
2. Why did worker’s movements form stronger parties and movements in European countries like Germany and Britain than in the United States?
3. How did political institutions give shape and direction to different working class movements? How did these influences combine with differences in social and economic change?
4. What made the difference for the emergence of working class, democratic socialist parties?

Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg (eds.), *Working-Class Formation* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 1-41, 397-455 (essays by Katznelson and Zolberg), and two of the following three excerpts: 45-154 (Sewell, Perrot and Cottereau on France), 159-276 (Bridges and Shefter on the United States), or 279-393 (Kocka and Nolan on Germany).


*Further recommended reading:*


**March 6: Contemporary Party and Electoral Systems**

1. What are the main variants in electoral systems, and what difference do these make for patterns of representation and governance?
2. What transformations have the working class parties of advanced industrial democracies recently undergone?
3. What parallel transformations have faced parties of the Right? What role has neoliberalism played in these transformations, and how have neoliberal agendas fared?
4. Have party elites, mass publics or institutions played the bigger role in these transformations?


Further recommended reading:
Ramseyer and Rosenbluth, Japan’s Political Marketplace.
Kaare Strom and Wolfgang Müller, Policy, Office or Votes? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

March 11-16: SPRING RECESS

March 20: NO CLASS

March 27: Capitalism and the Welfare State

1. What constitutes the main types of “national capitalisms”? What holds these institutional systems together internally? What consequences do they have for politics, policy and performance?
2. What are the main international varieties of welfare states? What fundamental dynamics distinguish these types? Institutional, social, economic?
3. How far has the world economy globalized? In what sense?
4. Is economic globalization undermining distinctive national capitalisms and welfare states? If so, which ones and why? If not, why not?

Peter Hall and David Soskice, Varieties of Capitalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), introduction (manuscript).

Further recommended reading:

**PART IV: INSTITUTIONS AND SCALE**

April 3: **Federalism**

APSA-CP: Newsletter of the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, Special Issue on Federalism 11(1) (Winter 2000).

1. Does federalism promote the goals of economic, environmental, redistributive other policies better than other forms of territorial organization?
2. What problems does federalism have? In what circumstances is it a better or worse form of government?
3. What kind of analysis can best account for decisions for lodge more or less decisionmaking authority with the national government and with the states in the U.S.?
4. Does the rational choice account of fiscal federalism provide a convincing account of the
consequences from this form of government?

Further recommended reading:

April 10: Decentralization

Jefferey M. Sellers, Governing from Below (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapters 1, 3.

1. What critique does Selznick offer of decentralization in the New Deal? Why does he see decentralized governance as a problem? Does this critique hold up today?
2. Is Selznick more a new or an old institutionalist?
3. What are the sources of the ambiguity Handler finds in decentralization? Under what circumstances has decentralization raised the level of empowerment? How would Selznick respond to this analysis?
4. Why has decentralization taken place? Can institutional explanations account for this process, or are other influences (such as the changing economy) more powerful?

Further recommended reading:
Peterson, *The Price of Federalism*.

April 17: Local Governance

1. What can be gained by analyzing institutions from a local perspective?
2. What is local (or urban) governance, and what role does it play in overall systems of policy, politics and economics?
3. Can systems of local governance explain local outcomes any better than other typologies of governmental and politico-economic institutions?
4. Can institutional analysis provide a full account of the way democracy should operate?

Sellers, Chapters 4-6.

Further recommended reading:

April 24: Presentation, discussion of student research proposals