

PIA3127: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Political Institutions and Behaviour

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

3127

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

Political institutions are an important component in contemporary political science theories. What are the origins of political institutions, and why do some institutions evolve? How do various political institutions affect our political behaviour, economic activities, and even daily life? This course aims to provide a comprehensive review of political institutions and behaviour. Topics include major theories of institutionalism, the origins, evolution, and development of institutions, institutional analysis of political behaviour, and discussions on some key institutions at the domestic and international levels. By studying this course, students are expected to acquire the basic concepts and debates in political institutionalism and apply them to interpret and predict individual and collective behaviour and strategies worldwide. This course will also enrich students' knowledge of the key literature and measurements in political science research.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Understand political institutionalism and its evolution		x	x	
2	Understand the logic of political institution and its effect on political behavior		x	x	
3	Getting basic knowledge of the important institutions in contemporary political system		x	x	x
4	Acquire the basic analytical skills to assess the validity of theories regarding political institutions and behaviour		x	x	x
5	Utilize analytical concepts and tools to formulate critical assessment and interpretation on public policies and political actions.		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Introduce key theories and concepts of authoritarian politics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

2	In-Class Presentation and Discussions	Discuss relevant topics and provide argument in evaluating and explaining the certain political phenomenon in authoritarian regimes. Students are expected to discuss these topics with a specific case of an authoritarian regime in the world	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
3	Term Essay	Students are expected to demonstrate their understanding in key theories and arguments in the authoritarian politics. The essay should be a critical analysis, rather than summary of course materials	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
4	Final Test	Students are expected to demonstrate the accurate understanding of key concepts, theories and ideas discussed in the classes. They are also expected to demonstrate their ability to apply what they learn from the class to analyse an new case	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	In-class quiz	1, 2, 3	10	Random short quiz to test students' familiarity with required reading each week.	No
2	Critical Analysis Essay	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	20	Pick one topic covered in the lecture to write essays to critically analyze and discuss the relevant literature	Yes

3	Presentations	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	Group project: Each group will summary one topic of the week, and the act as the discussant to another presentation.	Yes
4	Term Test	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	Final Test	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. In-class quiz

Criterion

Student' s familiarity with the content of required reading

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent familiarity with readings. Correct Understanding of the main argument of the reading.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good familiarity with readings. Largely correct Understanding of the main argument of the reading.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate familiarity with readings. Medium level of understanding on the main argument of the reading, with some error

Marginal (D)

Limited familiarity with readings. Limited understanding of the main argument of the reading.

Failure (F)

No attendance or unfamiliar with the reading with poor understanding of the main argument.

Assessment Task

2. Critical Analysis Essay

Criterion

Students' demonstration of knowledge and understanding on key debate among literature

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent demonstration of knowledge. Excellent understanding on key debate among the literature.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good demonstration of knowledge. Good understanding on key debate among the literature.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate demonstration of knowledge. Adequate understanding on key debate among the literature.

Marginal (D)

Limited demonstration of knowledge. Limited understanding on key debate among the literature.

Failure (F)

Little demonstration of knowledge. Very little or wrong understanding on key debate among the literature.

Assessment Task

3. Presentations

Criterion

Student demonstration of critical thinking skills and familiarity with literature

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent demonstration of critical thinking skills. Very good familiarity with literature

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good demonstration of critical thinking skills. Good familiarity with literature

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate demonstration of critical thinking skills. Adequate familiarity with literature

Marginal (D)

Limited demonstration of critical thinking skills. Average familiarity with literature

Failure (F)

Limited demonstration of critical thinking skills. Unfamiliarity with literature

Assessment Task

4. Term Test

Criterion

Students' demonstration of knowledge and on key concept and theory

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent demonstration of knowledge on the key concept and theory. Excellent answers based on theories and literature learned in this course.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good demonstration of knowledge on the key concept and theory. Good answers based on theories and literature learned in this course.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate demonstration of knowledge on the key concept and theory. Adequate answers based on theories and literature learned in this course.

Marginal (D)

Limited demonstration of knowledge on the key concept and theory. Answers are only marginally based on theories and literature learned in this course.

Failure (F)

Very little demonstration of knowledge on the key concept and theory. Answers are irrelevant to the theories and literature learned in this course.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Institutionalism, Institution Change, Rational Choice, Presidentialism and Parliamentarianism, Institutions and Behavior, Electoral Institution, Political Institution of Development, Institutionalism and Democracy, Political Parties

Detailed Syllabus

Brief Introduction to Institution and Institutionalism

Institutions as an Analytical Perspective

Social Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism

Institution and Behavioural Equilibrium: Rational Choice Institutionalism

The Origins, Change and Legacies of Institutions

Informal Institutions

Presidentialism versus Parliamentarianism

Election and Electoral System: An Institutional Approach

Parties: Why are Political Parties Important?

Institutions and Regimes Change

Institutional Approach in Autocracies: Parties, Elections, and Legislatures

Institution, Democratic Backsliding, and Populism

Institutions of Economy and Development

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	North, Douglass C. Institutions." Journal of economic perspectives 5.1 (1991): 97-112.
2	Diermeier, Daniel, and Keith Krehbiel. Institutionalism as a Methodology." Journal of theoretical politics 15.2 (2003): 123-144.
3	Helmke, Gretchen and Steven Levitsky. Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." Perspectives on Politics. 2.4 (2004): 725-40.
4	Milan Svolik. 2012. The Politics of Authoritarian Rule. Cambridge University Press.
5	Avner Greif. Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
6	Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions, Chapter 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17, 28, 29, 37, 28

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Schuler (2020) United Front: Projecting Solidarity Through Deliberation in Vietnam. Oxford University Press
2	Mershon, Carol. 1996. "The Costs of Coalition: Coalition Theories and Italian Governments." The American Political Science Review 90(3): 534-54.
3	Boix, Carles, and Susan Carol Stokes. 2003. "Endogenous Democratization. "World Politics 55(4): 517-49.
4	Tsai, L (2007) Accountability without Democracy. Cambridge University Press
5	Gandhi, J., 2008. Political institutions under dictatorship. Cambridge University Press
6	Przeworski, A., 1991. Democracy and the market: Political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Cambridge university press.
7	March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. "The new institutionalism: Organizational factors in political life." American political science review 78, no. 3 (1983): 734-749.
8	Greif, Avner, and David D. Laitin. "A theory of endogenous institutional change." American political science review 98, no. 4 (2004): 633-652.

9	Selected Periodicals and Scholarly Journals: 1. American Political Science Review 2. American Journal of Political Science 3. British Journal of Political Science 4. European Political Science Review 5. Journal of Politics 6. Comparative Political Studies 7. Comparative Politics 8. International Organization 9. International Studies Quarterly 10. Governance 11. Political Studies 12. World Politics
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