

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Elections and Political Institutions in Contemporary Germany - 54642

Last update 06-09-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: Cont. German Studies:politics, Soc.&Cult

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Tristan Klingelhöfer

Coordinator Email: tr.klinge@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Tuesdays, 13:00 – 14:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Tristan Klingelhofer

Course/Module description:

According the democratic ideal, elections influence the composition and working of central state institutions. In this course, we survey if and how this ideal translates into practice in contemporary Germany. We begin with an overview of the political system in general, the machinations of the electoral system as well as the standard theoretical framework of how elections are supposed to realize democracy in parliamentary regimes. Subsequently, the course introduces the main approaches to explaining voting behavior and election outcomes, paying particular attention to continuities and change over time as well as divergences between East and West. In the final part of the course, we go over the main institutions of the federal republic and analyze how elections and public opinion shape their functioning and action.

Course/Module aims:

The course aims to give students a theoretically-motivated overview of the German political system. Rather than looking at the different institutions in isolation, the approach focuses on the dynamics and connections that arise from the democratic aspirations of the system. It will enable students to gauge exactly how elections exert influence over politics, familiarizing them with associated scholarly debates and intellectual conundrums along the way.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- *describe the central institutions in the German political system,*
- *analyze the determinants of elections and draw out their implications for the composition and functioning of said institutions,*
- *and relate these dynamics to theories of system performance and democratic government.*

Attendance requirements(%):

85

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Seminar

Course/Module Content:

Part 1 – Setting the stage

- (1) Contours of the German political system*
- (2) Federalism – German style*
- (3) The mixed-member electoral system*

Part 2 – Elections in Germany

- (4) Applying classic theories of voting behavior*
- (5) Change over time*
- (6) Divergences between East and West*

Part 3 – Elections and political institutions

- (7) Representation in the Bundestag*
- (8) Forming governments in complex settings*
- (9) Legislating with and against the Bundesrat*
- (10) Parties as multi-level organizations*
- (11) Parties adapt to electoral change*
- (12) The Federal Constitutional Court and public opinion*

- (13) Recapitulation and evaluation*

Required Reading:

The complete syllabus and the required reading will be uploaded to the Moodle site of the course.

Additional Reading Material:

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 70 %
Active Participation / Team Assignment 15 %
Presentation / Poster Presentation / Lecture 15 %

Additional information: