

Foundations of Institutional Political Analysis: Theory and Methods

Organised by Ellen Immergut & Waltraud Schelkle

Mondays, 15:00-17:00, Seminar Room 2

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“Institutions” are the second nature of society. Creations of actors with intentions and motivations, institutions order social, political, economic, and even cultural intercourse. Indeed, institutions constitute the very basis for human interaction. Consequently, institutions bear within them equally the potential danger of the most deep-seated social control, as well as the promise of human liberation from both the social bond and the constraints of nature. Institutionalism is the study of the origins, effects, and potential for reform of institutions.

This seminar introduces students to the theoretical program of the new institutionalism. We will review the three main strands of theory, rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism, and discuss recent literatures on institutional design, institutional stability and change, and social and political consequences of institutions. In addition, we will focus on the methods used within these three branches of the new institutionalism.

The aim of the class is three-fold. One is to familiarize students with classic texts and recent publications that any emerging political scientist will find useful to know and cite (the list is in that sense necessary but not sufficient, of course). The other is to help students develop their own research projects by encouraging them to see it through the lens of institutionalism. Third, where appropriate, we will discuss the differences, advantages, and disadvantages of institutionalist versus behavioralist approaches to political phenomena.

For each session, we ask a small group of volunteers to post 2-3 paragraphs (one page) on the readings, that elaborate the relationships between the readings and ask questions we can take up in the seminar. The instructors will provide such a short paper for the first week, and then we will divide up the remaining weeks amongst the participants. For the last session, we ask each participant for a 2-page reflection paper discussing an important aspect of the course as a whole, e.g. on the relevance of two or all three institutionalisms for their research. We expect participants to post the short papers on the weekly readings to the course webpage by Monday morning at 10:00 AM, as they will kick off our class discussion. The reflection piece is due on Friday 11 December at 13:00.

Requirements: readings, participation, preparation of short paper/discussion questions, thought piece.

Learning Outcomes: Understand the distinction between behavioralism and institutionalism, and their theoretical assumptions, including the similarities and differences of the three branches (rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalism). Be able to propose research designs and methodologies derived from these three schools for specific empirical problems. Learn from key examples how to parse the literature and develop a rationale and justification for a dissertation puzzle. Develop a sensitivity to the fit of theoretical model to a given empirical application.

Reading List:

1. October 3rd: Introduction: From Behavioralism to Institutionalism

- Dahl, Robert A. 1961. 'The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest'. *American Political Science Review* 55(4): 763–72.
- Easton, David. 1985. 'Political Science in the United States: Past and Present'. *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique* 6(1): 133–52.
- Truman, David B. 1970. "Interest Groups and the Nature of the State." In *American Society, Inc: Studies of the Structure and Political Economy of the United States*, ed. Maurice Zeitlin, Markham Sociology Series. Chicago: Markham. 317-37.
- Hall, Peter A., and Rosemary C. R. Taylor. 1996. 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms'. *Political Studies* 44(5): 936–57.

Part 1: Three types of Neo-Institutionalism

2. October 10th: Rational Choice Institutionalism

- Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 22-41,1-7, 88-118.
- North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3-10.
- Krasner, Stephen D. 1988. 'Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective'. *Comparative Political Studies* 21(1): 66–94.
- Moe, Terry M. 1990. 'Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story'. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 6: 213–53.

3. October 17th: Sociological Institutionalism

- Powell, Walter W., and Paul J. DiMaggio. 1991. "Introduction." In Powell, Walter W., and Paul J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1-38.
- March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. 1984. 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life'. *American Political Science Review* 78(3): 734–49.
- Schmidt, Vivien A. 2000. "Values and Discourse in the Politics of Adjustment". In Fritz W. Scharpf & Vivien A. Schmidt (Eds.), *Welfare and Work in the Open Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 229-309.

4. October 24th: Historical Institutionalism

- Thelen, Kathleen, and Sven Steinmo. 1992. "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics." In Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen and Frank Longstreth (Eds.), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-32.
- Immergut, Ellen M. 1998. 'The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism'. *Politics & Society* 26(1): 5–34.
- Hall, Peter A., and Kathleen Thelen. 2009. 'Institutional Change in Varieties of Capitalism'. *Socio-Economic Review* 7(1): 7–34.

Part II: Issues

5. November 7th: Path dependency

- North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-35.
- Pierson, Paul. 2000. 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics'. *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251–67.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. 2006. 'The Joint-Decision Trap Revisited'. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(4): 845–64.
- Tsebelis, George. 1995. 'Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism and Multipartyism'. *British Journal of Political Science* 25(3): 289–325.

6. November 14th: Institutional Change

- Streeck, Wolfgang, & Thelen, Kathleen. 2005. "Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies". In Wolfgang Streeck & Kathleen Thelen (Eds.), *Beyond Continuity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1-39.
- Gerschewski, Johannes. 2021. 'Explanations of Institutional Change: Reflecting on a "Missing Diagonal"'. *American Political Science Review* 115(1): 218–33.
- Immergut, Ellen M., and Ikuo Kume (Eds.). 2006. Special Issue: Crises of Governance in Japan and Europe: Institutions and the Politics of Change in Japan and Europe, *Governance*, 19(1): 1-133, [select one article](#).

7. November 21st: The political power of ideas

- Hall, Peter A. 1989. *The Political power of economic ideas: Keynesianism across nations*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 3-26.
- Goldstein, Judith and Robert O. Keohane. 1993. "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework." In *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 3-30.
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. 2007. "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework." In Jeffrey T. Checkel (Ed.), *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3-28.

- Jabko, Nicolas. 2006. *Playing the Market: Political Strategy for Uniting Europe, 1985-2005*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1-9.

8. November 28th: Collective action

- Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. 'The Strength of Weak Ties'. *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360–80.
- Olson, Mancur. 1982. *The rise and decline of nations: economic growth, stagflation, and social rigidities*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press. 17-74.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1-28.
- Keohane, Robert O., and Elinor Ostrom. 1995. "Introduction". In Robert O. Keohane & Elinor Ostrom (Eds.), *Local Commons and Global Interdependence*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications. 1-26.

9. December 5th: Delegation

- Elster, Jon. 1984. *Ulysses and the Sirens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2nd edition. 65-111.
- Majone, Giandomenico. 2001. 'Two Logics of Delegation: Agency and Fiduciary Relations in EU Governance'. *European Union Politics* 2(1): 103–22.
- Lohmann, Susanne. 2003. 'Why Do Institutions Matter? An Audience–Cost Theory of Institutional Commitment'. *Governance* 16(1): 95–110.
- Abbott, Kenneth W., Philipp Genschel, Duncan Snidal, and Bernhard Zangl. 2020. 'Competence versus Control: The Governor's Dilemma'. *Regulation & Governance* 14(4): 619–36.

10. December 12th: CONCLUSIONS

For this session we will prepare some interactive wrap-up exercises, based on your thought pieces (Due on Dec 11th at 13:00.)