

Electoral systems and party competition in multiethnic democracies

Lecturer:

Dr. Christina Isabel Zuber (mail@christinazuber.com)

Course description

This course deals with the two closely connected topics of electoral systems and party competition in ethnically heterogeneous democracies. With regard to the first topic, electoral systems, we will focus on the promises and pitfalls of “electoral engineering”, i.e. the reform of the formal rules defining an electoral system with the aim of influencing the political behaviour of parties and voters. Can the right choice of the electoral system bring stability to ethnically divided societies? Or do we rather have to see the electoral system itself as a result of the choices of political parties? With regard to the second topic, party competition, we will see how to classify parties as ethnic, non-ethnic and multi-ethnic, and assess how these parties choose their strategies, taking into account voter preferences, the behaviour of their competitors, and the incentives of the electoral system. Does party competition involving ethnic parties necessarily lead to ethnic outbidding? Or can parties seek to represent ethnic interests without putting the stability of multiethnic democracies under threat?

The course consists of a morning lecture and an afternoon workshop. In the afternoon workshop, participants will apply the theoretical concepts and arguments developed in the morning lecture to multicultural democracies in Eastern and Western Europe in the form of group assignments.

Readings

Electoral system design

- Pippa Norris. 2004. *Electoral engineering. Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 (and Chapters 2 and 3 optional but highly recommended!).
- Reilly, Ben. 2002. Electoral Systems for Divided Societies, *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 156-170.
- Colomer, Josep M. 2005. It's Parties That Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down), *Political Studies* 53, 1-21.

Party competition

- Chandra, Kanchan. 2011. What is an ethnic party? *Party Politics*, 17(2): 151-169.
- Rabushka, Alvin & Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1971. Political Entrepreneurship and Patterns of Democratic Instability in Plural Societies, *Race & Class* 12 (4): 461-476.
- Zuber, Christina Isabel. 2012. Ethnic party competition beyond the segmented market, *Nationalities Papers* 40(6): 927-944.