

# Political control of the bureaucracy or bureaucratic politics? Theoretical debates and empirical insights

Jun.Prof. Dr. Christina Isabel Zuber, Summer Term 2018, Thursdays, 11:45 - 13:15

## Description

The seminar introduces students to two of the most prominent theoretical approaches in the field of public administration: Theories of political control of the bureaucracy and theories of bureaucratic politics. The former treats politics and public administration as separate spheres, assuming that political elites decide on the content of laws, while bureaucrats comply with and efficiently implement their decisions. A key question is then how much control political elites really have over bureaucrats and how they can ensure their compliance.

Theories of bureaucratic politics challenge this dichotomous picture of policy-making political elites on the one side controlling policy-executing bureaucrats on the other. They focus our attention on the policy-making role of public administration, to which they ascribe a central role in the political power structure. On this view, administrative behavior does not consist in the value-neutral execution of policies solely guided by considerations of efficiency. Administration *is* politics (Waldo 1948).

During the seminar, we will discuss these two competing theoretical approaches and their theoretical off-shoots and use them as a starting point to explore the complicated relationship between democratic legitimacy and administrative efficiency.

In their presentations, students fill the theoretical debate with empirical studies that are applying the theories. This allows us to test the explanatory power of each theory and encourages students to understand the relationship between theory and empirical findings in the field of public administration.

## Goals

Students know what theory is and can tell explanatory from normative theories. They know the advantages, but also the limits of working with general theories in the social sciences.

They know the main assumptions of theories of political control of the bureaucracy and theories of bureaucratic politics. They can recognize empirical studies that apply these theories and judge which evidence supports which theory.

Students know how to read theoretical literature and empirical contributions. They know the main components of the research process and can identify these components in published articles. They know how to find relevant literature and can draft a literature review for a hypothetical research paper contributing insights about one of the theories discussed.

## Requirements and modalities

*Note: Please read the following paragraphs carefully before asking questions about requirements and modalities. The answer to your question is often already contained in this document.*

Requirements for this course are threefold:

**1. Participation:** you come to class having carefully read and thought about the assigned reading materials for the week, and participate actively in class discussions. You may fail to attend max. two sessions.

**2. Presentations, handouts and acting as a discussant:** you find and present one article that was published in a peer reviewed journal<sup>1</sup> and that presents empirical research related to the theories we discuss during the seminar. In addition to presenting this article in class, you prepare a concise handout of the same article (I will provide a guideline for how to structure your presentation in class). The article you choose to present must be uploaded to Ilias one week before the session at which it is presented. The handout must be uploaded to Ilias by midnight of the day before the day you are scheduled to present. In addition, you once comment on somebody else's presentation in class, taking the role of a discussant.

**3. Literature review:** by the end of the term, you develop and hand in a literature review covering the state of research on a subject related to one of the theories discussed in class. You can think of this literature review as the first stage in a research project you might be doing to test one of the theories we discuss. The review should provide answers to the following

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<sup>1</sup> Some good public administration journals are: *Journal of public administration research and theory*, *Journal of policy analysis and management*, *Policy sciences*, *Policy studies journal*, *Governance*, *Journal of European public policy*, *Public administration*, *Public administration review*. The easiest way to start your search is to open the journal's website and do a keyword search on the theory.

questions: What do we know with regard to the subject in question and with what degree of certainty (e.g. inconclusive findings, contradictory findings, or agreement?). Where are remaining gaps that need to be addressed by future research? The literature review should be of appr. 3000 words (double spaced, times new roman, 12pt). It must be sent uploaded to Ilias in pdf format (document labelled with your surname) by 15 September 2018, midnight.

Grades will be based on a combination of 1, 2 and 3: in-class participation counts 10% of the grade, the presentation plus handout plus acting as a discussant 30%, and the literature review 60%. Late submissions of the literature review will lower your grade by 0.3 for each day your work is overdue, unless you provide a justified excuse on time. Please note that a student job does not count as a justified excuse.

I will provide you with more detailed guidelines on how to write a literature review in class. Please note that I have zero tolerance for plagiarism, which according to the Oxford Dictionary (online edition) is defined as “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own”. Students caught plagiarising will automatically fail the seminar. We will also discuss academic integrity and how to prevent plagiarism in class.

All the literature can be accessed via ILIAS.

You all have rights to upload the research articles and handouts to ILIAS. Please try whether this works and let me know if you encounter any problems.

## **Individual sessions and literature to be prepared for each week**

### **19 April 2018. Introduction**

- You do not have to prepare any material. We will introduce the topic and our plan for the whole semester.

### **26 April 2018. Research Skills I & II: Proper citing and Purpose of doing a literature review**

- APSA Style Manual for Political Science Students
- Jones, Lars R. 2011. Academic Integrity & Academic Dishonesty: A Handbook About Cheating & Plagiarism, Revised & Expanded Edition. Available at <http://www.fit.edu/current/documents/plagiarism.pdf>.
- Knopf, Jeffrey 2006. Doing a literature review. PS: Political Science and Politics, 39 (1): 127-132.

### **02 May 2018, Wednesday, 11:45 in Room J213 (inside the library). Research Skills III: Literature research**

- Session led by Judith Heeg from the library (where she is responsible for the social sciences)

### **03 May 2018. How to build and test theories: the research process / Skills IV: How to read, summarise and critically evaluate research articles**

- Frederickson, H.G. and Kevin B. Smith. 2003. The public administration theory primer: Westview Press: Boulder Colorado, Chapter 1: p. 1-15
- Gschwend, Thomas and Frank Schimmelfennig. 2007. Introduction: Designing research in political science – a dialogue between theory and data, in: Gschwend, Thomas, and Frank Schimmelfennig, eds. *Research Design in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 1- 18.
- Handout on how to summarize and critically discuss academic publications

### **10 May 2018: No Session, Public Holiday**

### **17 May 2018. Political control of the bureaucracy I: the classic dichotomy / Skills V: how to do a presentation**

- Wilson, Woodrow, 1887. The Study of Public Administration. *Political Science Quarterly* 2(2): 197-222
- Frederickson & Smith. 2003, Chapter 2: p. 15-40
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Miranda, Racquel, Lena

### **24 May 2018. Political control of the bureaucracy II: Principal-Agent Theory**

- Gailmard, Sean. 2014. Accountability and Principal–Agent Theory. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Retrieved 4 May. 2017, from <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641253.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199641253-e-016>.
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Jasmin, Tom, Andreas

**31 May 2018. No Session, Public Holiday**

**07 June 2018. Political control of the bureaucracy III: Capture theory**

- Levine, Michael E., and Jennifer L. Forrence. 1990. Regulatory capture, public interest, and the public agenda: Toward a synthesis. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 6: 167-198.
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Decebal, Carla, Gwenda

**14 June 2018. Letting things sink in – what have we learned so far?**

- Literature discussed and skills acquired so far: please prepare questions and comments
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Robert, Linus, Moira
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Kerameddin, Dani, Kim

**21 June 2018. NO SESSION, this session is made-up for by the library session**

**28 June 2018. Theories of bureaucratic politics I: the dichotomy under attack**

- Allison, Graham T., and Morton H. Halperin. 1972. Bureaucratic politics: A paradigm and some policy implications. *World politics* 24: 40-79.
- Frederickson & Smith. 2003, Chapter 3: p. 41-66.
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Sena, Gamze, Maria

**05 July 2018. Theories of bureaucratic politics II: bureaucrats as policy-makers**

- Rosati, Jerel A. 1981. Developing a systematic decision-making framework: Bureaucratic politics in perspective. *World Politics* 33 (2): 234-252.
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Tugce, Sam, Mitsuko

**12 July 2018. Representative bureaucracy III: if politics, then representation!**

- Krislov, Samuel. 1974. Representative bureaucracy. Chapter tba
- Research article chosen by seminar participant: Moritz, Betty, Noam
- Research article chosen by seminar: Ridvan, Claudius, Justin

**19 July 2018. Conclusion and peer feedback on ideas for literature review**

- Frederickson, H.G. and Kevin B. Smith. 2003. The public administration theory primer: Chapter 10: 229-247.
- Own ideas for topics for literature review