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Virtual Office Hours (on Teams):  
Monday 10-11:30; Thursday 9:30-11:00

PP2623 (Term 2 2022)  
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## **Comparative Electoral Systems (20 Credits)**

**Introduction:** This module is an introduction to the study of electoral systems and voters. We will examine the design of electoral systems around the world and examine their impact on voter turnout, vote choice, and political attitudes. We will also evaluate the extent to which electoral rules can help resolve conflict in divided societies and improve the representation of women and under-represented groups. The module will provide you with an understanding of how rules affect political behaviour and representation which can help to inform debates about how best to design electoral rules that strengthen and enhance democracy.

Some of the questions that we will be looking at include:

- How do electoral systems reflect different visions of democracy?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of plurality and PR systems?
- How do electoral systems influence political attitudes and political behavior?
- How can rules be designed to improve the representation of women and minorities?

### **Attendance and Engagement**

Lectures are pre-recorded and are available via BBL on Monday. In person seminars are scheduled on Tuesdays at 3-4 and 4-5pm (see your timetable). You can also attend on online via collaborate (on BBL) at the same time.

All students are expected to attend either the in person or the online weekly seminar sessions regularly as those who fail to attend classes often get lower marks than those who do attend, and actively participate. It is in class where students learn subject matter and skills that they will be assessed on and when writing references members of staff often comment on a student's performance in classes. If you miss classes due to unforeseen circumstances it is good practice to contact your Personal Tutor.

### **Core Text**

Farrell, David M. 2011. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Bloomsbury Press.

This book is available through Brunel as an ebook but you will be limited to a download of 45 pages. There is one copy that is always available at the library on a non-loan basis and four others that are available for loan. You can purchase a used copy on Amazon. There is also a first edition available that was published in 2001 that is very similar and is available on Amazon for £4.27.

## Schedule

### **Week 1 (10 January): Introduction to Electoral Systems**

Questions: Why Study Electoral Systems? What should an electoral system do?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 1

### **Week 2 (17 January): Single Member Plurality Systems**

Questions: How can electoral systems be classified? How do they reflect different visions of democracy? What countries are good examples of each vision? Which are not?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 2

### **Week 3 (24 January): Majoritarian Systems**

Questions: What is a plurality and how does it differ from a majority? What advantages (if any) do majoritarian systems have over plurality systems? What is AV and where is it used? Why did British voters reject AV in 2011?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 3

Coll, Steve. 2020. "The Case for Dumping the Electoral College" *The New Yorker*. 28 September.

### **Week 4 (31 January): Proportional Representation Systems**

Questions: What is the principal advantage of PR systems? What is STV and where is it used? Are mixed systems the best of both worlds?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 4-6

### **Week 5 (7 February): Consequences of Electoral Systems**

Questions: How do electoral systems influence political attitudes and behaviour?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 7.

### **Week 6 (14 February): Reading week. No Lecture or Tutorials.**

### **Week 7 (21 February): Voter Turnout and Political Engagement**

Questions: How do electoral systems influence turnout? Should voting be compulsory?

Readings:

Karp, Jeffrey A. and Susan A. Banducci. 2008. "Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behavior" *British Journal of Political Science*. 38(2): 311-334.

Anderson, Christopher J. and Christine A. Guillory. 1997. "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems" *American Political Science Review* 91(1): 66-81.

### **Week 8 (28 February): Voter Knowledge of Electoral Rules**

Questions: Are some electoral systems easier to understand than others? How much do citizens know about electoral rules and does it matter?

#### Readings:

Farrell, Ch. 10

Karp, Jeffrey A., Alessandro Nai, and Pippa Norris. 2018. "Dial 'F' for Fraud: Explaining Citizens Suspicions about Elections" *Electoral Studies*. 53(1): 11-19.

Karp, Jeffrey A. 2009. "Candidate Effects and Spill-Over in Mixed Systems: Evidence From New Zealand" *Electoral Studies*. 28(1): 41-50.

### **Week 9 (7 March): Women's Representation**

Questions: How do electoral systems influence the representation of women? Which systems are best for improving women's representation over the short term?

#### Readings:

Krook, Mona Lena. 2018. "Electoral Systems and Women's Representation" in *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* eds. Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart.

Thames, Frank C. 2017. "[Understanding the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation](#)" *Politics & Gender*. 13: 379-404.

### **Week 10 (14 March): Minority Representation**

Questions: How can rules be designed to improve the representation of minorities? Could these rules be considered undemocratic?

#### Readings:

Guinier, Lani. 1994. "Groups, Representation, and Race Conscious Districting: A Case of the Emperor's Clothes" in *Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*. New York: Free Press.

Guinier, Lani. 1993. "[The Representation of Minority Interests: The Question of Single-Member Districts](#)" *Cardozza Law Review*. 14.

Brockington, David, Todd Donovan, Shaun Bowler and Robert Brischetto. 1998. "[Minority Representation under Cumulative and Limited Voting](#)" *Journal of Politics* 60(4): 1108-1125.

**Week 11 (21 March): Reforming Electoral Systems and Feed Forward: Preparing for the Final Exam**

Questions: What explains electoral system change?

Readings:

Farrell, Chapter 8-9.

Benoit, Kenneth. 2004. "[Models of Electoral System Change](#)" *Electoral Studies* 23(3): 363-389.

**Week 12 (28 March): No Lecture or Tutorials; Final Exam (see below)**

**Assessment**

Assessment	Submission Deadline	Notes
Final Take Home Exam (100% of grade)	1 April, 2022	Exam will be distributed on Wiseflow on 31 March at 9:30am

**Note on Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct is any action that may give a student an unpermitted advantage and is governed by [Senate Regulation 6](#). These actions include plagiarism, collusion, and the recycling of work. Plagiarism is defined by the University (SR 6.21) as: *the knowing or reckless presentation of another person's work or ideas as one's own, and includes the use of published or unpublished work without acknowledging the source*. It is important you understand the rules and regulations with regards to plagiarism and that you reference your coursework appropriately.

The following are some ways to avoid plagiarism:

- Always use your own words to summarise an argument made by others. Everyone has their own style.
- Work on developing better writing skills. Writing is not easy and takes a lot of practice!
- Remember, we do not expect you to produce work that is of publishable quality. If we see it we will suspect something!
- Use multiple sources and learn how to use literature to develop and support an argument.

Collusion and Recycling of Work:

- Do not share your work with anyone. You could be subject to misconduct procedures even if someone else submits your work for assessment.
- Do not submit anything that you have previously submitted for assessment for any module.

The Wiseflow system will match published and unpublished material on the internet and produce a similarity score. These scores will flag your essay. The range of penalties includes temporary or permanent suspension and/or exclusion from the University or from specific University facilities or activities, and permanent expulsion from the University, including

Residences. At a minimum (ie. first offence), it will result in a capped resit counting for 0 for your GPA but repeated instances could be far more severe. The academic misconduct procedure is a lengthy process which could easily take 6 months or even a year to resolve.

### **Submitting coursework**

As per the [College Student Handbook](#) and [College Coursework Submission Procedure](#), formal coursework submissions must be made via WiseFlow *only*. On no account will we accept any coursework via any other means. So, if you attempt to, or actually submit it to, a lecturer, the Taught Programmes Office (TPO) or to anyone else, either in person or via email, we will not accept it, and we will not look at it or mark it. This is the case for those with extenuating circumstances and for those without extenuating circumstances. Any coursework not submitted via WiseFlow will be deemed to have not been submitted.

While submitting your coursework online, you must use the e-coversheet available on Blackboard Learn in the folder called '*How to submit*' available on the main page of each module. In this folder you will also find a video and a written description of the coursework submission process.

Please note that we will not accept coursework submitted in any other file format than this/those prescribed on the coursework brief's submission instructions section. We do not accept any document ending in '.pages', and if you choose to use a Mac, you should be aware that this is not supported by the University and there are sometimes technical 'issues' caused when you choose to do so. What 'technical issues'? It might be that the document is not open-able (the most likely) or that something is deleted. After submitting your coursework to WiseFlow, please check that it is actually there. Do not rely on simply pressing the 'submit' button *hoping* that it has been submitted and it is on WiseFlow. Go back in, and check, that it is actually there. Because, if you discover, later, that it is not then this will be an error on your part for which the university cannot be held accountable.

### **Late submissions of coursework**

The late submission policy has changed as of September 2016. How 'late coursework' is handled and who to get in contact with is detailed in the College Student Handbook in the 'Late Submission Policy' and 'Extenuating Circumstances' sections: [College Student Handbook](#)

### **Academic support**

It is useful to note that Brunel staff email addresses usually use the format of: [Firstname.Surname@brunel.ac.uk](#). Academic staff will normally respond to student emails within 2 working days.

During term 1 and 2, all academic staff have feedback and consultation hours for personal tutees and for students taking their modules. These will normally be posted on the academic member of staff's door and published on the TPO page on Blackboard Learn. Students may use these hours to follow up aspects of the modular/study or assessment block or to discuss their studies. You can go to an office hour on your own or in a small group.

Out of term time, academic staff are still available for discussions and meetings (for personal tutees and for Dissertation tutees), but often work from home or are on annual leave. Therefore, it is advisable to contact them by email to arrange an appointment.

More information on academic support can be found in the student well-being handbook available on this module's BBL page.