

Senior Seminar: Designing Democratic Governments

POLS 196

Spring 2019

Professor Heather Stoll

hstoll@polsci.ucsb.edu

Class Meeting Time: Thursdays 2:00–4:50p.m.

Class Location: Ellison 2824

Office: 3715 Ellison Hall

Office Hours: T 2:00p.m.–4:00p.m. or by appointment

1 Course Objectives

What kind of democratic government should a country have? In this seminar, we will examine the process by which governments are designed; the major choices that must be made (for example, a proportional representation versus a majoritarian electoral system); and the arguments for and against particular choices. We will ask how these choices matter for political outcomes, public policy, and peoples' lives. We will also grapple with the importance of democratic government and how to sustain it (and hence how democracies die, to paraphrase a recent, influential book). Throughout, the theoretical issues will be illuminated by discussions of both historic and current examples of institutional choice, with a particular focus upon (but not limited to) the United States and other advanced industrial democracies.

The seminar has three overarching goals. The first is to familiarize students with the academic literature on and debates about political institutions and constitutional design. The second is to give students experience in engaging in evidence-based policy debates, including writing policy memos, working in teams, and making presentations, all important skills in the world beyond UCSB. The third is to provide students with a flavor of graduate-level instruction and hence with a more interactive learning experience than can usually be obtained from even upper division lecture courses in political science at UCSB.

2 Course Requirements

First and perhaps most obviously, because this class is a seminar, it will fail without adequate student participation. Most classes will be loosely organized into two sessions. In the first part of the class, we will discuss the normative and empirical issues raised by the theoretical readings, which consist of academic articles and book chapters. In the second part, we will discuss a case study, where we will apply what we have learned to a contemporary example of institutional choice, debating the pros and cons of different institutional arrangements for a particular country. The case studies will draw from the previous week's theoretical readings, so as to give you time to digest the theoretical debates. Readings for the case studies will primarily consist of a few opinion pieces or news articles. To encourage participation, a large portion of your grade will be based upon it. This includes verbal participation during the actual class period, and written participation in the form of assigned Gaucho Space forum postings. Some of these required Gaucho Space postings are described below. Note that the quantity of participation does not necessarily equal the quality, and I will weigh both when assigning you a participation grade.

Second, students are required to serve as a moderator for one theoretical set of readings from Weeks 2 through 10 (meaning, the theoretical readings for one of these weeks). The moderator has two jobs. First, to write and share with the class a short (1-2 page) critical commentary on the readings that poses discussion questions for the class. In this short commentary, you might identify what you think are the key debates, points of controversy, or theoretical or empirical concerns — the things that you think we should talk about in class, in other words. This critical commentary should be posted to the appropriate forum on the course Gaucho Space page by 12:00pm on the Tuesday of the week when the readings will be discussed. The rest of the class is then responsible for posting one response to one moderator’s critical commentary, and one response to one comment by another student, by 12:00pm on the day of class that week (Thursday). These response postings will serve as part of your participation grade. The second job of the moderator is then to come to class prepared enough to help steer class discussions.

Third, for one of the weeks between Weeks 3 through 9, you will be part of a 2-3 student team making a policy recommendation to the class about the case study in question. Specifically, you yourself will write a short (circa 3-5 page) policy memo arguing either for or against the proposed institutional changes in that week’s case study. I will randomly assign one or more students to write in favor, and one or more students to write opposed. Your memo should be posted to the appropriate forum on the course Gaucho Space page by 5:00pm on the Monday of the week when the case study will be discussed. You and your teammates are then responsible for reading each other’s memos and coming up with a consensus recommendation to make to the class. You will present your recommendation via a 5-10 minute PowerPoint (or equivalent) presentation. I encourage you to meet with me, either in office hours or by appointment, to discuss your presentation in advance of class. After our first class meeting, I will ask you for your preferences over weeks for both serving as a moderator and the policy recommendation; I will do my best to give you one of your top choices, while assuring a (relatively) even distribution of students over weeks.

Fourth and finally, as a final project, students will write an approximately eight-to-ten page policy memo about a political institutional reform, either in the United States or another country, as their final project. There are no exams in this course, so this final project doubles as both a final exam and a more conventional term paper. The policy memo is due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 12 June, although you may of course turn it in earlier if doing so better fits your schedule. You may begin working on the memo at any time after the fourth week of class, when I will hand out a detailed prompt. The short, earlier policy memo and the feedback you receive on it should help you with this longer, final policy memo.

3 Grading

Grades for the course will be calculated as follows.

- Class participation, including Gaucho Space postings. (30%, of which roughly 20% is for in-class participation, and 10% for Gaucho Space postings)
- Service as moderator, including written critical commentary. (10%)
- Short policy memo and in-class presentation. These two components will be weighed equally. (25%)
- Final project (longer policy memo). (35%)

4 Required Reading Materials

Readings for the course are available in two ways. First, I have put our three core texts on reserve at the library (labeled [LIB] in the schedule below). These texts are: Dahl's *On Democracy* (2nd edition from 2015, although 1st edition from 1998 almost always acceptable as an alternative); Lijphart's *Patterns of Democracy* (2nd edition from 2012); and Levitsky and Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die* (2018). These texts can be alternatively obtained from many online vendors, often used (and hence inexpensively), if your budget allows it. Second, all other readings are available from the course Gaucho Space site; these readings are labeled [GS] in the schedule below. Note, however, that to access some of these readings, you will either need to be on a university computer or to have your home computer configured for off campus access.

5 Syllabus

Week 1: Organizational Session

- Robert Dahl, 2015, *On Democracy*, Preface to the Second Edition. [GS/LIB]
- *Preferences for participation (moderator, policy presentation) due by Friday, April 5 by 12:00pm*

Week 2: Democracy and Institutions: What Does It Mean to Design and Sustain a “Democratic” Government?

- Robert Dahl, 1998/2015, *On Democracy*, Chapters 1-2, 4-5, and 8-9. [LIB]
- Arend Lijphart, 2012, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 1. [LIB]
- Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, 2018, *How Democracies Die*, “Introduction.” [LIB]
- The Economist, 2014, “What’s Gone Wrong with Democracy?,” 1 March. [GS]
- *Discussion of Policy Memos*

Week 3: Constitutions

- Robert Dahl, 1998, *On Democracy*, Chapter 10 [LIB]
- Arend Lijphart, 2012, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 12 [LIB]
- Zachary Elkins, Tom Ginsburg, and James Melton, 2009, *The Endurance of National Constitutions*, Chapters 1 and 3. [GS]
- *Case Study: Deliberative or Direct Democracy in the United States?*
 - Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, 2018, *How Democracies Die*, Chapter 2 (optional: Chapters 1 and 3). [LIB]
 - James Fishkin, 2013, “Deliberation by the People Themselves: Entry Points for the Public Voice,” *Election Law Journal* 12 (4). [GS]
 - Room for Debate: “Out of Officials’ Hands and Onto the Ballot,” 2013, *The New York Times*, June 18. [GS]
 - Editorial Board, “Let the People Pick the President,” 2017, *The New York Times*, November 7. [GS]

Week 4: Executive-Legislative Relations: Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism

- Arend Lijphart, 2012, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 7. [LIB]
- Jose Antonio Cheibub, 2007, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy*, Chapter 1. [GS]
- David Samuels and Matthew Shugart, 2010, *Presidents, Parties and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*, February 2010 Summary by Shugart. [GS]
- Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, 1992, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, Chapter 1. [GS]
- *Case Study: A Constitution for Israel?*
 - Aluf Benn, 2010, “A Danger Called Constitution,” *Haaretz*, June 16 (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/a-danger-called-constitution-1.296458>). [GS]
 - Mordechai Kremnitzer and Amir Fuchs, 2011, “Now’s the Time for a Constitution” (<http://en.idi.org.il/analysis/articles/news-the-time-for-a-constitution>). [GS]
 - Gregory Mahler, 2011, *Politics and Government in Israel*, Chapter 4, p. 97-114. [GS]

Week 5: Legislatures

- Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 11. [LIB]
- Geoff Allen and Heather Stoll, 2019, “A Number Most Convenient? The Causes and Representational Consequences of Legislative Size.” Work in Progress. [GS]
- John M. Carey, 2008, “Legislative Organization,” in Sarah A. Binder, R. A. W. Rhodes, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. [GS]
- George Tsebelis and Jeanette Money, 1997, *Bicameralism*, Chapters “Introduction” and 1. [GS]
- *Case Study: Does the United States Need a Parliament or a Stronger Presidency?*
 - Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, 2018, *How Democracies Die*, Chapter 6 (optional: Chapter 4). [LIB]
 - David Brooks, 2013, “Strengthen the Presidency,” *New York Times*, December 12. [GS]
 - Chris Edelson, 2014, “A Stronger Presidency Is Not the Solution,” *University of Wisconsin Press Blog*, July 2. [GS]
 - Akhilesh Pillalamarri, 2016, “America Needs a Parliament,” *The National Interest*, August 2. [GS]

Week 6: Vertical Relations: Centralization vs. Decentralization, Federalism vs. Unitarianism

- Arend Lijphart, 2012, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 10. [LIB]

- Daniel Treisman, 2007, *The Architecture of Government: Rethinking Political Decentralization*, Chapters 1, 2 (p. 21-28 only), 10-12. [GS]
- *Case Study: Reform the Organization of the United States Congress?*
 - Editorial Board, 2018, “America Needs a Bigger House,” *The New York Times*, November 9. [GS]
 - Jonathan Bernstein, 2018, “A Bigger House Is a Bad Idea,” *Bloomberg Opinion*, November 13. [GS]
 - Eric W. Orts, 2019, “The Path to Give California 12 Senators, and Vermont Just One,” *The Atlantic*, January 2. [GS]
 - Jay Willis, 2018, “The Case for Abolishing the Senate,” *GQ*, October 16. [GS]

Week 7: Electoral Systems: The Big Picture

- Robert Dahl, 1998/2015, *On Democracy*, Chapter 11. [LIB]
- Arend Lijphart, 2012, *Patterns of Democracy*, Chapter 8. [LIB]
- Jennifer Gandhi and Abigail L. Heller, 2017, “Electoral Systems in Authoritarian States,” in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*. [GS]
- Mala Htun and G. Bingham Powell, 2013, “Between Science and Engineering: Political Science, Electoral Rules, and Democratic Governance” (Chapter 1, p. 1–13), in “Report of the Task Force on Electoral Rules and Democratic Governance,” American Political Science Association (<http://www.apsanet.org/ElectoralRules/>). [GS]
- Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, 1997, *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*, p. 1-2, 7-14, 121-131. [GS]
- *Case Study: A United Kingdom? Devolution and Scottish Independence*
 - Juliet Berger, 2000, “Bye-bye Britain? Devolution and the United Kingdom,” *SAIS Review*, 20 (2). [GS]
 - Gordon Brown, 2017, “Brexit is an Opportunity to Make a Federal United Kingdom,” *Financial Times*, March 28. [GS]
 - Michael Keating, 2017, “Brexit and Devolution in the United Kingdom,” *Politics and Governance*, 5 (2): 1–3. [GS]

Week 8: Electoral Systems: The Devil Is in the Details

- R. Michael Alvarez, Betsy Sinclair and Richard Hasen, 2006, “How Much is Enough? The Ballot Order Effect and the Use of Social Science Research in Election Law Disputes,” *Election Law Journal* 5 (1). [GS]
- Shaun Bowler and Todd Donovan, 2005, “Cumulative Voting and Minority Representation: Can It Work?” in Gary M. Segura and Shaun Bowler, eds., *Diversity in Democracy: Minority Representation in the United States*. [GS]
- Lisa Handley, 2017, “Redistricting,” in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*. [GS]

- David Lublin and Shaun Bowler, 2017, “Representation of Ethnic Minorities,” in Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*. [GS]
- Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, 1997, *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*, p. 115-119. [GS]
- *Case Study: Proportional Representation for Canada?*
 - Ed Broadbent and Hugh Segal, 2018, “The Evidence is Clear: Canada Needs Electoral Reform,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 9. [GS]
 - Patrice Dutil, 2017, “Why Trudeau Abandoned Electoral Reform,” *Literary Review of Canada Magazine*, May. [GS]
 - Richard Johnston, 2010, “Political Parties and the Electoral System,” in John C. Courtney and David E. Smith, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. [GS]

Week 9: In the Trenches: Electoral Administration and Governance

- Henry Brady, Michael Herron, Walter Mebane Jr., Jasjeet Sekhon, Kenneth Shotts, and Jonathan Wand, 2001, “Law and Data: The Butterfly Ballot Episode,” *PS* 34 (1). [GS]
- Excerpts from the Commission on Federal Election Reform, 2005, “Building Confidence in U.S. Elections: Report of the Commission on Federal Election Reform,” Letter from the Co-Chairs (p. ii) and Executive Summary (p. iv-v); skim Section 1, Goals and Challenges of Election Reform (p. 1-7), and Summary of Recommendations (p. 79-87) (<http://www1.american.edu/ia/cfer/>). [GS]
- Susan Hyde, 2010, “Experimenting in Democracy Promotion: International Observers and the 2004 Presidential Election in Indonesia,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (2) [GS]
- Pippa Norris, 2014, *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*, Chapters 1 and 10 [GS]
- *Case Study: Following California’s Lead? Micro-level Election Reform in the United States*
 - The Economist, 2018, “The Minority-Majority: America’s Electoral System Gives the Republicans Advantages over Democrats.” July 12. [GS]
 - Charles, Lane, 2018, “This Solution to Gerrymandering is Worse Than the Problem,” *The Chicago Tribune*, April 3. [GS]
 - Anthony McGann, Charles Anthony Smith, Michael Latner, and Alex Keena, 2017, “We Have a Standard for Judging Partisan Gerrymandering. The Supreme Court Should Use It,” *The Washington Post*, February 2. [GS]
 - Eric McGhee and Daniel Krimm, 2012, “Test-driving California’s Election Reforms,” Public Policy Institute of California (http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1032). [GS]
 - Editorial Board, 2018, “Do-It-Yourself Legislative Redistricting,” *The New York Times*, July 21. [GS]

Week 10: Democracy in Crisis, and the Limits of Constitutional Engineering?

- Robert Dahl (and Ian Shapiro), 2015, *On Democracy*, Chapters 12, 15–17. [LIB]

- Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, 2018, *How Democracies Die*, Chapters 5 and 9 (optional: Chapters 7–8). [LIB]
- Zachary Elkins, Tom Ginsburg, and James Melton, 2009, *The Endurance of National Constitutions*, Chapters 2 and “Conclusion.” [GS]
- Adam Przeworski, 2018, *Why Bother with Elections*, “Conclusion.” [GS]
- Philippe Schmitter, 2001, “Contrasting Approaches to Political Engineering: Constitutionalization & Democratization,” in M. Becker, H-J. Lauth, and G. Pickel, eds., *Rechtsstaat und Demokratie* [GS]