Master Seminar WP 2.1 – European Institutions

Time and location:  
Monday, 12:15-13:45, Oettingenstr. 67, L155  
Tuesday, 10:15-11:45, Oettingenstr. 67, 169  

Office hours:  
every Tuesday (during term time), 13:30-14:30, H005-9

Course description: The institutions of the European Union (EU) have been the subject of much debate and criticism in recent years. The Euro-crisis has challenged the EU’s institutional status quo and has highlighted its cracks and weaknesses. In this course, we analyse the EU’s institutional architecture against the backdrop of different theoretical approaches, rooted in different literatures, such as integration theory, neo-institutionalism and theories of (democratic) legitimacy. We are particularly interested in exploring the factors leading to the transformation of particular institutions as well as the creation of new ones. We will also focus on the design properties of EU institutions as well as their consequences for political outcomes.

Structure of the seminar sessions: In this seminar, you will acquire in-depth knowledge of different theoretical perspectives to account for the formation, design, transformation, as well as the consequences of European institutions. Moreover, you will learn to apply these perspectives to empirical phenomena in your own research projects. The overall objective of the module is to provide you with the knowledge and skills to conduct theory-guided research on key issues of European institutions. To this end, you will be asked to read several texts in preparation of each session (texts marked with an asterisk * = compulsory reading, available in the Intranet course folder). In our seminar sessions we will first reconstruct and discuss the theory/ies based on the compulsory reading. In order to assess the analytical usefulness of the theory/ies we will then apply it/them to specific institutions. Those of you who opt for a written exercise (“Übungsaufgabe”) as course requirement (see below) will produce a “mini case study” of European institutions; this will serve as starting points for our in-class discussion of how we can make productive empirical-analytical use of the theory in question.

Module requirements: The module “WP 2” comprises two seminars: “WP 2.1 Europäische Institutionen/ European Institutions” (Rittberger) and “WP 2.2 Internationale Institutionen/ International Institutions” (Hülßse or Kruck). The module examination consists of a research paper
(20,000-30,000 keys and one mini case study (“Übungsaufgabe”). You will have to complete one of the two module requirements in WP 2.1, the other one is due in WP 2.2.

In this seminar, the “Übungsaufgabe” will be one “mini case studies” of 5-6 standard-formatted pages each (excluding references). The task for this “mini case study” is to apply a theory introduced in one of the compulsory readings to a European institution (or several ones) of your choice. The short paper must be handed in via email by Friday noon prior to the relevant seminar session and will be made available to all course participants. You might also be asked to briefly present the key argument of your paper in class. All participants who choose to write a research paper in this seminar will have to present a research paper outline in one of the two research paper workshops (two page-outline to be submitted via email by Friday noon prior to the relevant workshop session). The deadline for the research paper is 12 August 2016 noon.

Commitment is a two-way street: I expect you to be well prepared when attending my class. You should budget at least half a working day for each week’s readings. If you decide that attending the class is not among your priorities, or if you should decide to appear only sporadically or unprepared, you are, as you are probably aware of, free to do so. Two things you should bear in mind, though. First, research shows that there is a robust relationship between class attendance and study success (i.e. your grades). Check out this meta-analysis in the Review of Educational Research: <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/80/2/272.abstract>. Second, a lack of commitment on your behalf will also be of little benefit for if you have to shop for letters of reference or a thesis supervisor. However, if you commit to my class, I will do everything I can to support you in succeeding. Nothing makes a lecturer more proud than seeing his or her students do well. But commitment is not a one-way street. So, it’s your choice.

Staying up to date: The most important discussions and debates that shape research on European institutions and politics take place in peer reviewed academic journals. You should make it a routine to regularly consult and screen the journals mentioned below, especially if you plan to write your seminar paper in this course.

Comparative European Politics
European Journal of Political Research
European Political Science Review
European Union Politics
Governance
Journal of Common Market Studies
Journal of European Integration
Journal of European Public Policy
Regulation & Governance
West European Politics

One of the best academic blogs on current affairs in the EU is the EUROPP blog, administered by colleagues at the LSE (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europppblog/)

Politico Europe (http://www.politico.eu) keeps you up to date on current affairs. Make sure you subscribe to their Newsletter, bringing you fresh information every morning (esp. “Brussels Playbook” and “Morgen Europa”).
Overview of the seminar sessions

1. Introduction: Origins, design, change, and consequences of European Institutions (11./12.4.)

Part I Theories of institutions

2. Rationalist approaches to institutions (18./19.4.)


3. Historical institutionalism (25./26.4.)


4. Ideational approaches to Institutions (2./3.5.)


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Part II Institutional change in the EU

5. Reforming the Union (9./10.5. 2015)


SUGGESTION FOR MINI CASE STUDY: (a) pick one hypothesis from Bickerton et al. and provide a short empirical illustration of the selected hypothesis; (b) think about empirical cases that fit the typology in the article by Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (Figure 2). Choose a case from one cell and provide an empirical illustration of the integration dynamics of this case.

6. Differentiated integration (23./24.5.)


SUGGESTION FOR MINI CASE STUDY: (a) revisit one of Kölliker’s cases against the backdrop of other theories (e.g. Schimmelfennig/Leuffen/Rittberger); (b) why does the UK not pursue further differentiated integration and votes on ‘Brexit’ instead?; (c) find out about opt-outs, temporary derogations or suspensions, which states have obtained from EU law and confront these with one of the theoretical perspectives.

Part III  Institutional design

7.  The expansion of the EP’s prerogatives (30./31.5.)


SUGGESTION FOR MINI CASE STUDY: (a) why did the EP succeed with its proposal to nominate ‘Spitzenkandidaten’ for the Commission Presidency?; (b) find a case where the EP obtained new prerogatives and confront this instance of empowerment with one of the various theoretical perspectives; (c) what is the EP’s role in the EU’s reformed economic governance regime? How can its involvement (or lack thereof) be explained?

8.  Agencies and Networks: The design of regulatory institutions in the EU (6.6./7.6.)


SUGGESTION FOR MINI CASE STUDY: (a) explain the creation of ‘Banking Union’; (b) explain the institutional design of the SSM or the SRM; (c) explain the creation of Europol, Frontex, or the EASO – what institutional changes can be expected in the context of the "refugee crisis"?

Part IV   Institutional consequences

9. The Euro-crisis and its consequences: Caught in the iron cage? (13.6./14.6.)


SUGGESTIONS FOR MINI CASE STUDIES: think about instances of policy or institutional change in the EU and how you could go about assessing the ‘power of ideas’.
10. The politicization of the EU: A pathway towards a more legitimate order? (20./21.6.)


SUGGESTION FOR A MINI CASE STUDY: draft a short research design for a project analysing politicization during the Euro-crisis.

Part V Preparing your seminar paper

11. Planning your research paper (27./28.6.)


12. Research paper workshop I (4./5.7.)

13. Research paper workshop II (11./12.7.)