COMPARATIVE PARLIAMENTARY STUDIES

Objectives
This course will focus on three aspects of legislative politics in parliamentary democracies: (1) parliamentary constitutions and their consequences, (2) parliamentary institutions, behaviors, and strategies, and (3) cabinet coalition bargaining and governance. On all of the topics covered in this course, we shall draw on recent and ongoing research projects. The seminar is designed for graduate students in political science but is, with the consent of the instructor, open to well-qualified students from other programs. Because this is an interactive seminar, full participation in seminar discussions is both expected and required.

Responsibilities and Grades
The seminar will involve a core of required readings. All students, including auditors, should complete these readings before seminar meetings and be prepared to discuss them. You will also post a weekly memo to the class message board by the evening of the day before the seminar (Monday 8:00 pm). Your memo should be one paragraph to a page and contain either (i) a critique of some of the readings, (ii) possible discussion questions for the class meeting and your (tentative) answers, or, (iii) interesting ways to compare and contrast readings. The memo should not be a summary of readings. During the week you make a formal presentation, you do not need to turn in a memo (see below).

The main written assignment will be a seminar paper (at least 15-20 pp.) on parliamentary politics, due on December 11. Topics should be chosen by October 20, in consultation with the instructor. There will also be a take-home essay assignment (with a page limit). Tentatively, this assignment will be due on November 17. You will also be expected to make two seminar presentations: one on a topic related to the course readings (see the list of study questions below) and one on your seminar paper project. The paper will account for 40% of your grade, the take-home exam also 40%, and seminar participation (including memos and seminar presentations) 20%. You have to complete all assignments to get credit for the course.

Books and Materials
The following required books have been ordered by the UCSD Bookstore:

Other readings may be assigned and made available. Details will be discussed during the first class meeting. All readings listed below are required.
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Week 1 (September 29):

What is Parliamentary Democracy?

Readings:
Strom, Müller and Bergman (2003), chs. 1 and 3.
Cheibub (2007), ch. 2.

Week 2 (October 6):

Parliamentary Structure and Process

Readings:

Study Questions:
1. What purposes do restrictive procedures serve in parliamentary democracies?
2. How do parliamentarians seek to overcome their lack of policy information relative to the executive branch?
3. Who rules parliament: Presiding officers, party leaders, the prime minister, or the citizens?

Week 3 (October 13):

Parliamentary Recruitment and Roles

Readings:
Döring, ch. 5 (Andeweg and Nijzink).

Study Questions:
1. Which matters most to the quality of parliamentarians: the demands of selectors or the supply of candidates?
2. To what extent and how does the pursuit of office shape parliamentary behaviors?
3. Do parliamentarians choose their roles?

Week 4 (October 20):

Parliamentary Elections

Readings:

Study Questions:
1. Is the parliamentary dissolution power the reason that parliamentary democracies are so stable?
2. Can incumbent parties in parliamentary systems fool the voters all of the time, some of the time, or none of the time?
3. Are PR elections the cause of multiparty systems, or are multiparty systems the cause of PR?
Paper Topics Due

Week 5 (October 27): Political Parties
Readings:
Cheibub (2007), ch. 5.
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003), ch. 22.
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008), ch. 11.

Study Questions:
1. The cartel party: a European peculiarity, a wave of the future, or a figment of the imagination?
2. Does the policy influence differential between government and opposition matter, and if so, how?
3. Why do citizens distrust political parties?

Week 6 (November 3): Coalition Bargaining: Formation and Membership
Readings:
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008), chs. 1-2, 4, and 6.
Tsebelis (2002), ch. 1 and 4.

Study Questions:
1. Was Riker right after all: Is the desire to avoid unnecessary “passengers” the most important force in coalition bargaining?
2. Are pre-electoral agreements the key to coalition bargaining?
3. To what extent does cabinet structure dictate coalition membership, and to what extent does coalition membership dictate cabinet structure?

Week 7 (November 10): Coalition Bargaining: Governance and Portfolio Allocation
Readings:
Laver and Shepsle (1996), chs. 1-5, 8-9, and 13.
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008), chs. 5, 7-8.

Study Questions:
1. What powers do cabinet members have, and how does it matter?
2. Which is the greater threat in executive appointments: adverse selection or moral hazard?
3. Does the parity norm disprove rational choice theories of coalition bargaining?
Week 8 (November 17): Coalition Bargaining: Stability and Duration

Readings:
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008), chs. 9-10.

Study Questions:
1. Does cabinet stability matter?
2. The suspicious deaths of parliamentary cabinets: Do they jump or are they pushed?
3. What makes critical events in coalition politics critical, and how critical are they?

Take-Home Essays Due

Week 9 (November 24): Policy Performance

Readings:
Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003), ch. 23.

Study Questions:
1. Does parliamentary democracy enhance the production of public goods, the creation of rents, neither, or both?
2. What matters most to policy performance: regime type, cabinet type, or electoral system?
3. Have the parliamentary mechanisms of citizen control lost their edge?

Week 10 (December 1): Parliamentarism, Presidentialism, and Democratic Stability

Readings:
Tsebelis (2002), ch. 3.

Study Questions:
1. Is the relationship between regime type and democratic stability spurious?
2. Is the semi-presidential regime type the happy medium?
3. Is the failure of presidential democracy a failure of Latin American politics, a failure of military intervention, a failure of presidential leadership selection, or none of the above?

December 11: Seminar Papers Due