



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

History of political institutions

PROF. CRISTINA BON; PROF. VALENTINA VILLA

Course aims and intended learning outcomes

By conveying an historical perspective of institutional changes over time, the course provides students with the essential knowledge to understand the historical development of Western political institutions from the feudal society to the late 20th Century's mass democracies, as well as the useful tools to raise their awareness over the present time. Attention will be particularly paid to some crucial concepts to the analysis of both historical as well as current institutional changes, such as: state, constitutionalism, parliamentarism, presidentialism, rule of law, corporativism, subsidiarity and globalization.

Knowledge and understanding

At the end of the course the student will be able to understand and describe the various forms of organized power over time. Besides, the student will be able to master the history of political institutions' specific lexicon.

Applying knowledge and understanding

At the end of the course the student will be able to apply his historical knowledge to interpret the current dynamics of present political regimes, with particular reference to European and North-American countries.

Course content

The course is divided into one module of forty hours and a twenty hours workshop. The first module is focused on the main governmental frames of the Western societies in the Medieval, the Early-Modern and the beginning of the Modern Ages (from 5th to 19th Centuries). The workshop explores the rise of the authoritarian states at the beginning of the 1900s, the cleavage of the Second World War and the following attempts to create new institutional forms of cooperation in the second half of the twentieth century.

FIRST MODULE The organization of power: origins and developments of Western political systems from the feudal society to the age of liberalism. (Prof. Cristina Bon)

1. Historical method and main concepts.
2. Fundamental characteristics of the Medieval Age.
3. Early Middle Ages: the Carolingian Empire.
4. High Middle Ages: Seigniories and Communes.
5. From the modern state to the absolutism.
6. The classic absolutism: the French monarchy.
7. The English constitutionalism and the conflict between Crown and Parliament.
8. The constitutional history of the American revolution.
9. The French revolution: constitutional aspects.
10. The Napoleonic regime.
11. Constitutional monarchies of the 1800s.
12. The nation-building process in the liberal period.

WORKSHOP: The crisis of the liberal state: from authoritarian regimes to supranational institutions (Prof. Valentina Villa)

1. The beginning of the Twentieth Century.
2. The Italian drift towards dictatorship.



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3. The rise of Nazism.
4. The Soviet Union.
5. Post WWII constitutional systems.
6. The origins of the European Union.

Reading list

Students will be required to prepare on both the notes taken in class and the following textbook:

R.C. VAN CAENEGEM, *An Historical Introduction to Western Constitutional Law*, Cambridge University, Press, Cambridge, 1995 (only chapters 2-6; 7, pp. 150-93; 8; 9, pp. 270-291).

Other reference essays and readings will be assigned by the lecturers during the class. Power points presentations of the lectures and reading materials will be available on blackboard.

Teaching method

Traditional lectures. Active participation is strongly encouraged: students are expected to participate constructively with comments and questions.

Assessment method and criteria

The final written exam will be held during the official Appelli, starting from June 2020. This exam will include questions related to two modules of the course and each part will include both open questions and multiple choices.

Otherwise, students can take two intermediate exams at the end of each module (i.e. January 2020 and May 2020), weighting respectively 60% and 40% of the final grade.

These intermediate tests, willing to verify ongoing student's knowledge of the main topics of the course, will include both open questions and multiple choices.

The final grade will be a weighted average of these two marks. Students failing one of the two partial written-tests will be allowed to take the failed part during any exam during the official sessions, from June 2020 to February 2021.

Students that, for any reasons, will not take both the intermediate written tests will be required to take the final written exam on the whole program during the official Appelli, as described above.

In order to pass the exam, students will be required to show their command of the various forms of organised power over time, of the essential chronological sequence of the events and of the specific lexicon of the course.

Notes and prerequisites

The course assumes a good knowledge of the European history from the Medieval times to the XXI century; students who believe to require additional knowledge before taking the course can contact the lecturers at their email addresses.

Further information and office hours can be found on the lecturers' webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/eng/cristina_bon/; http://docenti.unicatt.it/eng/valentina_giorgia_maria_villa/

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