



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Political science

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Course aims and intended learning outcomes

This is an introductory course to the analysis of political phenomena. It aims to illustrate the fundamental concepts and processes of politics, with examples drawn from country-specific actors, issues, and dynamics that are designed to illustrate the basic ideas. It addresses both theoretical and empirical issues on a comparative basis, mainly but not exclusively focusing on Europe.

The course aims to provide students with the basic knowledge about concepts, models and theories for the analysis of contemporary politics. On completion of this course, students should achieve the following outcomes.

With reference to knowledge and understanding, students will be able to grasp the institutional functioning of the consolidated democracies and to recognize the main developments and issues of contemporary democratic competition. As for applying this knowledge and understanding, they will be able to use the concepts and analytical tools, illustrated in the course, to carry out a basic analysis of political systems.

Course content

After introducing the main theoretical and methodological approaches of political science, the course will focus on structures, processes, and actors of political life.

FIRST PART: *What is politics?*

- basic political concepts
- the state
- political systems, processes, and functions

SECOND PART: *Political regimes*

- authoritarian regimes
- democracy and democratization

THIRD PART: *Democratic governments and institutions*

- systems of government
- legislatures
- executives and bureaucracies
- territorial government

FOURTH PART: *Political participation*

- political parties
- electoral systems
- voting
- interest groups
- public policy and policymaking

Reading list

R. HAGUE-M. HARROP-J. MCCORMICK, *Comparative Government and Politics. An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 11th edition, 2019.



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The specific parts to be studied by attending students will be indicated during lectures, while non-attending students will have to study the textbook in full.

Teaching method

Traditional lectures. Active participation is strongly encouraged: students are expected to participate constructively with comments and questions. The power point presentations will be available through the online platform Blackboard.

Assessment method and criteria

The assessment will be based on a written exam with test (up to 20% of the grade; 1 point for each correct answer) and open-ended questions. Their assessment will centre on: the accuracy of knowledge shown by students; the congruence of their answers with the open-ended questions; and their capacity to critically use the concepts illustrated in the course and in the textbook in order to provide original answers.

To gain additional points (up to 2) for the final grade, students may write an essay no longer than 2500 words. The essay must be completed by individual students acting alone. The assessment of the essay will centre on: the accuracy of knowledge; the congruence of the essay with the assignment; and the capacity to critically use the concepts illustrated in the course and in the textbook in order to provide an original argument. Further instructions will be provided during the academic year.

For attending students, the exam may be divided into a mid-term session and a final one.

Notes and prerequisites

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at <http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG> or on the Faculty notice board.

This is an introductory course and, hence, no prerequisite is necessary.

All news and updating will be made available on Blackboard. Students are kindly invited to register on the platform and consult it on a regular basis.