Ballot samples: India, Ireland, Japan, and Israel

For representative democracy to work, it requires a set of rules to determine who wins elections and gets to govern. However, these rules can vary greatly in terms of how votes are cast, counted, and translated into seats, and differences in the rules can produce significantly different political outcomes, both directly (due to the way in which votes are counted) and indirectly (due to incentives that affect the behavior of political actors, such as voters and political parties). The set of rules that structure the process of voting and election is what we call the electoral system. This seminar will survey and analyze electoral systems from around the world to explore how electoral rules can affect voters, politicians, parties, policymaking, and representation.

Course objectives:
By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Know and understand the basic mechanical differences between electoral systems.
- Use electoral results to obtain key measures of analysis, such as the effective number of parties and level of (dis)proportionality.
- Compare and contrast the electoral systems used by different countries, and evaluate how observed differences in the politics of those countries may be related to the electoral systems.
- Recognize the possibilities and limitations of electoral system design and reform.

Note: This syllabus is only an outline of the course, and not any sort of contract from which you can claim rights. If deviations from the syllabus are required for any reason, they will be announced in class. Such announcements always trump this document.

GRADES/EXPECTATIONS
You are expected to keep up with assigned readings and to attend and actively participate in each meeting (see DISCUSSION/PARTICIPATION section below). In addition, your grade will be based on several writing assignments. The components of the grade will be weighted as follows:
No student will receive a passing grade without turning in every assignment on time. No extensions will be offered, except in the event of serious emergencies (for which proper documentation will be required).

Accommodations for students with disabilities:
Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with me by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in the inability to respond in a timely manner.

Academic integrity policy:
You are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity in your work for this and all courses you take at Harvard. You are encouraged to discuss the material and exchange ideas with your classmates, and may consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own original research and writing, and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

DISCUSSION/PARTICIPATION
You are expected to come to class meetings having done the readings for that week, and prepared to discuss central questions and puzzles that arise from them. A few times during the quarter (depending on the number of students enrolled), you will be expected to take the lead in orienting the discussion of that week’s readings. These may be the same weeks that you prepare a response paper, but they do not have to be—taking the lead in discussion means more than simply presenting your response paper. It means organizing the material in a way that helps to draw out interesting questions or gaps in the arguments of the readings, and raising questions for discussion. Note also that for a discussion to be led, there must be others involved—so, everyone is required to participate actively in discussion. Each week, the person(s) responsible for leading discussion will meet with me some time in advance to go over the planned discussion questions.

RESPONSE PAPERS
You must submit a minimum of three response papers over the course of the semester. These are short papers (3-5 pages, double-spaced), which must be submitted to me by email by 9 am on the day of our class meeting. Your response papers must do at least one of the following: (1) offer a synthesis and critical review of the week’s readings; or (2) pose some thoughtful question(s) that would be valuable for discussion and somehow relevant to the topic of the week. In weeks in which you write a response paper, you are especially encouraged to read the recommended readings.

One model (but not the only one) for these papers is to respond to events in the news that are related to the week’s topic. For instance, you could research events in one of the countries we discuss and say something about how the electoral system may be shaping the events you have read about in the news. Such events could be a recent election, a change of government, or a current policy or reform debate.

Note: At least one response paper must be turned in on a date of your choosing by Week 5.

ELECTION ANALYSIS PAPER
You will also prepare an election analysis paper (~10 pages, double-spaced). Imagine you are a country expert who has been asked to write a post-election analysis for the State Department, an NGO, or the news media. You will choose a specific election in some country, explain the electoral system, and describe the parties or candidates that contested the election. Most importantly, you will discuss the outcome, focusing in particular on how the electoral system helped shape the results, and applying the key measures of analysis (e.g., indices of
fragmentation and disproportionality), you have learned from the course. Some examples of such analyses can be found here: The Monkey Cage Election Reports.

You may choose any election in any democracy after 2005 (the last year covered in PES, the main textbook), except for an election that is included in the readings or already extensively covered on The Monkey Cage. In addition, you may not analyze a national-level (i.e., presidential or congressional) election from the United States, though state and local-level elections are permitted. The election case you choose must be approved by October 24.

You must consult (and cite) a minimum of four sources, including at least one academic source—meaning a peer-reviewed journal article or a book published by a major press. You may also make use of web-based sources, such as newspapers, specialized blogs, or data archives. In addition, it would be helpful to consult primary sources (e.g., government, NGO, or international organization publications about electoral systems or elections).

Since the point of the election analysis is to advance an argument that helps the reader understand what was significant—in your considered judgment—about the election and the electoral system, your paper should have a clear thesis statement and your argument should be carefully developed with supporting evidence. Topics may include such questions as:

- How did the electoral system shape the conduct of the campaign and/or the outcome of the election?
- How might the results (i.e., the distribution of seats) have been different under a different electoral system?
- Was there any coordination failure among parties or candidates? Why, and how did this affect the results?
- Was some party or minority group advantaged or disadvantaged by the electoral system?
- Would a reform of the electoral system help resolve some perceived problem related to the current electoral system?

Students with more advanced statistical skills are welcome to analyze the raw election data, if such data are available, but this is not required. If you need help narrowing your topic, or finding information or data for the election you’ve chosen, please consult me.

You will also give a brief PowerPoint presentation of your analysis during our scheduled exam time.

**READINGS**

There are two required books that you should acquire for this course:


Other readings are available via links in the syllabus or the course webpage.

PES contains country-specific chapters, which are usually divided into the following sections:

(1) Historical background of the country’s political system
(2) Origins of the current electoral system
(3) The electoral system as it stands today
(4) Political consequences of the electoral system
(5) The politics of electoral reform

Sections 1, 2, and 5 can be read relatively quickly. When thinking about the origins of electoral systems and debates about their reform, it is important to remember that they are usually adopted by the very actors—politicians and parties—who will be most affected. Ask yourself: who stood to benefit from the adoption of certain rules, and who were the major players in these deliberations?
Sections 3 and 4 should be read more carefully. Pay attention to the critical electoral variables in Section 3. When you are done reading, you should be able to answer the following types of questions:

- What is the ballot’s structure (does it allow for intraparty competition)?
- How many votes does each voter get and are they cast at the party or candidate level?
- When the election is over, to what level do votes “pool” (can votes for one candidate help another)?
- How many seats are allocated in each district? By what rule or formula?

Section 4 will help you think about the theoretically relevant consequences of these rules for important dimensions of the political system:

- How do political parties or candidates interact with their (potential) supporters?
- What types of campaigning activities do candidates or parties pursue?
- What types of candidates are attractive to parties, and to voters?
- How cohesive are party members in terms of legislative voting?
- What kinds of parliamentary activities are important to legislators?
- What is the process of government formation (e.g., coalitions, cabinet post distribution)?
- How stable (long-lived) are governments?

As you read about each country case, you should focus on getting the basics of the rules correct, and then thinking about how those rules help to determine which behaviors make the most sense for politicians and parties to pursue. The above types of questions may also help to motivate your response papers and class discussion.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week 1: September 5**
Introduction and Orientation to the Topic

**Required:**
1. PES: Ch. 1 (pp. 3-23)
2. IDEA: Ch. 1-2 (pp. 1-33)

**Recommended:**

**Week 2: September 12**
Interparty Effects I: Duverger’s Law

**Required:**
1. PES: Appendix A (pp. 579-597)
2. PES: Ch. 2 (pp. 25-55)

**Recommended:**


**Week 3: September 19**

Interparty Effects II: Party System Fragmentation and Government Stability

**Required:**
1. PES: Appendix B (pp. 598-606)
2. IDEA: Annex D (pp. 188-190)

**Recommended:**
1. PES: Appendix C (pp. 607-620)
2. PES: Appendix D (p. 621)

**Week 4: September 26**

Intraparty Effects I: Candidate Selection and Candidate Characteristics

**Required:**
1. IDEA: Ch. 3 (pp. 119-126)

**Recommended:**

Week 5: October 3
Intraparty Effects II: Candidate and Legislator Behavior

Required:

Recommended:

Week 6: October 10
Single-Member District Systems

Required:
1. IDEA: Ch. 3 (pp. 35-53)
2. PES: Ch. 8 (pp. 157-184) The United Kingdom
3. PES: Ch. 7 (pp. 137-156) India

Recommended:
1. PES: Ch. 5 (pp. 99-118) Canada
2. PES: Ch. 9 (pp. 185-205) The United States
3. PES: Ch. 6 (pp. 119-136) France
8. Play the redistricting game.
9. Play Slate.com’s gerrymandering jigsaw puzzle.
Week 7: October 17
Proportional Representation: Closed, Open, and Flexible-List Systems

Required:
1. IDEA: Ch. 3 (pp. 57-90)
2. PES: Ch. 16 (pp. 333-351) Israel
3. PES: Ch. 21 (pp. 433-452) Chile
4. PES: Ch. 23 (pp. 473-489) Finland
5. IDEA: Case studies of Chile (pp. 78-81) and Brazil (pp. 86-89)

Recommended:
1. PES: Ch. 18 (pp. 375-394) Spain
2. PES: Ch. 20 (pp. 417-432) Belgium
3. PES: Ch. 24 (pp. 491-510) The Netherlands
4. PES: Ch. 22 (pp. 453-471) Denmark

Week 8: October 24
Ranked-Choice Ballots: AV and STV Systems

Required:
1. PES: Ch. 4 (pp. 79-97) Australia
2. PES: Ch. 25 (pp. 511-532) Ireland

Recommended:
1. IDEA: Case study of Ireland (pp. 72-74)
4. Read about the local electoral system in Cambridge, MA.

ELECTION ANALYSIS CASE DUE BY THIS DATE

Week 9: October 31
Electoral System Reform

Required:
1. PES: Ch. 3 (pp. 57-76)
2. IDEA: Ch. 6 (pp. 159-164)
3. PES: Ch. 12 (pp. 253-276) Italy
4. PES: Preface (pp. xiv-xvi) update on Italy

Recommended:

Week 10: November 7
Mixed-Member Systems

Required:
1. IDEA: Ch. 3 (pp. 90-119)
2. PES: Ch. 10 (pp. 209-229) Germany
3. PES: Ch. 14 (pp. 295-312) New Zealand

Recommended:

ELECTION ANALYSIS MEASURES DUE BY THIS DATE

Week 11: November 14
Japan: from SNTV to MMM

Required:
1. PES: Ch. 13 (pp. 277-293) Japan

Recommended:
Week 12: November 21
Electoral System Effects in New Democracies

Required:
2. PES: Ch. 15 (pp. 313-330) Russia
3. PES: Preface (pp. xvi) update on Russia

Recommended:
1. PES: Ch. 17 (pp. 353-373) South Africa
2. PES: Ch. 11 (pp. 231-252) Hungary
6. PES: Ch. 26 (pp. 535-578) Conclusion

Week 13: November 28
Review or bonus material TBD

Week 14: Reading Period and Final Presentations (TBD)

RESOURCES
Textbook: http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/Staff/Michael.Gallagher/ElSystems/
Psephos, Adam Carr’s Election Archive: http://psephos.adam-carr.net/
Fruits & Votes, Matt Shugart’s blog: http://fruitsandvotes.com/
The Monkey Cage Election Reports (older): http://themonkeycage.org/category/election-reports/
World Elections: http://welections.wordpress.com/
ECPR Political Data Yearbook: http://www.politicaldatayearbook.com/
Constituency-Level Elections Archive (CLEA): http://www.electiondataarchive.org/
NSD European Election Database: http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/
Election Passport: http://www.electionpassport.com/
Inter-Parliamentary Union PARLINE database: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp
More resources are listed in Appendix E of PES (pp. 622-630).

ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR FALL 2017
Source: http://www.electionguide.org/calendar.php

Norway: Parliament (Storting), 2017-09-11
Macau: Chinese Legislative Council (Macau), 2017-09-17
New Zealand: House of Representatives, 2017-09-23
Germany: Federal Diet (Bundestag), 2017-09-24
Liberia: House of Representatives, 2017-10-10
Chile: Chamber of Deputies and Senate, 2017-11-19
Honduras: National Congress, 2017-11-26