



CMINT: Political involvement in comparative perspective

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Course Description

Conceptually, political involvement refers to citizens' political attitudes, knowledge and participation. To assess the perceived legitimacy of democratic regimes, political sociologists mostly draw inferences from comparative or longitudinal population surveys which allow them to analyze democratic societies over time or with each other. For example, political support is considered to be a corner stone of any legitimate and well-functioning democratic regime. Despite deviating views on the required level of political support, scholars by and large agree that a minimum amount of political trust is needed for stable and efficient democratic systems. As a consequence, any potential sign of eroding political support, such as declining voter turnouts, the loss of members of political parties or increasing political cynicism or apathy, has become the subject of contested scholarly debates.

Similarly, political participation is considered to be part and parcel of democratic societies. And yet the interrelationship between the legitimacy of political rule and the "universe" of political participation is complex. While high turnout levels at national elections, for example, are an essential ingredient of legitimizing governments and their policies, non-institutionalized forms of participation, such as protest activities or boycotts, may be perceived as a threat to incumbent political parties or even the democratic regime as a whole.

This seminar will address the full conceptual range with its contradictions, and investigate the empirical state of affairs in European societies and beyond.

Requirements

2 hour written exam.

Individual presentation (15 to 20 minutes) on one of the topics listed below.

Participation is mandatory and active participation expected.

PROVISIONAL Course Outline

Topic
Introduction and conceptualising political involvement
The concept of political support
Democratic commitments in Europe
Political values
Political knowledge
Democratic theory and political participation
Concepts of political participation

Mapping the European terrain

Determinants of political participation: micro and macro level

PROVISIONAL Syllabus:

1. Introduction and conceptualising political involvement

2. The concept of political support

Norris, Pippa (2011): Democratic deficit. Critical citizens revisited, chapter 2: The conceptual framework, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-37.

3. Democratic commitments in Europe

Alonso, Sonia (2016): What type of democratic commitment lies behind the importance of living in a democracy?, in Ferrín, Mónica and Kriesi, Hanspeter (eds.): How Europeans View and Evaluate Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 130-151.

4. Political values

Halman, Loek (2007): Political values, in Dalton, Russell J. and Klingemann, Hans-Dieter (eds): The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 305-322.

5. Political knowledge

Cramer, Katherine J., Toff, Benjamin (2017): The fact of experience: Rethinking political knowledge and civic competence. *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 15(3), 754-770.

6. Democratic theory and political participation

Mayne, Quinton, Geißel, Brigitte (2016): Putting the demos back into the concept of democratic quality. *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 37(5), 634–644.

7. Concepts of political participation

Gabriel, Oscar W. (2012): Political participation in France and Germany: Traditions, concepts, measurements, patterns and explanations. In: Gabriel, Oscar W., Keil, Silke I., Kerrouche, E. (eds.): Political Participation in France and Germany, Colchester, ECPR Press, 6-20.

8. Mapping the European terrain

Teorell, Jan, Torcal, Mariano, Montero, José Ramon (2007): Political participation: Mapping the terrain. In: van Deth, Jan W., Montero, José Ramon, Westholm, Anders (eds.): Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies. A Comparative Analysis, London: Routledge, 335-357.

9. Determinants of political participation: micro and macro level

Norris, Pippa (2002): Democratic Phoenix: Political Activism Worldwide, Chapter 2: Theories of political activism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.