



UNIVERSITY
OF COLOGNE

Coalition Politics in Parliamentary Democracies

Winter Semester 2024/2025

See schedule for meeting times

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Draft Syllabus (may be subject to change)

1. Course Description

This seminar focuses on coalition politics in parliamentary democracies. In the first part, we will study political institutions and the behavior of political parties. Specifically, we investigate how political parties engage in coalition bargaining, why they form majority or minority governments, how they distribute cabinet portfolios and confront the challenges of joint policy-making. We dedicate a particular focus to the challenges of coalition formation and policy-making arising from increasing party system fragmentation and the rise of populist radical right parties in Europe. In the second part of the seminar, we will study political behavior and perceptions of citizens with regard to coalition governments. We explore political knowledge, coalition-directed voting, and the willingness of citizens to support novel types of coalition government. The sessions will consist of a mixture of theoretical grounding in the substantive literature and hands-on exercises with and replications of datasets on political parties, coalition policy-making, and survey experiments on coalitions.

2. Course Objectives

- Develop capacity to understand and critically reflect on the main debates related to the study of coalition governments
- Learn how to use R to analyze datasets on political parties and coalition politics and present the results appropriately

- Develop oral presentation skills
- Learn how to write an empirical research paper

3. Prerequisites

This is an advanced seminar. In general, it is expected that students possess background knowledge at the level of the following textbook: De Vries, Hobolt, Proksch, Slapin. 2021. *Foundations of European Politics: A Comparative Approach*, Oxford University Press. The book is accessible electronically through the Politics Trove subscription of the university library. Students must have completed the MA course in quantitative methods (or possess knowledge that is equivalent).

4. Course Requirements

This module follows the portfolio model of examination, meaning you will complete several assignments. You need to submit ALL assignments in order to receive a passing grade:

- A data exercise of a dataset on coalition politics (3-page write up due January 9), 20% of grade
- Discussion leader for a class reading, 10% of grade
- Presentation of your own research project, including a written 1-page writeup of your proposal (write up due January 23, presentation January 30), 10% of grade
- An empirical research paper on coalition politics (due March 1), max. 10-12 pages, 60% of grade

5. Course Material

Readings will be available as electronic articles through Ilias.

6. Course Outline

October 10
10:00-11:30

Session 1 **Course Logistics and Introduction to Coalition Politics**

October 31
10:00-13:30

Session 2 **The Bargaining Environment: Changing Party Systems in Europe**

Readings:

- Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2018. “Cleavage theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage.” *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1), 109-135.
- Bergmann, Henning, and Thomas Saalfeld. 2022. “Polarization and the Making and Breaking of Governments in European Parliamentary Democracies.” In *Contested Representation: Challenges, Shortcomings and Reforms, SSRC Anxieties of Democracy*, eds. Claudia Landwehr, Thomas Saalfeld, and Armin Schäfer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. chapter, 211–31.
- Bäck, Hanna, Debus, Marc, and Imre, Michael. 2024. “Populist Radical Parties, Pariahs, and Coalition Bargaining Delays.” *Party Politics*, 30(1), 96-107.

Session 3 **Theories of Coalition Formation: Which coalitions form?**

Readings:

- Shepsle, Kenneth and Michael Laver. 1996. *Making and Breaking Governments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Selected chapters.
- Martin, Lanny and Randolph Stevenson. 2001. “Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1), pp. 33-50.
- Tavits, Margit. 2008. “The Role of Parties’ Past Behavior in Coalition Formation.” *American Political Science Review* 102, pp. 495-507

November 21
10:00-13:30

Session 4

Coalition Bargaining and Portfolio Allocation

Readings:

- Strøm, Kaare, and Wolfgang C. Müller. 1999. "Political Parties and Hard Choices." In *Policy, Office, or Votes?: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, eds. Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strøm. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. chapter, 1–35.
- Bäck, Hanna, Marc Debus, Patrick Dumont. 2011. "Who gets what in coalition governments? Predictors of portfolio allocation in parliamentary democracies." *European Journal of Political Research*, 50: 441-478.
- Goddard, Dee. 2019. "Entering the men's domain? Gender and portfolio allocation in European governments." *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(2), 631-655.

Session 5

Coalition Policy-Making

Readings:

- Krauss, Svenja, and Kluever, Heike. 2023. "Cabinet Formation and Coalition Governance: The Effect of Portfolio Allocation on Coalition Agreements." *Government and Opposition*, 58(4), 862–881. doi:10.1017/gov.2021.68
- Martin, Lanny and Georg Vanberg. 2014. "Parties and Policymaking in Multiparty Governments: The Legislative Median, Ministerial Autonomy, and the Coalition Compromise." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 979-996
- König, T., Lin, N., Lu, X., Silva, T. N., Yordanova, N., and Zudenkova, G. 2022. "Agenda control and timing of bill initiation: A temporal perspective on coalition governance in parliamentary democracies." *American Political Science Review*, 116(1), 231-248.

December 12
10:00-15:30

Session 6 **The Puzzle of Minority Governments**

Readings:

- Cheibub, José Antonio, Shane Martin, and Bjørn Erik Rasch. 2021. “Investiture Rules and Formation of Minority Governments in European Parliamentary Democracies.” *Party Politics* 27 (2): 351–362.
- Thürk, Maria. 2022. “Small in Size but Powerful in Parliament? The Legislative Performance of Minority Governments.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 47: 193-224.
- Thürk, M., and Klüver, H. 2024. “Hitting the Sweet Spot? The Electoral Consequences of Supporting Minority Governments.” *Comparative Political Studies*

Session 7 **Crises and Technocratic Governments**

Readings:

- Caramani, Daniele. 2017. “Will vs. reason: The populist and technocratic forms of political representation and their critique to party government.” *American Political Science Review*, 111(1), 54-67.
- Wratil, Christopher and Giulia Pastorella. 2018. “Dodging the bullet: How crises trigger technocrat-led governments.” *European Journal of Political Research*, 57: 450-472.
- Armstrong, Brenna, Tiffany Barnes, Daina Chiba and Diana O’Brien. 2024. “Financial Crises and the Selection and Survival of Women Finance Ministers.” *American Political Science Review* 118(3): 1305–23.

Session 8 **Data Lab I**

This lab introduces important data sets on coalition politics and showcases their application potential. Students get the opportunity to conduct their own analysis using these data.

January 9
10:00-15:30

Session 9 **Governing with Populists**

Readings:

- Proksch, Sven-Oliver, Jens Wackerle, Lukas Hetzer, Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, Jasmin Rath, Hauke Licht. 2024. "Rise of the Radical Right and Minority Governments: A Survey Experiment of Voters' Coalition Preferences.", Working Paper.
- van Spanje, J., and Weber, T. 2019. "Does ostracism affect party support? Comparative lessons and experimental evidence." *Party Politics*, 25(6), 745-758
- Jahn, Detlef. 2021. "Quick and dirty: how populist parties in government affect greenhouse gas emissions in EU member states." *Journal of European Public Policy* 28.7: 980-997.

Session 10 **Electoral Implications of Coalitions**

Readings:

- Klüver, Heike, and Jae-Jae Spoon. 2020. "Helping or hurting? How governing as a junior coalition partner influences electoral outcomes." *The Journal of Politics* 82.4: 1231-1242.
- Fortunato, David. "The electoral implications of coalition policy making." *British Journal of Political Science* 49.1 (2019): 59-80.
- Fortunato, David, Nick Lin, Randolph Stevensen, and Mathias Tromborg. 2021. "Attributing Policy Influence under Coalition Governance." *American Political Science Review* 115(1): 252-68.
- Falcó-Gimeno, Albert, and Pablo Fernandez-Vazquez. 2020. "Choices That Matter: Coalition Formation and Parties' Ideological Reputations." *Political Science Research and Methods* 8(2): 285-300.

Session 11 **Data Lab II**

This lab introduces additional data sets on coalition politics and showcases their application potential. Students get the opportunity to conduct their own analysis using these data.

January 30
10:00-15:30

Session 12 **Final Paper Project Presentations**