Informal Institutions in Developing Countries and Transitional Regimes

Poli522
Fall 2017

(Last Updated on July 27, 2017)

Time: 11:35 am - 2:25 pm, Tuesdays
Sept 5 - Dec 5, 2017

Location: LEA 109

Course Description

This course examines informal institutions - rules and procedures that lack formal codification yet effectively shape political behaviour. The first part of the course will provide an overview of institutional analysis, and examine recent efforts to define, conceptualize, and empirically analyze informal institutions and informal politics more broadly that influence actual political practices in many developing and transition countries. The second part of the course will consider the conditions under which informal institutions matter by situating the inquiry in the context of several ongoing debates in comparative politics and political economy, including (1) state building (2) law and order (3) growth (4) corruption, (5) organized crime, and (6) gender equality. The study of informal institutions entails inherent methodological challenges, in that many of the practices we will examine are illicit and/or covert. Throughout the course we will also look at methodological approaches, ranging from interviewing techniques to statistical tools, designed to overcome these challenges.

Requirements and Grading

1) Class Participation (30%)  
   There will be 150-170 pages of reading for each week. You are expected to come to class having completed all readings. “Background readings” are not required but will help you understand the theoretical context against which a thematic focus is placed for a particular week.

   - Regular class attendance (5%): I will hand out a sign-in attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. For each unexcused absence, 1% will be deducted from your grade.

   - Class presentation (15%): Each week, two students as a team will be in charge of reviewing the week’s materials by making a presentation of no more than 15 minutes, and leading discussions. The team needs to send all seminar participants a 3-page (double-spaced) review indicating the main points of the presentation at noon on the day before the seminar to facilitate discussion in class.

   - Seminar Discussant (10%): Each week immediately following the presentation, two students as a team will be seminar discussants to make comments on the presentation based on their understanding of the readings. The team should come to class with a few points ready, and comment for no more than 10 minutes.
2) **Review Essay (30%)**

Each student is required to write two critiques (3-5 double-spaced pages, worth 15% each) concerning the assigned readings on a particular week. Reviews will only be accepted in **hard copy** on the day for which the reading is due because their other purpose is to enhance the quality of class discussions. **No extension or incompletes will be given.**

3) **Final Paper (40%)**

Two choices (1) research design (2) review essay; 25-35 pages, double-spaced.

For those who have taken courses on research methodology, they are allowed to choose “research design” option to develop an inquiry, and design a research agenda. “Review essay” shall go beyond readings of a particular week.

Submission: Only **electronic version** of the final paper submitted to MyCourse will be accepted. **For every 30-min past the deadline, one point will be deducted from your final grade.** If you encounter technical difficulties at the last time, submit the paper by email first and then try again later on MyCourse.

**Course Materials:**

All readings are electronically available. If you would like to purchase books, you can do so through amazon.ca. My own book is available for purchase at Paragraphe Bookstore under course number POLI380.

**Miscellaneous Reminders**

1) **Classroom etiquette:** Please turn off any iPods or cell phones prior to the beginning of class. If you take notes on a laptop, then please do not surf the web in class. You are welcome to bring snacks and beverages.

2) **Required readings** should be completed by the date corresponding with the lecture as indicated on this syllabus. All books and articles are available on reserve at the library. Any changes that are made to the syllabus will be announced in class.

3) **McGill University** values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

McGill has policies on sustainability, paper use and other initiatives to promote a culture of sustainability at McGill.
SECTION ONE:
WHAT ARE INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS?

Week 1: Course Overview and Various Institutionalism (Tuesday, Sept 5)

- How do various scholars define the term “institutions”?
- What are the differences between the major approaches to institutionalism, and what, if anything, do they share in common?
- What is “institutionalization”?

Readings:
1) Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms, Political Studies 44 (1996): 936-957

Week 2: Conceptualizing Informal Institutions (Tuesday, Sept 12)

- What are informal institutions?
- How do informal and formal institutions interact?
- How do informal institutions form and evolve?

Readings:
1) Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky: Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics

SECTION TWO:
WHEN/HOW/WHY DO INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS MATTER?

Week 3: Informal Institutions and State Building (1) (Tuesday, Sept19)

- What is state building?
• What are some examples of informal institutions during the process of state building?
• How are informal institutions affecting or affected by the state building process?

Background readings:

Readings:
2) Steffen Hertog, Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia (Cornell University Press, 2011) Chp 1: Unpacking the Saudi State

Week 4: Informal Institutions, law, and order (1) (Tuesday, Sept 26)

• When and how do informal institutions help provide order?
• How do formal judicial and law enforcement institutions interact with informal practices?

Readings:
1) Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan chapter 6 “A Reconfiguration of Political Order? The State of the State in North Kivu (DR Congo)”
2) Donna van Cott, “Dispensing Justice at the Margins of Formality: The Informal Rule of Law in Latin America,” in Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, eds., Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006)
Weak 5: Informal Institutions, law, and order (2) (Tuesday Oct 3)

- How do informal institutions affect the construction of rule of law?
- When do informal practices give way to formal practices?

Readings

Weak 6: Informal Institutions and Growth (1) (Tuesday Oct 10)

- What kinds of informal institutions are under investigation in these readings?
- How do these informal institutions affect economic development?
- How do informal institutions interact with the formal institutions and affect economic Development?

Focus: the state and society

Readings:
2) Juan Wang, “the Politics of Poverty Mis-Targeting in China”

Weak 7: Informal Institutions and Growth (2) (Tuesday, Oct 17)

- What kinds of informal institutions are under investigation in these readings?
- How do these informal institutions affect economic development?
- How do informal institutions interact with the formal institutions and affect economic Development?

Focus: firms
Weak 8: Corruption (1) (Tuesday, October 24)

- What is corruption?
- What are the various types of corruption and how, if at all, are they related?
- What positive effects, if any, can corruption have?

Readings:

Week 9: Corruption (2) (Tuesday, October 31)

- How is corruption related to other types of informal institutions and informal practices previously examined in this course?
- How can illicit behavior, such as corruption, be studied?

Readings
2) John McMillan an Pablo Zoido, “How to Subvert Democracy: Montesinos in Peru,”


**Week 10: Organized Crime (1) (Tuesday, Nov 7)**

- What are some examples of organized crimes?
- What are the relationship between organized crime and informal institutions?
- How do organized crimes interact with formal institutions?
- How do organized crimes emerge, evolve, or survive?

**Readings:**


5) Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, & Theda Skocpol, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

**Week 11: Organized Crime (2) (Tuesday, Nov 14)**

Two case studies, choose one to read:


**Week 12: Clientelism (Tuesday, Nov 21)**

- What is clientelism?
- How does clientelism affect the formal institutions of democracy? How do various configurations of formal institutions affect the extent or type of clientelism?
- How can illicit phenomena like clientelism be studied?
Background reading:

Readings:

Week 13: Informal Institutions and Gender (Tuesday, Nov 28)

- How are informal institutions related to gender?
- What kind of informal institutions affect gender equality?
- How do informal institutions affect gender equality?

Readings:

Week 14: LAST CLASS (Tuesday, Dec 5)

Final Assignment Q&A