Political Science 490
Informal Institutions: Institutionalism for Developing Countries

Northwestern University
Department of Political Science
Fall 2015
Wed. 9:00-11:50AM, Scott Hall #107 (Burdick Room)

Instructor: Jordan Gans-Morse
Office Hours: Thurs. 12:30-2:30PM and by appointment
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COURSE SUMMARY

This course will examine informal institutions — rules and procedures that lack formal codification yet effectively structure political behavior. The first part of the course will provide an overview of institutional analysis. Existing institutionalist approaches focus primarily on formal institutions, yet in many developing and transition countries formal rules and procedures have a marginal influence on actual political practices. We will examine recent efforts to define, conceptualize, and empirically analyze informal institutions and informal politics more broadly.

The second part of the course will consider informal institutions in the context of several areas of highly active research in contemporary comparative politics and political economy, including (1) clientelism, (2) institutions and economic growth, (3) corruption, (4) state building, and (5) institutions in non-democratic regimes.

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 focus on innovative methodological approaches, ranging from interviewing techniques to statistical tools, designed to overcome these challenges.

The course is designed for graduate students preparing for the comprehensive examination in comparative politics or designing a dissertation prospectus for study of the developing world, but students from other sub-disciplines are welcomed and encouraged to enroll.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation

Students are expected to complete all readings prior to each session and to attend every seminar. Seminar participation will count for 30% of students’ overall grade. In addition to unstructured contributions to the conversation, each week students will be assigned a reading that they should read with particular care and know especially well. When questions or
disputes arise during discussions, the student responsible for the reading will be expected to take the lead in resolving confusion and sorting out divergent interpretations. Finally, students will be expected to post a discussion question on Canvas each week by 5:00PM on Tuesday.

Assignments

(1) Short essays: During some weeks, students will be asked to prepare a brief essay on a particular reading. Additional information about the content of these essays will be provided later in the quarter. The essays should be no more than two single-spaced pages and should be distributed by email to all seminar participants no later than noon on the day before the seminar meets. The aim of these essays is to introduce the rest of the group to as broad of range of material as possible while keeping the mandatory reading at a reasonable level. Students should be prepared to discuss and answer questions regarding their essay during seminar. The short essay assignments will count for 20% of the overall grade.

With respect to the seminar’s primary assignment, students will have two options:

(2a) Writing assignment option: The writing assignment may consist of a critical literature review, a research proposal, a conference paper, or a data analysis. My primary aim is that the assignment facilitates students’ preparation for the field exam(s), dissertation prospectus, and/or publication of a journal article. With this in mind, I am willing to tailor the assignment to individual students’ goals. Please come discuss your project with me no later than the fifth week of the quarter, and preferably sooner. The writing assignment will count for 50% of the overall grade.

(2b) Exam/journal review option: In place of the writing assignment, students may elect to write two mock journal reviews on readings of their choice from the syllabus and take a written exam. The exam will be designed to simulate field exam questions. The reviews will count for 15% and the exam for 35% of the overall grade. Reviews must be submitted prior to the meeting in which we discuss the particular reading, and the two reviews cannot be done for the same week of readings.

Deadlines: The exam will be held on Wednesday, December 2nd at 9AM and the paper will be due by on Wednesday, December 9th by 9AM.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, the aim is that students will:

• Possess a rigorous conceptual command of the institutionalist approach to political science.
• Be prepared to develop research focused on the role of informal institutions.
• Be familiar with methodological tools for analyzing illicit or informal political behavior.
COURSE MATERIALS

The course draws on a wide range of sources, and there are no books that we will read in their entirety. Many of the readings are journal articles that are available in electronic form through the Northwestern library. For excerpts from books, I will make copies available via the course website on Canvas.

That said, I encourage you to purchase the following books (listed in descending order of importance):


Additionally, the following is a useful – but expensive – resource. I will provide copies of several of the essays in this volume.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Week 1: Alternatives to Institutionalism: Structuralism, Functionalism, Behavioralism
Wednesday, September 23

Key questions:

- What are the alternative approaches to institutionalism?
- How distinct are these different approaches? Is it productive to consider these distinctions?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?

Readings:

- Andrew Janos, Politics and Paradigms: Changing Theories of Change in Social Science (Stanford University Press, 1986)
  - Chapters 1-3
  - Chapter 1

Further Background Reading:

- Andrew Janos, East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Post-Communism (Stanford University Press, 2002) (see Chapter 1)
Week 2: Varieties of Institutionalism

*Wednesday, September 30*

Key questions:

- How do various scholars define the term “institutions”? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each definition?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of institutionalist approaches?
- What precipitated the trend toward institutionalism in political science?
- What are the differences between the major approaches to institutionalism, and what, if anything, do they share in common?
- What is “institutionalization”? Is it a fruitful concept?
- How do institutions form and evolve?

Readings:

- Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44 (1996): 936-957
  - Chapter 1
  - Chapters 1, 3, and 4
- Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 1968)
  - Skim pages 1-8, read pages 8-24, skim pages 78-92
  - Skim pages 369-381, read pages 381-401

Further Background Reading:

• Ira Katznelson and Barry Weingast, eds., *Preferences and Situations: Points of Intersection Between Historical and Rational Choice Institutionalism* (Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2005)
Week 3: Conceptualizing Informal Institutions
Wednesday, October 7

Key questions:

- What are informal institutions?
- How are informal institutions different from informal practices, culture, networks, and other related concepts?
- Is the concept of “informal institutions” useful?
- How do informal and formal institutions interact?
- How do informal institutions form and evolve?

Readings:

  - Read pages 1-2, 11-22
  - Chapter 1
  - Read pages 1-10
  - Introduction and Chapter 1

Readings for Short Essay #1: Regionally Specific Analyses of Informal Institutions


Further Background Reading:


*Additional Regionally Specific Analyses*

• Kate Meagher, “Introduction to a Special Issue on ‘Informal Institutions and Development in Africa’,” *Africa Spectrum* 42, 3 (2007): 405-418
• Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Indian University Press, 1999) (see Part I: The Informalization of Politics)
Week 4: Enforcement, Compliance, and Institutional Change

Wednesday, October 14

Key questions:

- How are weak institutions different than informal institutions?
- What are the differences between enforcement mechanisms for formal and informal institutions?
- How are enforcement and compliance related to institutional change?
- What factors underlie enforcement and compliance problems?

Readings:

  - Chapters 5-7
  - Introduction and Chapter 7

Readings for Short Essay #2: Recent Works Related to Compliance and Enforcement

- Steven Levitsky and Dan Slater, “Ruling Politics: Institutional Reforms in Developing Democracies,” unpublished manuscript, Harvard University and University of Chicago
- Jordan Gans-Morse, excerpts from *Violence, Law, and Property Rights in Post-Soviet Russia*, unpublished manuscript, Northwestern University

Further Background Reading

• Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 1992)


• Avner Greif and Christopher Kingston, “Institutions: Rules or Equilibria,” in *Political Economy of Institutions, Democracy, and Voting*, N. Schofield and G. Caballero, eds. (Spring-Verlag 2011)
Week 5: Clientelism

Wednesday, October 21

Key questions:

- What is clientelism?
- How is clientelism different than related concepts such as corruption, electoral fraud, patrimonialism?
- Is the concept of “informal institutions” fruitful for understanding 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?

Readings:

- Susan Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco, Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2013)
  - Chapter 1
- Simona Piattoni, “Clientelism in Historical and Comparative Perspective,” in Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective, Simona Piattoni, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Readings for Short Essay #3: Methodological Approaches to the Study of Clientelism

(All students should read Wantchekon and at least one other of the following)

Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying, Frederic Schaffer, ed. (Lynne Rienner, 2007)

Readings for Short Essay #4: Regionally Specific Analyses of Clientelism

(All students should read at least one of the following)

- Timothy Frye, Ora John Reuter, and David Szakonyi, “Political Machines at Work: Voter Mobilization and Electoral Subversion in the Workplace,” World Politics (forthcoming)

Further Background Reading:

- James Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia,” American Political Science Review 66, 1 (1972): 91-113
- Susan Stokes, “Political Clientelism,” Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics, Susan Stokes and Carles Boix, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2007)
Week 6: Institutions for Growth
Wednesday, October 28

Key Questions:

• How do informal institutions affect economic development?
• How do informal institutions interact with the formal institutions needed for economic development?
• When is formalization of informal practices beneficial for economic development? When, if ever, is it detrimental?
• How is law related to formal and informal institutions?
• Are lessons from institutional development in the West applicable to developing countries?

Readings:

• Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James Robinson, “Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth,” in Handbook of Economic Growth, Philippe Aghion and Stephen Durlauf, eds. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005)
  o Skim pages 388-421
• Stephen Haber, Armando Razo, and Noel Maurer, The Politics of Property Rights: Political instability, Credible commitments and Economic Growth in Mexico, 1876-1929 (Cambridge University Press, 2003)
  o Chapters 1 and 2
  o Introduction and Chapters 3 and 8

Readings for Short Essay #5: Methodological Approaches to the Study of Informal Institutions and Growth

(All students should read Frye)

  o Preface, Chapter 1, and pages 27-53

Further Background Reading:

Background for Assigned Readings


On Institutions and Growth

• Douglass North, Structure and Change in Economic History (New York: Norton, 1981)
• Gary Cox, “Predatory states and the market for protection,” unpublished manuscript
• James Mahoney, Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

On Informal Institutions and Growth

• Philip Keefer and Mary Shirley, “Formal versus Informal Institutions in Economic Development,” in Institutions, Contracts, and Organizations, Claude Ménard, ed. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000)
• Hernando de Soto, The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism (New York: Basic
Books, 1989)


On Private Property Rights Protection and Contract Enforcement


*On Origins of Property Rights*

• Gary Libecap, *Contracting for Property Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 1994)
Week 7: Corruption
Wednesday, November 4

Key questions:

- What is corruption?
- What are the various types of corruption and how, if at all, are they related?
- Is an objective understanding of corruption a feasible goal, or is corruption a culturally subjective concept?
- How is corruption related to other types of informal institutions and informal practices previously examined in this course?
- What positive effects, if any, can corruption have?
- How can illicit behavior, such as corruption, be studied?

Readings:

  - Chapters 1 and 2
- Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 1968)
  - Read pages 59-72

Readings for **Short Essay #6**: Methodological Approaches to the Study of Corruption

(All students should read Kaufmann et al. and at least one other of the following)

- Claudio Ferraz and Frederico Finan, “Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effect of

- Maxim Mironov and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, “Corruption in Procurement and Shadow Campaign Financing: Evidence from Russia,” unpublished manuscript

Further Background Reading:

- Susan Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)
• Stephen Ellis and Beatrice Hibou, The Criminalization of the State in Africa (Indiana University Press, 1999)
• Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument (Indian University Press, 1999) (see Chapter 7)
Week 8: State Building
Wednesday, November 11

Key Questions

• Is the concept of strong and weak states useful? How does the study of informal institutions influence our understanding of state strength?
• In what ways do informal institutions support state building? In what ways do they undermine state building?
• How, if at all, does consideration of informal institutions aid in disaggregating the functions of the state? In disaggregating state actors?
• States are often defined in terms of a series of monopolies – on violence, on taxation, on the dispensation of justice. Are there certain spheres in which informal institutions play a greater or lesser role?
• Does the notion of formal vs. formal institutions hold meaning in the absence of a functioning state?

Readings:

  o Chapter 6
• Steffen Hertog, Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia (Cornell University Press, 2011)
  o Introduction and Chapter 1
• Lauren MacLean, Informal Institutions and Citizenship in Rural Africa: Risk and Reciprocity in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire (Cambridge University Press, 2010)
  o Chapter 1

Further background reading:


Week 9: Authoritarian Institutions
Wednesday, November 18

Key Questions

- How do institutions in authoritarian regimes differ from institutions in democratic regimes?
- Do informal institutions play a greater role in authoritarian regimes than in democratic regimes?
- Why do authoritarian regimes frequently create nominally democratic institutions (e.g., electoral systems, legislatures, courts)?

Readings

- David Art, “What Do We Know about Authoritarianism After Ten Years?” Comparative Politics (2012): 351-373
- Jennifer Ghandi, Political Institutions Under Dictatorship (Cambridge University Press, 2008)
  - Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 7
  - Chapters 1 and 2

Further Background Readings

- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Dan Slater, Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

**Authoritarian Electoral Politics**

• Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

**Authoritarian Courts**


**Authoritarian Constitutions**

• Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Simpser, *Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

**Authoritarian Institutions and Economic Development**

Week 10:
   Part I: Student Presentations of Research Papers
   Part II: Revisiting the Concept of Informal Institutions

Wednesday, November 25

Key Questions

- What are informal institutions?
- How are informal institutions different from informal practices, culture, networks, weak institutions, and other related concepts?
- Is the concept of “informal institutions” useful?