European Multi-Party Systems: 
Parties, Elections and Governments

Department of Government, 
London School of Economics and Political Science  
Reading List, 2nd Term 2004

Teacher responsible: 
Dr Paul Mitchell,  
Kings Chambers 308; p.l.mitchell@lse.ac.uk

Abstract: For better or worse representative democracy is virtually unthinkable without political parties. It is the competitive interactions of multiple parties in a wide range of electoral, parliamentary and governing arenas that generates much of the business and the high drama at the heart of representative politics. This course focuses on political competition amongst parties. Topics will include; parties as organisations; changing cleavage structures; electoral systems and strategic interaction; party system change and classification, and coalition governance. The primary focus is Western Europe, though reference will also be made to other competitive democracies.

Journals for this Course

Especially: 
European Journal of Political Research  EJPR  
Party Politics  PP  
West European Politics  WEP  
British Journal of Political Science  BJPS

Also: 
Electoral Studies  ES  
Journal of Theoretical Politics  JTP  
American Political Science Review  APSR  
American Journal of Political Science  AJPS  
Comparative Political Studies  CPS
## Seminars Topics and Schedule

All seminars are on Mondays 2-4pm, in Room H105

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Course structure and set-up; Overview of the study of parties and party systems and</td>
<td>12 Jan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Development and Functions of Political Parties (or what do parties want, how do they get it and how have they developed?)</td>
<td>19 Jan</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How are Parties Organised?</td>
<td>26 Jan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Are we in danger of having Parties without Members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. The Selection of Candidates and Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Money and Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Theory: Organisational change, Dealignment and Value change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. The Entry of New Parties (Greens, Left-Libertarian and the Extreme Right).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Classifications of Party Systems.</td>
<td>16 Feb</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why are Party Systems Different?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ELECTORAL COMPETITION &amp; GOVERNMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>How do Parties Win?: 1 - Electoral Competition</td>
<td>1 March</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>How do Parties Win?: 2 – Making and Breaking Governments</td>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional topics</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READING LISTS

Note
These reading lists are very extensive and are not intended as a mandatory labour sentence! It would be virtually impossible to read most of these items during this one term course. So concentrate on the essential readings and treat the rest as resource guides for further detailed work in the field, that might be useful for essays, dissertations, or future research (maybe a PhD!).

Background

Peter Mair (ed, 1990), *The West European Party System*. Oxford UP. (a very useful ‘reader’ with excerpts from many of the most important works. A good value purchase. Listed as Mair 1990 in the reading lists).

Alan Ware (1996), *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford UP. (Another very good purchase. Although aimed at advanced undergraduates this is a book worth having especially if unfamiliar with these topics. Many of the chpts in this book will be cited as good background reading for the seminar topics. From there move on to the essential readings). (Listed as Ware 1996 in reading lists).


Especially Important Books for this Course


Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds, 1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives.* New York: Free Press. (especially the first chpt which may be the most cited work in the whole field of parties research – not an easy read though).


Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom (eds 1999) *Policy, Office or Votes: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions.* Cambridge UP. (a collection of country chpts focusing on what motivates political parties and how they balance vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking goals in situations in which it is difficult to maximise all three simultaneously).


**COLLECTIONS OF READINGS**

**Theory and general comparative works**

*Note: these four volumes are weighty collections of important articles in their full non-abridged form ranging from about 1960 to the mid-1990s. Unless money is no object (they each cost about £100) and you enjoy carrying large bricks around – don’t buy them! They can usefully be consulted in the BLPES library.*


Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds, 1966) *Political Parties and Political Development*, pp.3-42. Princeton UP. (while by now quite an old book it contains a large number of classic articles that are still much cited, if not so often actually read). Listed in the reading lists as LaPalombara and Weiner (1966).

**Country by Country**

There are quite a few of these. The most recent are:


David Broughton and Mark Donovan (eds 1999), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*. London: Pinter. (includes: Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Portugal).


References to the texts above will be listed by author and date in the reading lists that follow– for example – Wolinetz (1998).


**SEMINAR READINGS WEEK BY WEEK**

1. **Overview**


*Systems: Continuity and Change.* Sage. (twenty years old now but still worth reading for an overview).


2. The Development and Functions of Political Parties (or what do parties want, how do they get it and how have they developed?)

Background reading

Ware 1996, Chapter 1 (Parties and Ideology, pp17-62) & chapter 2 (Supporters, Members and Activists, pp.63-72).

And/or GLM3 chapters 7 & 8, pp. 171-233.

Essential Reading


Additional Reading


Mair 1997, chpt 2 (‘Continuities, Changes and the Vulnerability of Party’).


3. How are Parties Organised?  
And How Do They Behave?

Topics:
The internal organisation of parties; changing patterns of party membership; the selection of election candidates and party leaders; parties as campaigning organisations; who makes the key decisions within parties?; party behaviour and trade-offs between goals.

Presentation(s)  
Presenter:

3a. Are we in danger of having Parties without Members?

3b. How are party Candidates and/or Leaders selected and why?

3c. How do parties make trade-offs between the central goals of vote, office and policy-seeking?

Chairperson/Discussant:

Background reading

Ware 1996, Chapter 2 (Supporters, Members and Activists, pp.72-92) and Chpt 3 (Party Organizations, pp.93-123).

And/or GLM3 chapters 10 (Inside European Political Parties, pp. 271-299).

Essential Reading


Additional Reading


Party Membership


Selection of Candidates and Leaders


Internal Power Structures and Decision-Making


Party election Campaigning


Shaun Bowler and David Farrell (eds, 1992). Electoral Strategies and Political Marketing. London: St Martin’s Press/Macmillan. (especially introduction and conclusion by the editors; there are also 10 country chpt, Western Europe plus the USA and New Zealand

Parties and Money


Political Parties, Democracy and Accountability


We have pushed our attempt at a systematization of the comparative history of partisan oppositions in European polities up to some point in the 1920s, to the freezing of the major party alternatives in the wake of the extension of the suffrage and the mobilization of the major sections of the new reservoirs of potential supporters. Why stop there? Why not pursue this exercise in comparative cleavage analysis right up to the 1960s? The reason is deceptively simple: the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s . . . the party alternatives, and in remarkably many cases the party organizations, are older than the majorities of the national electorates.


Topics:
What would constitute evidence of party system stability? How much ‘stability’ has there been? What is a political cleavage and to what extent have they been the foundation of party competition?; the Lipset-Rokkan ‘freezing’ thesis; Changes to Parties Versus Party System Change;

Presentation(s) Presenter:

4a Outline and Evaluate the Lipset-Rokkan social cleavage ‘freezing’ thesis.

4b Is the class cleavage in decline? If so was does this mean for party competition

4c If the class cleavage is in decline, does this mean that the labels ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ are less useful in describing/analysing the nature of party competition?

Chairperson/Discussant:

Background reading

GLM3 chapter 9.

Ware 1996, Chapter 6.

Essential Reading


Additional Reading


Measuring Stability


Class Voting


5. How and Why do Party Systems Change?

As the role of parties continues to decline, we may ultimately witness the eclipse or replacement of parties by other institutions that more effectively link the citizen and his government. With the narrowing of party functions and the shift of party support bases from broad, cohesive social groups towards a more diverse array of loosely organised issue groups, the context of party competition is changing. Ideological parties or highly disciplined parties with stable and strongly articulated preferences are apt to be small.


Even now, in the 1990s, and despite all the myths of electoral change, they [parties] continue to be successful, and hence they continue to survive. The electoral balance now is not substantially different from that of thirty years ago, and, in general, electorates are not now substantially more volatile than they once were. Following Rokkan, the party alternatives of the 1960s were older than the majority of their national electorates. Thirty years on, these self same parties still continue to dominate mass politics in western Europe. Nowadays, in short, they are even older still.


Topics:

‘Parties who used to derive their support from cohesive social groups based upon underlying social cleavages now relieve only on loosely organised and transient value-sharing communities’. Discuss.

Consider this model of party system change: “Electoral change = cleavage change = party system change”. Is this an accurate explanation of the transformation of party systems?

Presentation(s)        Presenter:

5a. Evaluate the extent and causes of party system change.

5b. How successful have ‘new’ political parties been and what accounts for their success or failure? What is ‘new’ about ‘new politics’ agendas?

5c. Case Study of the Greens

5d. Case Study of the Extreme Right
**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**

Ware 1996, Chapter 7
GLM3 chapter 9

**Essential Reading**


**Additional Reading**

*Post-Materialism and ‘Decline’ of Old Cleavages*


*Theorising Party System Change*


*New Parties*


6. **Classifications of Party Systems.**
   **Why are Party Systems Different?**

   The two-party system seems to correspond to the nature of things, that is to say that political choice usually takes the form of a choice between two alternatives. A duality of parties does not always exist, but almost always, but almost always there is a duality of tendencies. Every policy implies a choice between two kinds of solution... This is equivalent to saying that the centre does not exist in politics...

   In this connection we can construct a theoretical pattern which fits most of the facts if we take as our point of departure the idea that the two party system is natural, and then consider this fundamental tendency to be subject to modification as a result of two different phenomena: internal divisions and overlapping... inside all parties there are moderates and extremists, the conciliatory and the intransigent, the diplomatic and the doctrinaire, the pacific and the fire eaters... If the factions become exasperated and can no longer meet on common ground the basic tendency to dualism is thwarted and gives way to multipartism.


**Topics:**

Before doing any reading, think about this:
Consider two hypothetical party systems. In country A two political parties receive 46% of the vote each and a further eight parties 1% each. In country B ten parties each have 10% of the vote. In each case there are ten political parties. Does it make much sense to describe both states as ‘ten party systems’? Would you expect the competitive interactions and dynamic of competition to be very similar in each case?

**Presentation(s) **

6a. Outline and evaluate Sartori’s approach to party system classification.

6b. What is the ‘Centre’ of a party system?
   How useful a concept is this?

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**

Ware 1996, Chapter 5.

**Essential Reading**


**Additional Reading**


Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera (1979), ‘Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Applications to West Europe’, *Comparative Political Studies* 12, 3-27.


*Recent Reinterpretations?*


7. **How do Electoral Systems Structure Party Competition?**

Not only are electoral systems the most manipulative instrument of politics; they also shape the party system and affect the spectrum of representation.


[Early writers] tended to be highly optimistic about the possibilities of bringing about changes in established party systems through electoral engineering. What they tended to forget was that parties once established develop their own internal structure and build up long-term commitments among core supporters. The electoral arrangements may prevent or delay the formation of a party, but once it has been established and entrenched, it will prove difficult to change its character simply through variations in the conditions of electoral aggregation. In fact, in most cases it makes little sense to treat electoral systems as independent variables and party systems as dependent. The party strategists will generally have decisive influence on electoral legislation and opt for the systems of aggregation most likely to consolidate their position . .


**Topics:**

What are the consequences of particular electoral systems? How and why are particular systems chosen? How direct and mechanical is the connection between electoral and party systems? Are electoral systems in western democracies converging?

**Presentation(s)**

7a. ‘The choice of electoral systems makes little real difference to the nature of party competition and the structure of the party system’ Discuss.

7b. Examine two countries that have implemented major reforms to their electoral systems. What were the aims of the reforms and were they realised? Were there any important unintended consequences?

7c. Evaluate the Additional (Mixed) Member System

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**
GLM 2001, Chapter 11
Ware 1996, Chapter 10.

Essential Reading


Additional Reading


**But Does Electoral Engineering Work? – Recent Changes**


**United Kingdom**


Hain Peter (1986). *Proportional Mis-Representation: The Case Against PR in Britain* Hants: Wildwood House.


**Italy**


**Japan**


**New Zealand**


**Israel**


8. **How do Parties Win?: 1 - Electoral Competition**

Our main thesis is that parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. So as to attain their private ends, they formulate whatever policies they believe will gain the most votes, just as entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain the most profits for the same reason.


**Topics:**
How do parties compete? How do parties strike trade-offs between vote, office and policy-seeking behaviours?
Proximity, salience and directional theories of electoral competition.
Are the electoral judgements of voters on parties mostly prospective or mostly retrospective?

**Presentation(s)**

8a. Explain and compare proximity and directional models of voting.

8b. Do parties actually compete on ideological grounds? Is party competition uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional?

8c. Are there any non-ideological bases of party competition and how significant are they?

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**

Laver 1997 Ch 4 (‘Political entrepreneurs, politicians and parties’) and 6 (‘Party competition’).
Ware 1996, Chapter 11

**Essential Reading**


**Additional Reading**

Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom, ‘Political Parties and Hard Choices’, in Muller and Strom (eds 1999) *Policy, Office or Votes: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*. Cambridge UP.


**Spatial and Directional Theories of Voting**


Harold Hotelling (1929), ‘Stability in Competition’, Economic Journal 30, 41-57. (while this article has nothing directly to do with politics it the classic article on which spatial modelling was based, leading to downs . . .).


**Dimensionality**


9. How do Parties Win?: 2 – Making and Breaking Governments

In n-person, zero-sum games, where side payments are permitted, where players are rational, and they have perfect information, only minimal winning coalitions occur.


**Topics**
- How do you win the coalition game?
- Who breaks coalitions, and why?
- Government Termination and Electoral Losses
- Is winning ever like losing, and losing like winning!? 

**Presentation(s)***

9a. Outline and evaluate the main theories of government formation

9b. How and why do governments end and what are the consequence

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**

GLM 2001, Chapter 12

**Essential Reading**


**Additional Reading**

*From Elections to Government Formation*

Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom (2000, eds). *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*. Oxford UP.


Strøm, Kaare (1990), Minority Government and Majority Rule. Cambridge: CUP.


Government Termination


**Debate on the Laver-Shepsle Portfolio Allocation Approach:**


From the point of view of describing and of justifying representative democracy, the relationship between party and government policy is obviously crucial. If a party says one thing to the voters and then goes into a government which does something quite different, then its supporters have been disfranchised (at least as far as getting their preferred policies enacted) just as effectively as if they never had a vote in the first place.


**Topics:**
Do Parties make a Difference? If so in what ways? Or is everything important already decided/committed by institutions and bigger processes?
What happens after government formation? The ‘life’ of cabinet governments.

**Presentation(s)***


10b. Do parties that ‘break’ governments lose votes?

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Background reading**

GLM 2001, Chapter 13
Ware 1996, Chapter 12

**Essential Reading**


**Additional Reading**


Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom (eds 1999) Policy, Office or Votes: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions. Cambridge UP.


Schmidt, Manfred G (2002) Political performance and types of democracy: Findings from comparative studies EJPR, 41:1, 147-64


Divided Government


Additional Topics From Previous Years

A. What is different about Ethnic Party Systems in deeply divided societies?

Although a party only represents a part, this part must take a non-partial approach to the whole.


The surest way to kill the idea of democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American electoral system of first-past-the-post.


The challenge is to take an environment conducive to ethnic and racial allegiances in the party system and create incentives for parties to bid for floating voters who would otherwise vote their group identity. From what we know of the politics of severely divided societies, the choice may well be to see voters floating in the political system or floating in the river.


Topics:
Party and Electoral competition in (malfunctioning) liberal democracies with ethno-national parties.

Presentation(s) Presenter:
How does the nature of parties and party competition change in ethno-nationally divided states?

Chairperson/Discussant:

Background reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Additional Reading**


Richard Luther and ???

**Belgium??**

**Northern Ireland**


B. Is anything different about the Post-Communist Party Systems of East-Central Europe?

It can be argued that post-communist Europe represents what is really the first case of European democratisation occurring in the effective absence of a real civil society. . . newly democratising electorates in general, and post-communist electorates in particular, are less likely to be underpinned by a strong cleavage structure, and in this sense are less likely to be easily stabilised or frozen.


Many features of the East European party systems resemble attributes of established Western democracies . . . As in Western Europe, voters’ socio-demographic position in society influences their ideological outlook in ways systematically related to their material self-interests. . . But whereas in Western Europe the increasing importance of voters;’ issue positions for their electoral choice results from an erosion of affective party identifications and cultural milieu-based subconscious commitments to a party, in Eastern Europe issue positions count because voter identifications and party-affiliated socio-cultural milieus had rather little chance to emerge.


**Topics:**
Is the Lipset-Rokkan social cleavage model of any relevance in analysing Europe’s party system in post-Communist countries?
Are parties and electoral behaviour similar or different?
Can party politics stabilise given the ‘triple transition’?
Are parties likely to be programmatic or clientelist or charismatic/authoritarian?
What if any programmatic cleavages can we expect to see emerge and structure competition in Post-Communist democracies?

**Presentation(s)**

11. What, if anything is different about post-Communist Party Systems?

**Chairperson/Discussant:**

**Presenter:**
Background reading

GLM 2001, Chapter 15

Essential Reading


Additional Reading


Peter Mair (1997), ‘What is different about Post-Communist Party Systems?’, chpt 8 in Mair *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*. Oxford UP.


Robert Harmel and Jan Sundberg (2001). Special Issue of *Party Politics* 7:5 on ‘Change in the Role of Parties in Democratization’.


On the former communist parties:


