

PSC 3263 - Political Institutions in Comparative Perspective

Introduction

Politics works through institutions. Organized governance is largely about how institutions operate in giving expressions to specific constellations of power, interests, and organizations, both formally and informally.

In this course, students will learn how political institutions have evolved and work in different contexts as mediatory institutions of the state and political processes. Students will also be introduced to theoretical models and approaches that have been developed in the political science analysis with regard to political institutions. While the focus is on political institutions in general, this course will enable students to understand the working of political institutions in Sri Lanka.

Objectives

This course seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To introduce students to the theoretical perspectives in Political Science inquiry on the nature, role and functions of political institutions.
- ii. To provide comparative perspectives on the ways in which political institutions function in different countries.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- i. Familiarize themselves with the key theoretical approaches to the understanding of key political institutions.
- ii. Understand that different political institutions play specific roles in the political process in different contexts, and
- iii. apply the comparative knowledge to understand the nature and working of the political institutions in Sri Lanka.

Themes

1. Approaches to political institutions: Political Modernization and comparative politics, political systems approach, new institutionalism.
2. Regime types (Parliamentary and Presidential) and democracy.
3. Political Parties and party systems: Theoretical approaches.

4. Political parties in India and the ‘Congress System’; Political parties in Sri Lanka.
5. Bureaucracy, military and Security Sector Reforms – Political modernization approach and the relative autonomy of the state apparatus thesis. Arguments for and debates in security sector reforms.
6. Judiciary in the US and India– Judicial Review and Constitutional interpretation, and judicial ‘independence’ and judicial ‘activism.’
7. Institutions of decentralization, regional autonomy and popular participation.
8. Major Political Institutions in Sri Lanka: Presidency, Cabinet, the legislature, the judiciary, the public service, and political parties.

Method of Assessment

Mid-term Test	15%
Assignments	15%
Final Examination	60%
Class Attendance and Participation	10%

Recommended Reading

Alagappa, Muthiah, 2001, *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, Stanford University Press.

Alavi, Hamza, 1972, “The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh,” in *New Left Review*, No. 74, pp. 59-81.

Almond, Gabriel and J. S. Coleman (Eds.), 1960, *The Politics of Developing Areas*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

deSouza, Peter and E Sridharan (Eds.), 2006, *India’s Political Parties*, New Delhi: SAGE.

Duverger, M, 1954, *Political Parties*, New York: Wiley.

Jalal, Ayesha, 1995, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press.

Kothari, Rajni, 1970, *Politics in India*, Delhi: Orient Longman.

Manor, James, 1988, “Parties and the Party System,” in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India’s Democracy: Changing State-Society Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stephan, Alfred, 1988, *Rethinking Military Politics*, Princeton: Princeton: Princeton University Press.