
Governing in parliamentary democracies. How governments are formed, how they govern, how they end

Universität Basel - HWS24 - Thursday 10-12

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Office Hours: Fr 9-12 or by arrangement

1 Abstract

In this seminar, we look at all aspects concerning governments and coalitions, mainly in parliamentary democracies. Three blocks of topics will be covered: how coalitions are formed, how they work, and how they end. First, we deal with how governments are formed: how do parties find their coalition partners? How do institutions shape coalition choices? How does the allocation of cabinet portfolios work? Second, we look at how governments act. Since this is a broad topic, this bloc is limited to the relationship between parliament and government, and the extent to which parties in government fulfil their campaign pledges. We will also look at the different partners in a coalition. Third, we look at how governments end: this includes factors that make the breaking of governments more likely, and mechanisms that can be installed to prevent premature termination.

2 Learning Objectives

- Being able to differentiate between different kinds of political systems, institutions and actors
- Understanding coalition dynamics, party preferences and strategies
- Being able to measure party positions as well as generally broadening knowledge about methods and data

3 Course Requirements

Please be aware that all requirements need to be fulfilled in order to pass the course. Note that attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed two absences from class.

3.1 Readings and active participation (10%)

Each week, there will be a short reading, which is necessary to follow the course. Students are expected to actively participate in discussions in class.

3.2 Application I: Summary of Dataset (20%)

For this short exercise you will get a dataset assigned where you will have to fill in a table with the most important information, such as access, variables and time frame. In the end, we will have a big table with the most commonly used datasets in political science, which will help you for term papers in this course as well as future research in general. Deadline is **3rd November 2024**.

3.3 Application II: Analysis (30%)

Here, you will be provided with a dataset. Your task is to run a regression, interpret the results and critically think about it. The result paper will be 700-1000 words. Deadline is **1st December 2024**.

3.4 Application III: Matching a Case to Theory (40%)

You will get a case of a recent government and analyse it using the theories we talk about in class. You will start by describing the case and identify 2-3 aspects you want to compare to theories from class, such as coalition negotiations, ministerial distribution, approval ratings or pre-mature government termination. You are free in the aspects you address as long as you link it to relevant scientific literature. The scope of the assignment is roughly 1500 words. Deadline is **12th January 2025**. More details on what is expected in the assignment will be discussed in class.

4 Course Structure

1 Introduction (19th September)

No readings

2 Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems (26th September)

Linz, Juan (1990): The perils of presidentialism. *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.

3 Government Formation I: Forming Coalitions (3rd October)

Gallagher, Michael, Michael Laver and Peter Mair (2011): "Building and Maintaining a Government." in: Gallagher et al. *Representative Government in Modern Europe*. McGraw-Hill: 381-403.

4 Government Formation II: Formation Duration (10th October)

Ecker, Alejandro and Thomas M Meyer (2015): The duration of government formation processes in Europe. *Research & Politics*, 2(4).

5 Government Formation III: Ministerial Selection (17th October)

Bäck, Hanna, Marc Debus and Patrick Dumont (2011): Who gets what in coalition governments? Predictors of portfolio allocation in parliamentary democracies. *European Journal of Political Research* 50: 441-478.

6 Government Action I: Partisan Theory (24th October)

Schmidt, Manfred G (1996): When parties matter. A review of the possibilities and limits of partisan influence on public policy. *European Journal of Political Research* 30(2): 155-183.

7 Government Action II: Coalitions and Policy Output (31st October)

Hübscher, Evelyne (2019): The impact of coalition parties on policy output. Evidence from Germany. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 25(1): 88-118.

Deadline Application I (3rd November)

8 Government Action III: Populist and Radical Parties in Government (7th November)

Huber, Robert and Christian Schimpf (2016): A drunken guest in Europe? The influence of populist radical right parties on democratic quality. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 10(2): 103-129.

9 Relationship of Coalition Parties (14th November)

Imre, Michael, Alejandro Ecker, Thomas M Meyer and Wolfgang C Müller (2023): Coalition mood in European parliamentary democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 53(1), 104-121.

10 Junior Partners (21st November)

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.

11 Control Mechanisms (28th November)

Krauss, Svenja (2018): Stability through control? The influence of coalition agreements on the stability of coalition cabinets. *West European Politics* 41:6.

Deadline Application II (1st December)

12 Consequences of Govt Behaviour: Economic Voting (05th December)

Debus, Marc, Mary Stegmaier and Jane Tosun (2014): Economic voting under coalition governments. Evidence from Germany. *Political Science Research and Methods* 2(1): 49-67.

13 Government Termination (12th December)

Walther, Daniel and Johan Hellström (2022): Government termination in Europe. A sensitivity analysis. *West European Politics* 45(3): 591-611.

14 Semester Wrap-up (19th December)

No reading

Deadline Application III (12th January)