

Presidentialism v. parliamentarism lesson plan

1. What is an institution? (North's definition)
2. What is new institutionalism? ("preferences can be understood only in the context of the institutionally generated incentives and institutionally available opinions that structure choice" Grofman in Shugart & Carey)
3. Why do electoral institutions matter?
4. Advantages and criticisms of different constitutional designs. Think about stability, effectiveness, representativeness.
 - a. Definitions
 - b. Presidentialism (Linz); what are responses to those weaknesses? (Shugart and Carey)
 - i. Criticisms:
 1. Temporal rigidity: fixed term, difficult to remove (impeachment difficulty etc.)
 2. Majoritarian tendencies/winner-take-all/false sense of popular mandate/distortion of representation
 3. Dual democratic legitimacies -> deadlock, potential breakdown/coup/instability, rule by executive decree
 - ii. Advantages:
 1. Accountability (of president & legislators)
 2. Identifiability (voters can identify alternatives)
 3. Mutual checks (assembly independence and reverse)
 4. Arbiter (above-partisan)
 - c. Parliamentarism
 - d. Semipresidentialism (Elgie); premier-presidentialism (Shugart and Carey)
5. If you were to partake in "political engineering" and advise a new democracy on the constitutional design, what would you advise? What would it depend on?
6. What are some of the problems with the critiques? Think about the sample of cases used to support the arguments (e.g. developing countries and presidentialism)
7. Lipset and culture – does institutional design matter? What else might matter according to him? (British colonialism, Protestantism)
8. Informal institutions
 - a. What are they? Why do they matter?
 - i. Definition: "informal institutions [are] socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels (...) informal institutions must be enforced in some fashion"
 - ii. How are they different from formal institutions? Examples?
 - iii. How are they different from culture?
 - b. Typology and examples:
 - i. Complementary (convergent, effective)
 - ii. Substitutive (convergent, ineffective)
 - iii. Accommodating (divergent, effective)
 - iv. Competing (divergent, ineffective)
 - c. What are their origins?
 - d. What functions do they perform?
 - e. How can formal and informal institutions complement/undermine each other?