

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE

ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM - POLS 357 (3 credits)

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Fall Semester 2009 - Meeting Time: Monday 3:35 - 6:15 p.m.

Course Content

This course focuses on the recent developments of Italian politics with a focus on the party system, the electoral system, the parliamentary system, the form of the state and recent moves towards federalism, the interest groups and the judiciaries.

Course objectives

The aim of this course is to provide students with a basic knowledge of the main institutions, actors and ongoing processes of change of contemporary Italian politics. At the end of the semester the students are expected to show evidence that they can understand, restate and comment the argument of a journal article on Italian politics from learned journals such as *Italian Politics and Society*, *Italian Politics: A Review*, *Modern Italy*, *The Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, or like journals.

Course description

Sessions consist in two parts. One consists in a presentation and discussion by the students of one journal article bearing on the previous week topic. The second part consists in a lecture. Exams (mid- and final) consist in reading, and accounting for a journal article on Italian politics.

Course grading

Participation of students (spontaneity, attention/interest paid to the session, and constancy/assiduity along the semester) counts for 25% of the total grade.

Paper presentation and research paper counts for 25% of the total grade.

Mid-term exam and final exam contribute each to 25% of the total grade.

Bibliography

1) Students must have the **reading pack** consisting in the journal articles for their presentation and discussion (available in Alessandro's office).

2) The textbooks are:

- Maurizio Cotta and Luca Verzichelli, 2007, *Political Institutions in Italy*, Oxford, OUP
- or Martin J. Bull & James L. Newell, 2005, *Italian Politics. Adjustment under duress*, Cambridge-Malden, Polity Press
- Simon Parker and Paolo Natale, 2010, *Contemporary Italian Politics*, Routledge

3) Students are expected to visit regularly **on line newspapers** such as:

<http://www.ansa.it/>;

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/italy/>;

<http://www.iht.com/pages/europe/index.php>

SCHEDULE

September 21, 2009

➤ *Introduction to the course*

- **From 1st to 2nd Republic**

➤ Lecture

September 28, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Sergio Fabbrini, 2006, The Italian Case of a Transition Within Democracy, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 2006, 8, 2, 145-161

- **The Italian Party System**

➤ Lecture

The Republic of Parties: From Deadlock to Bipolar Alternation

October 05, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Ivo Diamanti, 2007, The Italian Centre-Right and Centre-Left: Between Parties and 'the Party', *West European Politics*, 30, 4, 733-62

- **Electoral System and Elections**

➤ Lecture

The Electoral System and current government

October 12, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Antonio Florida, 2008, Gulliver Unbound. Possible electoral reforms and the 2008 Italian election: Towards an end to "fragmented bipolarity"?, *Modern Italy*, 13, 3, 317-32

- **The Executive**

➤ Lecture

The Executive

October 19, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Salvatore Vassallo, 2007, Government under Berlusconi: The functioning of the core institutions in Italy, *West European Politics*, 30, 4, 692-710

- **The Parliament**

➤ Lecture

The Parliament

October 26, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Marco Giuliani, 2008, Patterns of Consensual Law-making in the Italian Parliament, *South European Society and Politics*, 13, 1, 61-85

➤ Lecture

Italian political system: A review

November 02, 2009

● **Mid-term exam**

November 09, 2009

➤ Correction of mid-term and students' presentation

Maurizio Carbone and James L. Newell, 2008, Towards the End of a Long Transition? Bipolarity and Instability in Italy's Changing Political System, *Politics*, 28, 3, 138-49

● **Local Government**

➤ Lecture

Local Government & Paths towards Federalism

November 13, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Christophe Roux, 2008, Italy's Path to federalism. Origins and paradoxes, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 13, 3, 325–39

● **The Judiciary**

➤ Lecture

The Judicial Power

November 16, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

James Newell, 2005, Americanization and the judicialization of Italian politics, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10, 1, 27-42

● **Interest Groups/Industrial Relations**

➤ Lecture

Interest Groups and Industrial Relations

November 23, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Simone Baglioni, Donatella Della Porta, and Paolo Graziano, 2008, The contentious politics of unemployment: The Italian case in comparative perspective, *European Journal of Political Research*, 47, 5, 1-25

➤ Lecture

Form a Republic of Parties to a Fatherland

December 07, 2009

➤ Students' Presentation

Anna Cento Bull, 2008, The Italian Transition and national (non)reconciliation,
Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 13, 3, 405-21

➤ *Italian Politics: A Reassessment*

December 14, 2009

● **Final Exam**

THE OUTLINE

- 1) The **main argument(s)**:
 - a. What is the overall claim of the writing? (or/and) What is the author trying to convince us of?
 - b. Can we formulate the argument into a sentence or two? (or/and) Is there a sentence *in the text* where the author formulates it?
- 2) How does the author lead the argument? or What the **demonstration** consists in?
 - a. Here we need to follow the author's reasoning step by step. It is for this purpose (reconstructing the author's argument) that the outlining of the text paragraph by paragraph, section by section, is necessary. A good device for doing this is to give title to the paragraphs read (if the author has not or the author's ones are not sufficiently explicit)
- 3) We should aim to make an **assessment** of the argument: Does the argument convince us? Is only part of it convincing? Is it cogent/logical? Do we think it helps us understanding something fundamental about the issue at stake? What do we believe the strengths and weaknesses of the text are? Is there any particular assumption that is important for the argument that we think should be strengthened?
- 4) Keep in mind in making the assessment that, things such as the **vocabulary** (does the author use particular words that are particularly important for his argument/demonstration? What does he mean by these words? Are these words employed consistently –does the author always mean the same thing when s/he uses the words?); the **context** (are the period of writing or the period the writing refers to, the social, political, economic, and religious factors affecting his argument?); **alternative** or **counter-arguments** mentioned by the author her/himself, or anything else you deem relevant in the text, can be useful in making the assessment.

THE REVIEW/RESEARCH PAPER

The review part of your paper is a thoughtful account of the piece of writing you've read. The point of the review is to describe the piece of writing's content and argument(s) and to present some kind of discussion of it supported with some quotations from the writing that illustrate the points you're making. A person who has not read the piece of writing should be able to decide, from what you have written, whether or not to read it.

The research part of your paper is a bibliography of works that support your discussion of the author.

Your paper should include the following:

- ✓ Bibliographical information about the writing, including author(s), title of the chapter, title of the book, publishing information, date, page numbers (always appears at the top of your review)
- ✓ General summary of content (what is the writing about)

- ✓ Discussion of author's main point (why did the author write the book/chapter; what's the point(s) being made?)
- ✓ Identification of the main elements of argument (summarize the reasons the author cites to support the main argument)
- ✓ Discussion of the conclusion (what does the author conclude?)
- ✓ Identification of at least 2 problems/strengths that might be noted about the writing, the argument(s), the sources of information, the presentation, etc.
- ✓ Suggest, fix, discuss, the problems/strengths you've noted. What might have made the work stronger/better? What is so special about the really good aspects of the work?
- ✓ Suggest at least two bibliographical sources for supporting the discussion of the problems/strengths you've identified and give sufficient hints on their content.

Your paper should be between a medium-length paper (2 000 words or 6 double-spaced pages) and a long paper (3 000 words or 10 double-spaced pages).

Journals

On Italian Politics

Italian Politics and Society

Italian Politics: A Review

Modern Italy

The Journal of Modern Italian Studies

Other journals likely to contain articles on Italian politics

South European society & politics

Electoral Studies

Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans

Party Politics

Political Studies

Government and Opposition

West European Politics
