P&PA

Department of Politics & Public Administration

PO5232 Representative Democracy in Europe

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Aims and Objectives

The module examines the democratic process as it is practiced in European countries and the EU. As such, the object of study is the behaviour of political actors (including citizens and politicians). It focuses in particular on the linkages between the policy preferences of citizens and the public policies enacted by their representatives. Normative democratic theory tells us that such linkages are a requirement for representative democracy, but transforming citizens' preferences into public policy is far from straightforward.

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Discuss the central debates concerning the function and purpose of representative democracy.
2. Explain the theoretical arguments concerning political behaviour at the level of voters and political parties.
3. Critically assess competing theoretical arguments concerning political behaviour in light of empirical evidence.
4. Explain differences in political behaviour and political outcomes between countries.
5. Evaluate the quality of democratic representation in European countries and the EU.

Contents

The module will examine the various steps involved in the process of democratic representation, including:

- How citizens' political preferences are formed
- How citizens participate in politics
- How parties compete for votes and act as representative channels
- How parties form coalition governments
- How governments respond to public opinion

Each step will be examined at both the level of European countries and the European Union; the interactions between these two levels will also be considered. Throughout the module, topics will be considered in terms of normative theory (what would we want to see from a democratic perspective), predictive theory (what should we expect to see given the incentives and institutional context), and empirical evidence (what actually occurs).

Core Readings

Dalton, R. (2014). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (6th Edition). New York: Chatham House.

Dalton, R. and Klingemann, H.D. 2007. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gallagher, Michael, Michael Laver and Peter Mair (2013). *Representative Government in Modern Europe*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Powell, G.B. (2000). *Elections and Instruments of democracy: majoritarian and proportional visions.* New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Thomassen, Jacques and Peter Mair (2010). *Political representation and European Union governance*. London: Routledge.

Van der Eijk, C, and M. Franklin (2009). *Elections and Voters*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.