A Political Sociology of European Democracy

Jean Monnet Module

Syllabus 2011/12

Lecturer: Paul Blokker

Course Outline

The course has as its main objective the exploration of an emerging and distinctive approach in European Integration Studies, that of political sociology. The first aim is to explore and clarify the advantages and disadvantages of a critical, political-sociological analysis in comparison with existing political science approaches, in particular with regard to the study of European democracy, the democratic deficit, and an emerging European political society. A second aim is to enrich European Integration Studies with insights from democratic theory. A third aim is to exemplify the fruitfulness of a political-sociological approach by exploring processes of political interaction and conflict, political claims-making and justification, civic participation and contestation, and social integration and fragmentation in the European Union.

The course is divided in three parts. In the first part, it will be discussed to what extent democratic politics now transcends the contours of Westphalian, national democracies, and to what extent a European political society (including, but not confined to formal EU actors and institutions) can be said to (partially) replace and successfully fulfill some of the democratic, socially integrative, and symbolic functions of national democracy. In particular, it will be considered to what extent extra-EU democratic resources play a role in shaping EU institutions. A strong emphasis will be placed on the role of political conflict, critique, claims-making and justification in different political arenas that affect and shape the EU, ranging from formal institutions, to ‘comitology’, to civil society, to informal practices.

In the second part, different democratic theories of the EU will be discussed, as well as conflicting perceptions and public opinions of European democracy as held by significant (collective) actors, including political and legal elites, social movements, and civic actors. In particular, an emerging European political society (in terms of political party- and class-formation, socialization, cohesion, epistemic communities, and repertoires of legitimation) and different available understandings of the nature of a European political society will be scrutinized.

In the third part, distinct instances and events of European politics – in particular distinct moments of open political conflict and crisis - will be analysed from a political-sociological point of view, including processes of political elite socialization and decision-making (‘from above’) as well as cross-border mobilization, political action, and cohesion (‘from below’). Distinct events and crisis moments include the European
Constitutional project, enduring conflict over agricultural policy, the debate on fundamental rights, and migration policy.

**Weekly Programme**

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April

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**Part I. Europeanization and Democratization**

Tuesday 20 – Wednesday 21 March
1. Introduction: A Political-Sociological Approach to the EU
   - Introduction course (agenda, prerequisites, exam, readings main focal points)
   - Why a political sociology of the EU?

**Literature**


Tuesday 27 – Wednesday 28 March
2. The Westphalian Nation-State and European Integration
   - Changing role and context of the state
   - European society
   - Political and constitutional pluralism

**Literature**

Background readings

Tuesday 3 – Wednesday 4 April

3. Democracy on the European level
- Democraticness of EU
- European identity
- European demos

Literature

Background readings

Tuesday 17 – Wednesday 18 April

4. The Democratic Deficit: Formal and Informal Aspects
- Input and output legitimacy
- Civil society
- Representation claims

Literature

Part II. Multiple European Democracies and Legitimation

Tuesday 8 – Wednesday 9 May

5. The Construction of a European Political Society
- Technocracy
- Political Parties
- Transnational Movements
- Comitology
- Civil Society

Literature


6. Multiple Democracies I: Stakeholder Democracy

- Output-oriented legitimacy
- Economic integration

**Literature**


Tuesday 15 – Wednesday 16 May

7. Multiple Democracies II: Communitarian Democracy

- Value-based solidarity
- Cultural integration

**Literature**


**Background readings**


8. Multiple Democracies III: Post-National and Cosmopolitan Democracy

- Procedural legitimacy
- Socio-legal integration
- Cosmopolitanism

**Literature**


**Part III. The Political Sociological Study of European Democracy**

Tuesday 22 – Wednesday 23 May
9. Heuristic Devices of a Political-Sociological Approach

- Actor-based focus
- Interpretative analysis: cultural repertoires and democratic discourses
- Class analysis
- Socialization
- Networks
- Conflict, contestation, and critique

**Literature**

10. Focus I: Political Elites, Classes, Epistemic Communities

- Case-study: Charter of Fundamental Rights
- Case-study: Enlargement
- Case-study: Lawyers and European integration

**Literature**

**Background readings**

Tuesday 29 – Wednesday 30 May

11. Focus II: Social Movements, Civic Actors, Contentious Politics

- Case-study: European Social Forum
- Case-study: EU Citizenship

**Literature**

Tuesday 5 – Wednesday 6 June

12. Focus III: Perceptions of European Democracy

- Case-study: Convention on the Future of Europe
Conclusions: A Political Sociology of European Democracy

**Literature**

**Background readings**

**Further relevant literature**

**Prerequisites**
Knowledge of EU institutions (preferable), European integration, and theories of politics and democracy.