

Georgetown University
Villa le Balze
Fall 2009

GOVT 316 61
Contemporary Italian Politics and Society

Meeting Times: Monday 16:30-18:00 and Thursday 17:15-18:45

DESCRIPTION: This course focuses on the basic aspects and evolution of the Italian political system, since World War II to contemporary times. Students are introduced to the institutional settings, political parties, and main features of Italian politics and society. The political landscape of contemporary days will be studied into-depth. A special attention will be devoted to Berlusconi's landslide victory in the 2008 elections and to the ongoing activity of the Italian government.

On completion of the course, students have an overview of the following topics:

1. The institutional and political landscape of Italy since the beginning of a republican and fully democratic political system (the so-called *First Republic*).
2. The changes to the Italian system from the nineties to contemporary times; the main characteristics of the *Second Republic*.
3. The territorial aspects of Italian politics and society and their historical roots.
4. The composition, the agenda and the activity of the Italian government.

INSTRUCTOR: Nicolò Conti

FORMAT: Lectures, student presentations, class discussion

The course has a seminar format: lectures will introduce the topic and the main questions it raises, and will be followed by discussion. Students are expected to read the assigned material timely and thoughtfully and be ready to discuss the content in class.

Students are encouraged to express themselves freely and they are expected to participate actively.

Formal discussion leadership: At the beginning of each lesson one student presents a piece of political news and will conduct a class discussion in class. At the end of the course students present in class their research papers.

TEXTBOOK: Students should purchase the following textbook: Maurizio Cotta and Luca Verzichelli (2007), *Political Institutions in Italy*, Oxford University Press. The book is also available in Italian for those who want to practice the language (Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2008), *Il Sistema Politico Italiano*, Bologna, Il Mulino).

Another reference book (for lessons XIV-XVII) to be purchased or to be read on place at the VILLA is Robert D. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton University Press.

Some additional readings are available in digital format from the library or they will be distributed in class.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT: Class participation (10%); formal discussion leadership (10%); mid-term written exam (25%); final written exam (25%); final paper (30%).

OFFICE HOUR: Mondays after class upon appointment (contact me at conti19@unisi.it)

COURSE CALENDAR

- Lesson I
Sept 7. 16.30-18.00 **Introduction to the course**
- Lesson II
Sept 10. 17.15-18.45 **The Context of Italian Politics**
General reading
- Maurizio Cotta & Luca Verzichelli (2007), "The Italian Polity and its Long-Term Transformations", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 1, 1-34.
- Lesson III
Sept 14. 16.30-18.00 **Democracy Italian Style: parties and the problem of *Partitocrazia***
General reading
- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "The Republic of Parties", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 2, 35-66.
- Lesson IV
Sept 17. 17.15-18.45 **Italy: A divided society?**
Movie Show and discussion
- *The Best of Youth* by M. T. Giordana (part one)
- Lesson V
Sept 21. 16.30-18.00 **Voters and Elections**
General reading
- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "Electoral Systems and Elections", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 3, 67-100.
- Lesson VI
Sept 24. 17.15-18.45 **Italy: A divided society? (cont.)**
Movie Show and discussion
- *The Best of Youth* by M. T. Giordana (part two)
- Lesson VII
Sept 28. 16.30-18.00 **The Executive**
General reading
- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "The Executive", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 4, 103-136.
- Lesson VIII
Oct 1. 17.15-18.45 **The Parliament**
General reading
- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "The Parliament", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 5, 137-170.
- Lesson IX
Oct 5. 16.30-18.00 **The Courts**
General reading

- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "The Judicial Power", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 8.

Lesson X

Oct 8. 17.15-18.45

The Local Government

General reading

- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2007), "Local Government", in *Political Institutions in Italy*, chapter 6.

Lesson XI

Oct 12. 16.30-18.00

Revision

Revise all assigned materials from classes I-X

Lesson XII

Oct 15. 17.15-18.45

Mid-term exam (essay questions)

Lesson XIII

Oct 19. 16.30-18.00

Italy: what (un)civic culture?

General reading

- Edward Banfield (1967), *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, chapters 1, 2, 5 (pp. 17-44 and 83-102).

Lesson XIV

Oct 22. 17.15-18.45

Civic culture and the local government

General reading

- Robert D. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work*, chapters 1 and 2.

Lesson XV

Nov 2. 16.30-18.00

Civic culture and institutional performance

General reading

- Robert D. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work*, Chapter 3.

Lesson XVI

Nov 5. 17.15-18.45

Explaining civic culture

General reading

- Robert D. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work*, Chapter 4.

Lesson XVII

Nov 9. 16.30-18.00

The historical roots of civic traditions

General reading

- Robert D. Putnam (1993), *Making Democracy Work*, Chapters 5 and 6.

Lesson XVIII

Nov 12. 17.15-18.45

The Northern League and the issue of federalism

General reading

- Daniele Albertazzi & Duncan McDonnell (2005), 'The Lega Nord in the second Berlusconi government: In a league of its own', in *West European Politics*, XXVIII, 5, pp. 952-972.

Lesson XIX

Nov 16. 16.30-18.00

Constitutional reforms: towards a federal Italy?

- Christophe Roux (2008), 'Italy's path to federalism. Origins and paradoxes', in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, XIII, 3, pp. 325-339.

Lesson XX
Nov 19. 17.15-18.45

Local, national and beyond: Italians and the EU

General reading

- Nicolò Conti (2009), Tied hands? Italian Political Parties and Europe, in "Modern Italy", XIV, 2, pp 203-216.
- Pierangelo Isernia (2008), "Present at creation: Italian mass support for European integration in the formative years", in *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 43, 2, pp. 383-410.

Lesson XXI
Nov 23. 16.30-18.00

Review

Revise all assigned materials from classes XII-XX

Lesson XXII
Nov 30. 16.30-18.00

Student presentations of research papers (first round)

Lesson XXIII
Dec 3. 17.15-18.45

Student presentations of research papers (second round)

Lesson XXIV
Dec 7. 16.30-18.00

Final exam (essay questions)