# History of political institutions

## Prof: Cristina Bon; Prof. Valentina Villa

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

By conveying an historical perspective of institutional changes over time, the course provides students with the essential knowledge to understand the historical development of Western political institutions from the feudal society to the late 20th Century’s mass democracies, as well as the useful tools to raise their awareness over the present time. Attention will be particularly paid to some crucial concepts to the analysis of both historical as well as current institutional changes, such as: state, constitutionalism, parliamentarism, presidentialism, rule of law, corporativism, subsidiarity and globalization.

# *Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to understand and describe the various forms of organized power over time. Besides, the student will be able to master the history of political institutions’ specific lexicon.

# *Applying knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the course the student will be able to apply his historical knowledge to interpret the current dynamics of present political regimes, with particular reference to European and North-American countries.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course is divided into one module of forty hours and a twenty-hour workshop. The first module is focused on the main governmental frames of the Western societies in the Medieval, the Early-Modern and the beginning of the Modern Ages (from 5th to 19th Centuries). The workshop explores the rise of the authoritarian states at the beginning of the 1900s, the cleavage of the Second World War and the following attempts to create new institutional forms of cooperation in the second half of the twentieth century.

First Module: *The organization of power: origins and developments of Western political systems from the feudal society to the age of liberalism*. (Prof. Cristina Bon)

1. Historical method and main concepts.

2. Fundamental characteristics of the Medieval Age.

3. Early Middle Ages: the Carolingian Empire.

4. High Middle Ages: Seigniories and Communes.

5. From the modern state to the absolutism.

6. The classic absolutism: the French monarchy.

7. The English constitutionalism and the conflict between Crown and Parliament.

8. The constitutional history of the American revolution.

9. The French revolution: constitutional aspects.

10. The Napoleonic regime.

11. Constitutional monarchies of the 1800s.

12. Nation-State, Nation-Building and Imperialism in the 19th Century.

Workshop*: The crisis of the liberal state: from authoritarian regimes to supranational institutions* (Prof. Valentina Villa)

1. The beginning of the Twentieth Century.

2. The Italian drift towards dictatorship.

3. The rise of Nazism.

4. The Soviet Union.

5. Post WWII constitutional systems.

6. The origins of the European Union.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Students will be required to prepare on both the notes taken in class and the following textbook:

R.C. Van Caenegem, *An Historical Introduction to Western Constitutional Law,* Cambridge University, Press, Cambridge, 1995 (only chapters 2-6; 7, pp. 150-93; 8; 9, pp. 270-291).

Other reference essays and readings will be assigned by the lecturers during the class. Power points presentations of the lectures and reading materials will be available on blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Traditional lectures. Active participation is strongly encouraged: students are expected to participate constructively with comments and questions.

WARNING: In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow teaching in presence, online lectures and distance learning will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The final written exam will be held during the official Appelli, starting from June 2022. This exam will include questions related to two modules of the course and each part will include both open questions and multiple choices. The grade is expressed out of thirty: the exam is passed with a grade equal to or greater than 18/30. The maximum grade is 30/30: in deserving cases, the lecturers can add honors to this final grade.

Instead of taking the whole exam in the official Appelli, students can take two intermediate written tests at the end of each module (i.e. January 2022 and May 2022), weighting respectively 60% and 40% of the final grade. In order to take the second test it is necessary to pass the first with a minimum mark of 18/30.

These intermediate tests, willing to verify ongoing student’s knowledge of the main topics of the course, will include both open questions and multiple choices and the final grade will be a weighted average of the two respective marks. Students that, for any reasons, will not pass both the intermediate written tests will be required to take the final written exam on the whole program during the official Appelli, as described above.

In order to pass the exam, students will be required to show their command of the various forms of organised power over time, of the essential cronological sequence of the events and of the specific lexicon of the course.

WARNING: In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow to take the exams in presence, online exams will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course assumes a good knowledge of the European history from Medieval times to the XXI century; students who believe to require additional knowledge before taking the course can contact the lecturers at their email addresses.

Further information and office hours can be found on the lecturers’ webpage at *http://docenti.unicatt.it/eng/cristina\_bon/;* [*http://docenti.unicatt.it/eng/valentina\_giorgia\_maria\_villa/*](http://docenti.unicatt.it/eng/valentina_giorgia_maria_villa/)

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Please note that both lecturers are also available to schedule meetings via Teams.

*In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.*

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)