# 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 (to be held in the first semester) and one module of twenty hours (to be held in the second semester). 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 second module 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 in the 19th Century.

Second module*: The crisis of the liberal state: from the end of the 19th Century to the Post WWII constitutional systems* (Prof. Valentina Villa)

1. The turn of the Century and the rise of Imperialism

2. The beginning of the Twentieth Century.

3. The Italian drift towards dictatorship.

4. The rise of Nazism.

5. The Soviet Union.

6. Post WWII constitutional systems.

***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

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***

Lectures will form the core of the course. A steady and active participation is strongly encouraged: students are expected to participate constructively with comments and questions.

Depending on the number of attending students, discussion times or other small group activities may be provided during the academic year.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*- Assessment Method*

Both final exams and partial exams consist in written test, administered on Blackboard to be accessed through the proctoring program Respondus Lockdown Browser.

**The final written exam** will be held during the official Appelli, starting from June 2024. 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 partial written tests** at the end of each module (i.e. January 2024 and May 2024), 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. 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.

The grade of each partial 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.

*- Assessment Criteria*

The assessment will be based on a number of questions that are meant to ascertain the student's ability to write with correctness and propriety. 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. In particular, the lecturers will assess the capacity to place a political event or concept in its correct historical contextualisation, as well as the pertinence of the answers, the reasoned and coherent structuring of the discourse, the ability to identify conceptual and historical connections.

Please note that partial tests are meant to verify the ongoing student’s knowledge of the main topics of the course and will be assessed according to the same criteria explained above.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*- 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.

*- Office hours:*

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.

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