

**Course title:** Society and Politics in Contemporary Spain

**Language of instruction:** English

**Professor:** Marc Sanjaume-Calvet; Óscar García Jaén; Pau Torres

**Professor's contact and office hours:** Mondays 11:00 am (20.1E28)

**Course contact hours:** 45

**Recommended credit:** 6 ECTS credits

**Course prerequisites:**

This course is oriented to students interested in European, Spanish and Catalan politics. The course does not assume prior knowledge of Spanish and/or European politics.

**Language requirements:**

Recommended level in the European Framework B2 (or equivalent: Cambridge Certificate if the teaching language is English, DELE or 3 semesters in the case of Spanish).

**Course focus and approach:**

The course focuses on understanding the key aspects of Spanish and Catalan politics, particularly the functioning of Spain's democratic system since the 1970s. It examines political institutions, processes, actors, culture, and electoral behavior.

**Course description:**

This course is designed to give an overview of fundamental issues in the study of Spanish and Catalan politics. Its core is the study of the nature and functioning of the Spanish democratic system installed since the mid-seventies, paying special attention to its political processes, institutions, actors, political culture and electoral behavior. The course also introduces the previous Spanish democratic experience (2nd Republic, 1931-1936), its collapse (Civil War, 1936-1939), the dictatorial rule under by Franco, and the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-1978) which has strongly influenced the current features of the Spanish and Catalan political systems.

**Learning objectives:**

At the end of this course the students will be able: 1) to understand the development and working of the Spanish and Catalan political systems in the last decades within the context of the EU; 2) to comprehend the relationship between democracy and Spanish politics; 3) to become familiar with the key literature on Spanish, Catalan and European comparative politics.

**Course workload:**

The workload of the course rests on the assigned readings that students are expected to complete prior to coming to class and to contribute to discussion during activities. That is, during lectures, I will pose questions to encourage students' participation and developing critical thinking. Students are expected to actively participate along the

course with exercise, in-group activities and debates. Finally, they will have to make a home midterm exam and also home final exam.

### Teaching methodology:

The course is structured in both lecture and participatory formats. Classes usually start with an introductory lecture where the professor will present the most relevant issues of the topic at stake. Topics are grouped into weekly format which include students' activities oriented to relate concepts, to express original ideas as well as to develop their critical thinking on the topics under study. In addition, we will make a few selected field trips during the course aimed at improve the knowledge of the terrain.

### Assessment criteria:

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

- ✓ Class attendance and participation: 10%
- ✓ Individual presentation: 10%
- ✓ Group Presentation: 20 %
- ✓ Take Home Midterm exam: 30%
- ✓ Final exam: 30%

### BaPIS absence policy:

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student's final grade as follows:

Absences	Penalization
Up to two (2) absences	No penalization
Three (3) absences	1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Four (4) absences	2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Five (5) absences or more	The student receives an INCOMPLETE ("NO PRESENTADO") for the course

The BaPIS attendance policy does not make a distinction between justified and unjustified absences. All absences—whether due to common short-term illnesses or personal reasons—are counted toward the total amount and cannot be excused. Therefore, students are responsible for managing all their absences.

Only in cases of longer absences—such as hospitalization, prolonged illness, traumatic events, or other exceptional situations—will absences be considered for exceptions with appropriate documentation. The Academic Director will review these cases on an individual basis.

Students must inform the Instructor and the International Programs Office promptly via email if serious circumstances arise.

**Classroom norms:**

There will be a ten-minute break during each session.

**Weekly schedule:**

**Session 1 - Course description**

Introduction to the Course, Objectives, Course format, Principal contents, and overview of the course and the country.

*No readings*

**Session 2 – Basic Historical and Political Facts**

State formation - Historical narratives – Origins of institutional structure

**Readings:**

- Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi, Spain Dictatorship to Democracy: pp. 15-48.
- Gunther, Richard, José Ramón Montero and Joan Botella, Democracy in Modern Spain. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 65-78.
- Chislett, William, 2016, A New Course for Spain: Beyond the Crisis, Real Instituto Elcano:  
<http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/4042b2804bb4115fa0a5ba6e9c1af357/Chislett-New-course-for-Spain-beyond-crisis.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=4042b2804bb4115fa0a5ba6e9c1af357>
- Preston, Paul, The Triumph of Democracy in Spain, pp. 1-52.

**Session 3 - Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy**

The democratic moment- What democracy is ... and is not-Democracy's Third and Fourth Waves – Dangers and dilemmas of democracy – Explanatory factors for the consolidation of a democracy. Institutionalizing a new regime – The Constituent Process- The Constitution of 1978 – Analytical perspectives about the transition process to democracy – Explaining successful democratic consolidation.

**Readings:**

- Bunce, Valery. 2000. "Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations", Comparative Political Studies 33(6/7):703-734.

- Gunther, Richard, José Ramón Montero and Joan Botella, Democracy in Modern Spain. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 79-107
- Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi. "What Makes Democracies Endure?" Journal of Democracy, 7 (1), 1996: 39-55.
- Preston, Paul, The Triumph of Democracy in Spain, pp. 53-121. Maravall, José María and Julián Santamaría, "Political Change in Spain and the Prospects for Democracy." In: O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule.

#### **Session 4 - Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism, the Central Government, the executive, and the Monarchy**

Constitutional choices for new democracies – The virtues of parliamentarism – The virtues of presidentialism – The primacy of the particular – European and Spanish Parliamentarism- The Head of the State- The Prime Minister – The Cabinet – Making Laws in Spain: executives and legislatures – Monarchy in the Spanish Constitution

##### **Readings:**

- Lijphart, 'Parliaments: Concentration vs. Sharing of Legislative Power', in Democracies, pp. 90-105.
- Van Biezen, I., y J. Hopkin. 2005. The Presidentialization of Spanish Democracy: Sources of Prime Ministerial Power in Post-Franco Spain, in The Presidentialization of Politics, edited by T. Poguntke and P. Webb, Oxford University Press: 106-127.
- Linz, 'The Virtues of Parliamentarism' in The Global Resurgence of Democracy, pp. 154-161.
- Eaton, Ken, 'Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism', Comparative Politics 32 : 355-376.

#### **Session 5 – Institutions' role debate**

#### **Session 6 - Political Parties and Party System**

Theory of political parties and party systems – Parties and party system in Spain – Party membership – Power within parties - Party families in Spanish Politics – The role of national parties – The role of regional parties – New parties and movements in Spain.

##### **Reading:**

- Gunther, Richard, José Ramón Montero and Joan Botella, *Democracy in Modern Spain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 198-237.
- Gallagher, M., M. Laver and P. Mair. 2006. 'Party politics and party systems in Europe', in *Representative Government in Modern Europe*, pp. 187-227.
- Orriols, Ll. & G. Cordero. 2016. The Breakdown of the Spanish Two-Party System: The Upsurge of Podemos and Ciudadanos in the 2015 General Election, *South European Society and Politics*, 21:4, 469-492

### **Session 7 – [Visit] Museu d’Història de Catalunya**

### **Session 8 - Elections, Electoral System and Legislatives**

Theories of democratic institutions: consensus and majoritarian systems – The functions of legislatures – Bicameralism in Spanish politics - Checks and balances in the Spanish political system – The relationship between the legislative and the executive in Spain.

#### **Reading:**

- Montero, José Ramón, and A. Santana. 2020. 'Elections in Spain', in Diego Muro, and Ignacio Lago (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics*, Oxford Handbooks.
- Vallbé, J.J.; Sanjaume-Calvet, M. 2021. "Spain. A "Cardboard Model" of MP Floor Participation", In: Bäck, H.; Debus, M.; Fernandes, J.M. (ed.) *The politics of legislative debates*, Oxford University Press, pp. 692-712.
- Mújica, A.; Sánchez-Cuenca, I. 2006. "Consensus and Parliamentary Opposition: The Case of Spain". *Government and Opposition* 41 (1): 86-108.
- Field, B, 2009, 'Minority Government and Legislative Politics in a Multilevel State: Spain under Zapatero', *South European Politics and Society* 14(1): 417-434.

### **Session 9 – Midterm (exam)**

### **Session 10 – Electoral debate on Spanish Elections**

### **Session 11 – The Territorial Model**

Decentralisation – *Estado autonómico* – Territorial conflict – Nationalism

#### **Readings:**

- Colino, César. 2020. 'Decentralization in Spain: federal evolution and performance of the estado autonómico', in Diego Muro, and Ignacio Lago (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics*, Oxford Handbooks.

- Bossacoma, P.; Sanjaume-Calvet, M. 2019. "Asymmetry as a Device for Equal Recognition and Reasonable Accommodation of Majority and Minority Nations. A Country Study on Constitutional Asymmetry in Spain", In: Popelier P.; Sahadžić M. (eds) *Constitutional Asymmetry in Multinational Federalism. Federalism and Internal Conflicts*, Palgrave Macmillan.

### **Session 12 – Catalonia: history and politics**

History – Catalan politics – Nationalism – Catalan institutions

#### **Readings:**

- Sanjaume-Calvet, Marc, Berta Barbet Porta and Mireia Grau Creus. 2022. "Catalan self-government: from autonomy to self-determination?". In *Autonomy Arrangements in the World*, 2nd edition.
- McRoberts, K. 2022. *Catalonia. The Struggle Over Independence*. Oxford University Press.

### **Session 13 – The self-determination debate [Documentary Two Catalonias, Netflix]**

Territorial conflict – Self-determination demands – Accommodation and decentralization

#### **Readings:**

- Cetrà, D., and Harvey, M. (2019) Explaining accommodation and resistance to demands for independence referendums in the UK and Spain, *Nations and Nationalism*, 25, doi: 10.1111/nana.12417.
- Harguindéguy, J.-B., Sánchez, E.S. and Sánchez, A.S. (2021), 'Why do central states accept holding independence referendums? Analyzing the role of state peripheries', *Electoral Studies* 69: 102248.

### **Session 14 – [Field Trip] Institut d'Estudis de l'Autogovern (Catalan Self-Government Institute)**

### **Session 15 – [Field Trip] Catalan Parliament Visit**

### **Session 16 – Analysis on general elections**

### **Session 17 – The EU and the Europeanization of the Spanish Political System**

The European integration process – Europeanization and institutional analysis – Effects of the Europeanization process in the Spanish political system – The merger between the domestic and the European policy processes.

**Readings:**

- Closa and Heywood, 2004, 'Institutional adaptation: reshaping political structures', in Spain and the European Union. London: Palgrave.
- Arregui, Javier, 2007, Europeización y Transformación Institucional del Sistema Político Español, in España en Europa, Europa en España (1986-2006). Barcelona: CIDOB.

**Session 18 – Final Paper presentations**

**Session 19 – Recap Social Q&A**

**Session 20 – Final exam**

**Last revision: April 2025.**

**Required readings:**

The professor will assemble a coursepack/or indicate mandatory textbooks.

**Recommended bibliography:**

Students are encouraged to consult the following sources on their own.

Gunther, Richard, José Ramón Montero and Joan Botella. 2004. Democracy in Modern Spain. New Haven: Yale University Press

McRoberts, K. 2022. Catalonia. The Struggle Over Independence. Oxford University Press.

Muro, Diego and Ignacio Lago (eds). 2020. The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics, Oxford Handbooks.