

Universidade de São Paulo
Departamento de Ciência Política

Transitions and Institutions

Curso de pós-graduação FLS6395
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Course description

Social, political and economic change is a central object of research in the social sciences. Concepts like transition, transformation, crisis and breakdown are important in several subfields of political science and neighboring disciplines. Yet, although those subfields use similar theoretical paradigms and approaches to describe and explain institutional change, they often do not talk to each other. Rather than looking at a specific subject area (such as democratization), the intention of this course therefore is to distil key concepts and theories of transition and to trace their application across the boundaries of traditional subfields.

The course will present a broad overview of theoretical approaches to transition and institutional change. Subsequently, these approaches will be applied to different transitional situations such as transitions to democracy, democratic decline and breakdown of democracy, processes of economic transformation, economic and political crises, transitions from war to peace and institution-building in divided societies, transitional justice and the challenges of dealing with past human rights violations in post-conflict and democratizing societies. In accordance with the mission of the Martius Chair for German and European Studies to improve the perception of German science in Brazil, the course pays special attention to case studies from Europe and German contributions to transition and transformation research.

Objectives

The course is relevant for students interested in processes of social, political and economic change. It will have a strong focus on reading and discussing both ‘classic’ and more recent contributions to the field of transition studies. It is therefore essential for students to read the assigned materials prior to the session so that they can actively participate.

The course will be held in English (most of the readings and presentations of the professor will be in English), but depending on students’ needs will allow for discussions, student presentations and papers to be done in Portuguese.

Requirements

Participation in class discussions, short presentations, essay

Contents

1. Introduction: Transitions and institutions
2. Theoretical perspectives on transition and institutional change
3. Democratic transition
4. Economic transformation: Post-communist countries
5. Economic transformation: Developing countries
6. Economic crises
7. Political crises and instability
8. Democratic decline and breakdown
9. The role of actors in transition from war to peace
10. Transition from war to peace: constitutional design for divided societies
11. Transitional justice in democratic transitions
12. Peace vs. justice: transitional justice in post-conflict societies

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