Theories of Bureaucratic Politics: An International Perspective
Dr. Svanhildur Thorvaldsdottir
Oettingenstr. 67, Room 061, 8:30 - 10:00 s.t.

Seminar Abstract

International bureaucracies are oftentimes the institutional mechanism through which international policy is both formulated and implemented. And yet, we do not have a strong sense of how they work and the extent to which they parallel national bureaucracies. Do we expect international bureaucracies to be different from national ones? If so, how? What can our existing theories of bureaucratic politics and international organizations explain and where do they fall short? In this seminar, we will examine various theories of bureaucratic politics with a particular eye to their application to international organizations and their policy making processes. Students should emerge from this seminar with a comprehensive understanding of the theories of bureaucratic politics, especially as they apply to international organizations and are encouraged—through a seminar paper or presentation—to explore the linkages between the two in an analysis of their own design. Note that, for this class, it is helpful (but not required) to have some quantitative background as many of the readings will use statistical analysis and/or game-theoretic modeling. The course is designed to complement the seminar “Global Policy-Making in Organizational Fields: What Role for International Bureaucracies?” but can also be taken independently.

Very Important Dates

- **9 April 2018**: NO CLASS! In exchange for canceling class on the first day, I will, however, a) attend the first class of the complementary class to this one (Dr. Ronny Patz’s class, WP3.2: Global Policy Making in Organizational Fields) in case you want to stop by and ask questions, and b) offer an open session to help students brainstorm ideas for papers/presentations sometime during the week of June 4-8.

- **11 April 2018 (Wednesday), 18:00-20:00 c.t.**: Introduction to Dr. Ronny Patz’s class, WP3.2: Global Policy Making in Organizational Fields. If you are interested in taking both this class and that one together, or simply want to meet me or ask questions about the class, I will be there on the 11th and am happy to chat with passersby.

- **2 July 2018 and 9 July 2018**: Presentation sessions. In case we can’t fit everyone who wants to give a presentation into those two dates, we will schedule an additional session at a mutually agreeable time to fit everyone in.


Course Requirements

**Formal requirements:**

The formal requirement for this class will be in the form of a paper or a presentation (see details below). Both will require students to engage seriously with the content of the class and attempt to come up with original research that advances the scholarly literature. Students should decide on a topic no later than 11 June 2018 (submitting a paragraph to instructor by email or via hard
copy in class). A tentative bibliography of 15-20 sources used in preparation of the presentation or paper should be submitted a week later (email or hard copy are both accepted).

Regardless of whether students choose a presentation or a paper, the assignment will include the following:

- Identifying an interesting research question (this is harder than you think!);
- Situating the question in the relevant literature and showing how your answer advances that literature;
- Describing a theoretical and methodological approach for the project.

**Presentation-specific requirements:** Those students choosing to do a presentation will present a comprehensive and coherent *research design* as their assignment. Note that you do not need to actually do the analysis you propose; however, you must include all three items above in your presentation, and demonstrate that your project is feasible (this part is harder than it sounds—be forewarned!). Consider this a great opportunity to test-run an idea for a Master’s thesis. Presentations should last 20-25 minutes and will be followed by 5-10 minutes of Q&A from your fellow students and instructor. Grading is based on substance and style of presentation and discussion.

**Paper-specific requirements:** Students choosing to write a term paper for this class should write an *original research paper* conforming to the requirements outlined in the Prüfungsordnung for political science. The topic should be on a question which relates to the topic of the class, broadly defined. Students should be prepared to present *very briefly* (ca. 5 minutes) on their topic at some point during the semester. Grading, however, will be based only on the final paper to be submitted by 2 September 2018, 23:59 (email as PDF and as Word/RTF).

**Informal requirements:**

This Master’s level seminar relies almost exclusively on original research, mostly in the form of journal articles. You will be exposed to some of the canonical literature on bureaucratic politics and we will attempt to bridge what I consider a divide between that, on the one hand, and the literature on international organizations, on the other. This will be a collaborative exercise, and one which requires *considerable engagement from students* (or we will all die of boredom).

Many of the articles you will read are quite complex. While *I do expect you to have done the readings* ahead of time and come prepared to discuss them, *I do not* expect you to always understand everything. Comments that begin with, “I had no idea what the author was saying about . . . ” or “this part made no sense to me” are always welcome. If you didn’t understand something, chances are you are not the only one so you should always feel free to speak up.

Although there are no formal mathematical prerequisites for this class, you will find it helpful to know how to read a regression table and even more helpful to have had some exposure to game theory. However, I will expect no more from you than command of high-school level algebra and a *willingness to learn* new tools and applications. If you feel like you are struggling with the material, please do not hesitate to let me know.
Course Schedule

9 April 2018 — NO CLASS

16 April 2018

Topic: Bureaucratic politics: What is it and why/how do we study it?


23 April 2018

Topic: International Organizations: What are they and why/how do we study them?


30 April 2018

Topic: Explaining delegation I


7 May 2018

Topic: Explaining delegation II


14 May 2018

Topic: Delegation to International Organizations

28 May 2018
Topic: Domestic bureaucracies I


4 June 2018
Topic: Domestic bureaucracies II


11 June 2018
Topic: International bureaucracies I


18 June 2018
Topic: International bureaucracies II


25 June 2018
Topic: International bureaucracies III


2 July 2018 / 9 July 2018
Student presentations.