

17.50, Introduction to Comparative Politics (Fall 2006)
Prof. Chappell Lawson
Session 7: Institutions

Why do institutions matter?

1. They structure choice; called "agenda setting"
2. Institutions affect the number of veto players

Main democratic institutions

- Presidential / parliamentary (What are the main tradeoffs between them?)
- Federal / unitary
- PR / FPTP (Which system produces more parties?)
- Bicameral vs. unicameral (Nebraska)

Not so simple: Federalism

- What powers at local level? (E.g., law enforcement in USA, etc.)
- Uneven federalism, autonomy

Not that simple: Electoral systems

Really not this simple:

1. Institutions interact with one another (e.g., PR with presidential system).
Institutions interact with social structure (e.g., Canada and FPTP)
2. Other institutions that might matter
3. Constitutional silence

Really, really not this simple: Multidimensionality of policy space and cabinet government

What are most new countries doing?