The course will focus on the emergence, functions, activities and future prospects of political parties in Western democracies. Parties are one of the central actors of modern democracies and are essential to running elections, recruiting candidates for public office and governing the state. They are a main actor of representation and their role in interest aggregation and processing of societal demands is crucial. However, parties are also increasingly challenged by the complexity of multi-level governance and by their increasing unpopularity with citizens. In order to address all these problems, we will review some of the classic studies of party politics as well as more recent contributions on party change.

The course has a seminar format: lectures will introduce topics and the main questions they raise and will be followed by a class discussion. Students are expected to read the assigned materials timely and thoughtfully and be ready to discuss the content in class. Students will also present journal articles and discuss their research goals, methods and empirical findings.

For the PhD students credits are earned through the following assessments:

Class participation (20%)
Class presentations (30%)
Final paper of about 20 pages (50%)

Course Calendar

Week I – How Parties Organise

Readings:


Week II – The party system

Readings:

Student presentation:


Week III – Parties and electoral competition

Readings:

• Cox, G. (1997), Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems, Cambridge, Chapters 1, 2, 3

Student presentation:


Week IV – Parties in legislative assemblies

Readings:


Student presentation:

Week V – **Parties in government**

**Readings:**

- Strom, K. et al. (eds.) (2010), *Cabinets and Coalition Bargaining. The Democratic Life Cycle in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, Chapters 1, 2

**Student presentation:**


Week VI – **Challenger parties**

**Readings:**


**Student presentation:**


Week VII – **Parties and the EU**

**Readings:**


**Student presentation:**

Week VIII – Party change or decline?

Readings:


Class discussion of student paper proposals