University of Birmingham



Controversies in Contemporary Democracies: Comparative Perspectives

Final year module

Lecturer: David Bailey (/staff/profiles/government-society/bailey-david.aspx)

This module studies a variety of developments that potentially challenge contemporary democracies, including the declining ability of the electoral process, political parties and welfare states to appeal to citizens, and the rise of alternative types of political protest in response.

The aim of the course is to provide students with an up-to-date survey of comparative research into these developments, and to enable students to use the comparative method to conduct their own inquiries within this area. Questions to be studied include:

- Do parties still play a role in democracy?
- Why is support for far-right parties rising?
- Has left-wing politics become redundant?
- Is the welfare state in terminal decline?
- Can representative democracy survive the rise of `post-materialist' values?
- Why is political protest increasing? What effect does it have?
- What role do social movements play in contemporary democracy?

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of the main findings and debates relating to the challenges to contemporary democracies studied on the module
- Analyse and practically assess historical events and developments, patterns of political behaviour, and political outcomes within contemporary democracies.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage in political analysis through the adoption of the comparative method.
- Demonstrate the capacity to analyse and evaluate relevant explanations and arguments so as to reach a clear and scholarly assessment.

Assessment

• Term One/Two: Presentation (10%)

Term One: 1 x 2000 assessed essays (25%)

• Term Three: 2 hour examination (40%)

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