

GV101

Introduction to Political Science

Week 14: Coalitions and Single-Party Governments

Classes, Monday 10 February 2020

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Essential Reading Overview

- Clark, Golder, and Golder outline a shedload of concepts: ministerial responsibility, collective cabinet responsibility, an investiture vote, the formateur, a caretaker government, office-seeking and policy-seeking politicians, Gamson's law, (least) minimum winning coalition, connected coalition, minority government, surplus majority government, preelectoral coalition, and government coalition. They also highlight three possible ways that a government might set an election based on the economy (political surfing, political business cycle, or signalling), and give an overview of Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (further reading from Week 12).
- Tsebelis applies veto players theory and does empirical work to demonstrate that a greater number of coalition partners, and a greater range of positions in a coalition, is negatively associated with the number of significant pieces of (labour) legislation, and negatively associated with the variance in the number of such policies passed.
- A contemporary example of coalition formation: You, today.

Class Task

- This week you will be undertaking a task rather than answering questions. In your group you will first be allocated some votes to cast in an election based on your policy preferences and the current polling. Once the election has been conducted you will be allocated a political party and its seats in the legislature, along with its policy positions. You will then be expected to formulate the negotiating position of your party and participate in attempts to form a coalition government, with the resultant policy positions being implemented (to the delight or chagrin of the voting population).