Active Learning in Comparative Politics: A Mock German Election and Coalition-Formation Simulation*

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Instructors constantly encourage students to learn and process information. Brock and Cameron assert, "Individuals process information, learn concepts, and solve problems in different ways" (1999, 251). Some students learn by listening, others learn by taking notes, more learn by seeing, and still others learn by doing and saying. Yet in many college classrooms, the dominant teaching method is the traditional lecture. While lecturing may be a necessary teaching technique, it is often insufficient for teaching a large number of students with varying learning preferences.

Brock and Cameron advocate using Kolb's experimental learning model to accommodate diverse learning preferences. The model proceeds in four stages: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflexive observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation of learning (Kolb 1976, 1984, 1988).

I use Kolb's model as a blueprint to develop a semester-long project in my Introduction to Comparative Politics course. Implementing Kolb's model into the course benefits all types of learners and reinforces concepts, observations, and experiences important to the subject matter at hand. Encouraging students to learn from these four angles is beneficial to all students and forces them to analyze specific situations, reflect on their observations, confront problems, and develop their own ideas.

One difficulty in adapting Kolb's model is the need for concrete experience stages. In the natural sciences, laboratory experiments offer students first-hand interactions with course subject matter. However, it is not easy for social science students to partake in these kinds of hands-on experiments. I advocate the use of simulations to fill this void. A simulation allows students to relate their "book knowledge" to the "real world" in order to gain a deeper understanding of abstract concepts (Brock and Cameron 1999, 252). Furthermore, Woodworth and Gump state that simulations "provide the laboratories for political science" (1994). Simulations "recreate complex, dynamic political processes in the classroom, allowing students to examine the motivations, behavioral constraints, resources and interactions among institutional actors" (Smith and Boyer 1996, 690). In other words, they permit students to experience institutional processes in ways that reading textbooks and listening to lectures may not allow. Moreover, Poplin and Weeves add that "students want learning activities that are relevant and fun" as well as "learning experiments that offer some choice and require action" (1992, 16). Through simulations, instructors may perform experiments and illustrate actual processes in the classroom.

In this article, I discuss two types of simulations: mock proportional representation (PR) elections and government formations in multiparty political systems. Many undergraduate students who study comparative politics have difficulty understanding how PR electoral systems function. In addition, it may be difficult for students to comprehend the formation of coalition governments and the selection processes of Prime Minister and/or other cabinet ministers. To address these challenges, I develop simulations in which students first participate as party leaders, representatives, and voters in a mock PR election, and second in simulated coalition negotiations.[1] To develop the simulations, I loosely follow the guidelines put forth by Smith and Boyer (1996), authors of "Designing In-Class Simulations." Below I sketch each of the steps taken to design and carry out the simulations as well as report on their utility.

Goals of the Simulations

The general goal of the simulations is to expose students to democratic political systems and electoral systems that are very different from those in the United States. I hope to convey that the American way is not the only way.[2] However, there are several other specific goals that I wish to accomplish through the employment of the exercises and assignments.

First, the mock German election helps the students understand the process of electing representatives (as well as executives) to the legislature in parliamentary governments that use PR electoral systems. Students should be able to explain in detail how PR systems function (particularly in Germany). To do so, students actually partake in electing to the legislature individual candidates as well as candidates on party lists. Participation in the process allows the students to understand the process in the first-person.

Second, the coalition-formation simulation helps students understand how governments form in multiparty PR systems (particularly in Germany). Again, after participating in the government formation process, students should be able to explain the process of coalition formation and the goals, motivations, and constraints influencing actors' behaviors, and consequently the formation of governments.

Third, the simulations introduce students to major concepts relevant to comparative politics literatures, especially the literature on comparative political institutions. Such concepts include parliamentary government (fusion of powers), proportional representation, single-member districts, electoral thresholds, excess mandates, prime minister/chancellor, multiparty systems, coalition government, and coalition bargaining. By participating as party leaders and representatives in the election and formation of parliamentary governments, students encounter and learn about such concepts.

Fourth, the coalition simulation enables students to learn specific coalition-formation theories and apply them to "real" results. In short, students participate in and influence the actual formation of governments whose processes corroborate one or more academic theories.

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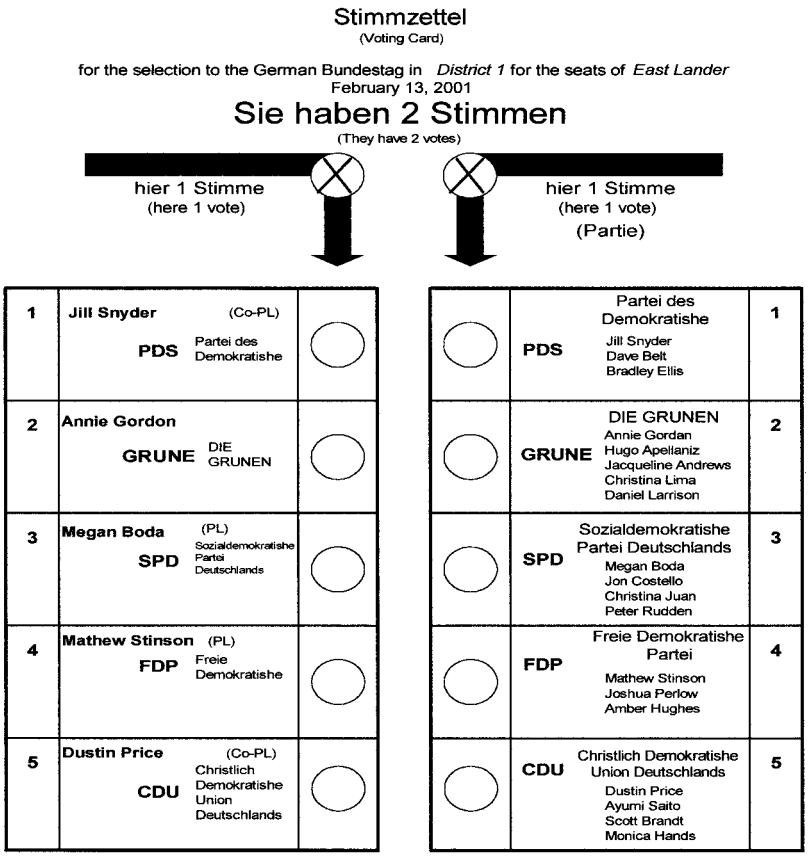
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Fifth, students learn about the German party system and the various political topics frequently debated in German politics. I require each student to research the German political parties and write reports that highlight party positions on specific issues. The assignment forces students to learn the different party perspectives on specific political issues. Sixth, the simulations teach critical and analytical thinking skills. The simulation designs force the students to think critically and analyze different scenarios before acting. For example, the students must develop bargaining strategies (active experimentation); act to form a coalition government (concrete experience); and write a reaction paper (reflexive observation) that relates the simulation to the actual German government as well as to other governments studied in the course.

Why Germany?

There are four main reasons why I choose to simulate Germany's electoral system and method of government formation. First, Germany fits the criteria for what I am trying to teach—PR and coalition government formation. Germany's electoral system allocates seats such that the proportion of Bundestag (or lower house) seats that parties receive roughly represents the proportion of votes that parties receive. In other words, Germany's electoral system generally fits the PR rubric.[3] Second, German manifesto materials are available on the Internet. These provide the substantive information on which students base their votes and form their governments. At the same time, students learn about different parties' stances on different issues, both specific to German parties and general to European party families. Third, by studying an actual country instead of a generic electoral system in a fictitious country, the students learn more than definitions and concepts; they learn in-depth information about one of the most prominent countries in the world. Specifically, they learn about the German multiparty political system and salient issues that dominate German political discourse. Fourth, although the exercise provides students with a sense of how elections take place in Germany, it introduces students to the foundations of worldwide electoral systems. Indeed, most of the democracies in the world use some form of PR system to elect legislative representatives. "In Latin America, the PR system is the standard; Mexico and Chile are the only exceptions" (Nohlen 1996, 46). We also know

Figure 1
Sample Ballot



PR is the standard in Europe (Lijphart 1994, 1999; Lijphart and Waisman 1996). In short, Germany's PR electoral and coalition-formation processes are worthwhile to mimic. Below I describe the intricacies of the system, such as its parties, electoral formulas, and the "rules of the game."

The German Electoral System

The Federal Republic of Germany's electoral system is characterized as a "'personalized proportional law,' with half of the 656 parliamentary deputies elected by plurality vote in single-member districts and the other half by proportional representation from Land (state) party lists." (Conradt 2001, 147). Five major political parties—the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU), the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Green Party, and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—compete for positions in the Bundestag. Each voter may cast two votes: one for an individual candidate in their electoral district and one for a party (see Figure 1). The latter vote determines the final percentage of seats each party will receive, and the former determines which candidates get those seats. If a candidate wins a seat as an individual member, his or her party loses one seat from those won via list voting (Conradt 2001, 147). For example, if the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) won 262 list seats by means of PR, the CDU is entitled to 262 total seats. If 200 CDU candidates simultaneously win district seats, the 200 district winners automatically get 200 of the 262 list seats and the remaining 62 seats are filled by PR list members. Thus the more districts a party wins, the fewer list seats received (Conradt 2001, 147). However, if a party wins more direct mandates (SMD votes) than the party is entitled to under PR, it retains these "excess" seats and the size of the parliament increases accordingly. For example, if the CDU won all 328 electoral districts, but only won 40% of the list vote or 262 list seats, the German Bundestag would increase from 656 seats to 722 seats.[4]

Only parties that win a minimum 5% of the vote or that have three candidates who directly win individual seats gain representation in the Bundestag. Also, due to the 5% rule, the extra seats that are not awarded to small parties capturing less than 5% of the PR vote are dis-

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Figure 2
Sample Breakdown of Candidates and Voters by Land (State) and District

Federal Republic of Germany

	East Lander				West Lander			
	District 1		District 2		District 3		District 4	
	Candidate	List	Candidate	List	Candidate	List	Candidate	List
PDS	Jill Snyder (Co-PL)	1) Jill Snyder 2) Dave Belt 3) Bradley Ellis	Dave Belt	1) Jill Snyder 2) Dave Belt 3) Bradley Ellis	H. J. Gallego. (Co-PL)	1) H.G. Gallego 2) Kenneth Ulich 3) Jaclyn Katz	Jaclyn Katz	1) H.G. Gallego 2) Jaclyn Katz 3) Kenneth Ulich
Greens	Annie Gordan (PL)	1) Annie Gordan 2) Hugo L. Apellaniz 3) Jacqueline Andrews 4) Christina Lima 5) Daniel Larrison	Hugo Appellaniz	1) Annie Gordan 2) Hugo L. Apellaniz 3) Jacqueline Andrews 4) Christina Lima 5) Daniel Larrison	Shawn Layman	1) Shawn Layman 2) Jamie Grant 3) Rachel Prieth 4) Derrick Glover	Rachel Prieth	1) Shawn Layman 2) Rachel Prieth 3) Jamie Grant 4) Derrick Glover
SPD	Megan Boda	1) Megan Boda 2) Jon Costello 3) Christina Juan 4) Peter Rudden	Jon Costello	1) Megan Boda 2) Jon Costello 3) Christina Juan 4) Peter Rudden	Michael Duncan (PL)	1) Michael Duncan 2) Gasford Golaub 3) Andrew Wasylak 4) Travis Turning	Gasford Golaub	1) Michael Duncan 2) Gasford Golaub 3) Andrew Wasylak 4) Travis Turning
FDP	Mathew Stinson (PL)	1) Mathew Stinson 2) Joshua Perlow 3) Amber Hughes	Joshua Perlow	1) Mathew Stinson 2) Joshua Perlow 3) Amber Hughes	Meghan Storrie	1) Meghan Storrie 2) Ephie Jefferson 3) Kim Tacy	Ephie Jefferson	1) Meghan Storrie 2) Ephie Jefferson 3) Kim Tacy
CDU /CSU	Dustin Price (Co-PL)	1) Dustin Price 2) Ayumi Saito 3) Scott Brandt 4) Monica Hands	Ayumi Saito	1) Dustin Price 2) Ayumi Saito 3) Scott Brandt 4) Monica Hands	Michael Spadaccini (Co-PL)	1) Michael Spadaccini 2) Christopher Atwood 3) Amanda Davis 4) Justin Thompson	Christopher Atwood	1) Michael Spadaccini 2) Christopher Atwood 3) Amanda Davis 4) Justin Thompson
Voters	Javed Mustaq Megan Pena John Cain Erin Long		Mindy Nemeth Eli George Laura Mirabella Kaylan Miers Todd Foege		Yolander Cannon Fardairie Lawrence Chad Roernik Tara Eliel		Paul Leone Melissa Schiby Meghan Horner Summer Starr Cody Pacic	

tributed to the parties that actually get into Parliament. Thus, the votes from the constituencies and those for the state lists are offset in such a way that the composition of the Bundestag almost identically reflects the distribution of votes among the parties.

The Formation of German Governments

After an election, in the most likely event that one party does not hold a majority of the seats in the Bundestag, a coalition government must form. To begin, the Bundestag elects the federal chancellor, who then appoints the cabinet ministers. Although the election is by secret ballot, the vote follows strict party lines such that the party with the most seats most often puts its party leader in power (Conradt 2001, 178). The *formateur* party, or party of the elected chancellor, becomes responsible for forming a government that will support the chancellor's policies. Potential coalition partners and the formateur negotiate until they reach a supported agreement. In forming a government, the chancellor may consider the number of seats needed to obtain a majority; the policy positions of potential coalition partners; his or her own party's policy positions; potential ministers (ideology and qualifications); and the demands of various factions within his or her party (Conradt 2001, 187).

With an understanding of German electoral and government-formation processes and the goals I set for the simulation, I sketch the design of the simulations. I begin with the general design and follow with the specific guidelines for both the mock election and the coalition negotiations.

Designing the Simulations

The simulations run for two to three class sessions, with students acting as party leaders, representatives, and voters in the first simulation (the mock election), and solely as party leaders and representatives in the second simulation (the coalition negotiations). Prior to the simulations, I acquaint the students with the German political system and the structure of the simulations.[5]

Multitask Simulation

The mock German election and coalition-formation simulations proffer multiple tasks for the students to complete. According to Smith and Boyer (1996), multitask simulations allow the students to make their own decisions, and the teacher must be prepared to adapt to the outcomes the students produce. In my simulations, I prepare for differing outcomes, and in some cases, the students' decisions may be altered by such procedures as secret voting.[6] In any event, the students must complete multiple tasks and assignments such as researching parties, voting in an election, writing coalition strategy papers, forming a government, and writing reaction papers. Below I describe these tasks in relation to the actors, their roles, and the contexts in which interaction among students takes place (election versus negotiations).

The Mock German Election[7]

Actors and Roles

I divide the students into the five German political parties and voters by state and district (see Figure 2). Germany's federalist system comprises 16 states, or *Länder*, and 328 electoral districts. However, for the purposes of the mock election and the number of students in my class (55), I split Germany into two separate states, "East Land" and "West Land," composed of four electoral districts each. The major actors are the political parties and their most obvious task is to get elected. That is, each party should try to gain the most seats in parliament. As far as voters go, they should

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Figure 3
Spring 2001 Mock Election Results
Federal Republic of Mock Germany
Total votes = 55 (27 in East & 28 in West)

	East Lander	West Lander	Total
PDS	2/27 = .07 = 7% of vote .07*10 = .7 = 1 seat Jill Snyder (top of list)	3/28 = .11 = 11% of vote .11*10 = 1.1 = 1 seat H.G. Gallego (top of list)	5/55 = .09 = 9% of vote 1+1 = 2 seats 2/20 = 10% of seats
Greens	8/27 = .30 = 30% of vote 30*10 = 3 = 3 seats Annie Gordon (top of list) Hugo Apellaniz (2nd on list) Jacqueline Andrews (3rd on list)	6/28 = .21 = 21% of vote .21*10 = 2.1 = 2 seats Shawn Layman (top of list) Jamie Grant (2nd on list)	14/55 = .18 = 25% of vote 3+2 = 5 seats 5/20 = 25% of seats
SPD	8/27 = .30% of vote .30*10 = 3 = seats Megan Boda (won D1) J. Costello (won D2) Christina Juan (3rd on list)	9/28 = .32 = 32% of vote .32*10 = 3.2 = 3 seats Michael Duncan (top of list) Gasford Golaub (2nd on list) Andrew Wasylak (3rd on list)	17/55 = .31 = 31% of vote 3+3 = 6 seats 6/20 = 30% of seats
FDP	6/27 = .22 = 22% of vote .22*10 = 2.2 = 2 seats Matt Stinson (top of list) Joshua Perlow (2nd on list)	7/28 = .25 = 25% of vote .25*10 = 2.5 = 3 seats Ephie Jefferson (won D4-also 2nd on list) Meghan Storrie (1st on list) Kim Tacy (3rd on list)	13/55 = .24 = 24% of vote 2+3 = 5 seats 5/20 = 25% of seats
CDU	3/27 = .11 = 11% of vote .11*10 = 1.11 = 1 seat Dustin Price (top of list)	3/28 = .11 = 11% of vote .11*10 = 1.1 = 1 seat Michael Spadaccini (won D3)	6/55 = .11 = 11% of vote 1+1 = 2 seats 2/20 = .10% of seats

elect the candidate/party that appears to be the best for the job.

Tasks: Issue Papers and Roles

Each student is to research his or her respective party's stances on particular political issues. The first assignment is to read each of the party's platforms and write a summary paper that describes a particular party's stance on a specific issue. Each party has a written copy of their party programme on the Internet.[8]

I ask my students to read all parties' manifestos and to pay particular attention to sections that cover similar issues across parties. In keeping with the European theme, I ask them to concentrate on domestic issues and social welfare policies—education, health care, environment and labor issues—as well as foreign policies—defense and foreign affairs. Each student writes a summary of his or her party's stance on a single issue of his or her choice, compares and contrasts the party's stance on that issue to that of the other parties, and emails the summary to the class.[9] Thus, each student prepares a piece of each party's policy goals and ideals, which provide a framework for party roles.

Tasks: Speeches/Debate

Next, I select party leaders to compile each group's issue papers into a campaign platform and to give a five-minute speech covering each of his or her party's positions on the issues. Research for the issue papers and party-leader speeches provides the foundation for both the election and the coalition-formation simulation. First, mock voters (every student in the class) use the information to decide for whom they will vote. Second, parties use the information during negotiations to form a government. Additionally, it provides forums for debate and class discussion by incorporating topics and issues salient to present-day Germany.

Once the students are more familiar with the system, the class participates as party leaders, representatives, and voters in a Mock German election. First, party leaders give their five-minute campaign speeches. Second, party leaders briefly debate some issues, responding to one another's claims and comments as well as party members' and voters' (students not designated as party leaders) questions and comments.[10] To further transform my classroom into the German Bundestag, I cover the podium with a Federal Republic of Germany flag and make miniature party logo flags for each of the party leaders. The extra effort helps keep parties separated in the students' minds, and sets the scene for the action to take place.

Tasks: Voting

After hearing the speeches, I ask each of the students, including party leaders and candidates, to vote. I divide the classroom into states and districts (see figure 2) and have each student sit in his or her respective district.[11] From each state, 10 members are elected to a "20-seat Bundestag." Four representatives are elected by winning their districts, while 16 others are elected through party lists.[12] Each student votes using a replica German ballot that corresponds to his or her district (see Figure 1). Finally, I collect the votes, ending the first day of the mock election.

It is important to remember that coalition formation depends upon election results. Coalition governments form only if one party does *not* control more than 50% of the seats.[13] Figure 3 shows the results of an election in Spring 2001. First, the figure illustrates how a party's share of mandates is roughly proportional to its percentage of the popular

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vote. Second, it shows which individuals receive seats and how—by SMD or PR list. For example, Jill Snyder (PDS) was elected by the list vote, whereas Megan Boda (SPD) was elected by winning her district.

Results of Election

In the next class, I write the names of elected individuals on the board, and I present the calculations of the results to illustrate the nuances in our election and describe exactly how the 20 representatives were elected (see Figure 3). I point out that the percentage of seats each party receives corresponds roughly to the percentage of the votes each party received. This presentation of the results aids the students' comprehension of how proportional representation systems function, especially the German system. After obtaining seat allocations of the parties in the Bundestag, the stage is set for coalition negotiations and government formation.

Coalition Formation

Set-Up

Coalition formation begins by sorting the remaining non-elected students (voters) into one of the five political parties. As a result of the mock election, the largest party becomes the formateur party, which holds the key to the chancellorship.[14] The formateur accepts and rejects offers until a government forms. However, before offers are accepted and rejected they must be formulated.

Background Information

Before beginning coalition negotiations, it is useful to provide to students some background information that explains the possible motivations and considerations of the coalescing parties. In class lectures, I present and discuss several theories of coalition formation. During coalition negotiations, I encourage students to apply theories to the exercise. For example, we cover seven coalition-formation theories that posit different strategies for forming multiparty governments: Riker's (1962) minimal winning coalitions; minimal size coalitions; Leiserson's (1970) bargaining proposition theory; deSwaan's (1973) minimal range coalitions; Axelrod's (1970) minimal connected winning coalitions; Laver and Schofield's (1990, 88) "pivotal party" theory; and Laver and Shepsle's (1996) cabinet equilibrium theories.[15] I ask that the students create a government-formation strategy using the theories as a guide.

Actors, Goals, and Roles

After I present the results, the class begins coalition negotiations. The key actors are the parliament members. The other students become staffers and advisors for their respective parties. Each party receives a role sheet that states the ground rules for the simulation and characterizes each party's structure and the power relationships that exist due to the outcome of the mock election. To begin, the rules specify the structure of the negotiations process and what is legal and illegal during negotiations. They also specify that all parties write strategy papers and that the coalescing parties compromise on a budget proposal, fill all six minister positions, and agree to proposed tax cuts/raises.

The role sheets serve three additional purposes. First, they communicate to the parties the power of seats in the mock Bundestag. Second, they provide information on the history of coalitions, such as data on the average number of seats each party obtained for the last 10 years. Finally, they reveal expert rankings of German cabinet portfolios (Laver and Hunt 1992, 196). However, it is up to the students to form their own beliefs about each party's ideological positions on various issues.

Tasks: Party Ideological Scales on Several Issue Dimensions

To address the role that policy plays in coalition negotiations, I have the students rank the parties on a Left/Right (1–10) ideological scale for each of the six issues covered in the issue papers.[16] I then average the scores for each party on each issue to produce a "public opinion" measure of each party's ideology on each issue dimension.[17] Based on students' beliefs about the parties' stances on particular issues and the interparty power relationships, parties must develop coalition-negotiation strategies.

Tasks: Strategy Papers

For the second assignment, each group of students writes a party strategy paper, which addresses three issues. First, students include a list of their elected representatives and their qualifications. For example, if a student is an education major, he or she voices that qualification to be considered for minister of education. Similarly, an international relations major would be qualified to head the international affairs ministry. In the case that a student's major and/or hobbies have nothing to do with politics, economics, and/or any of the cabinet ministries, I ask them to stretch the truth.[18]

Second, they prepare a description of policy objectives. This is simply a more organized version of everyone in the group's issue papers. The purpose is to identify each party's ideological position on each issue.

Third, the group develops a party strategy for coalition negotiations based on the answers to the following questions: Which party's ideas are closest to my own party's ideas? Which party is farthest away? Whom do I want to fill the specific ministry positions and on what grounds? In the strategy paper, students apply coalition theories to the party strategy. Is the size of the coalition more important than policy? What policies are extremely important to your party and which ones are less important? Given a sum of money, what percentage would you spend on programs related to each issue area?[19] Which tax cuts do you support and on what issue area will the money be spent? If you propose a tax increase, what is your target population and on what issue area will you spend the money?

The students email the entire class the first two parts of the essay, but share the third part only with the group members and the instructor. Students keep their strategies secret while disclosing the qualifications and platforms.

Tasks: Web Negotiations

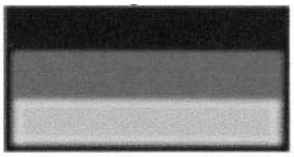
The parties enact their strategies in web negotiations, which they initiate via an Internet discussion board. Although no online agreements are binding, parties may begin bargaining over tax cuts, budgetary allocations, and so on. This stage is more or less a "feeling out" process that lets the formateur party know what to expect during upcoming in-class bargaining sessions. Smaller parties may form coalitions, thus increasing their leverage during in-class negotiations.

Tasks: In-Class Bargaining

After the completion of the strategy papers and web negotiations, live in-class bargaining begins. The party leaders sit in a circle with their party members behind them. The formateur party moves first, and each of the other parties moves in succession. The bargaining process is structured so that each party

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Figure 4
Coalition Agreement Form



Greens
Party 1

Annie Gordan
Authorized Signature

SPD
Party 2

Michael Duncan
Authorized Signature

Offer Submitted By: Greens

Offer Accepted By: SPD

Chancellor: Mike Duncan - SPD

Cabinet Positions Designated:

Ministry	Education	Interior	Environment	Foreign Affairs	Health	Labor
Headed By:	Annie Gordan	Jon Costello	Shawn Layman	Jon Costello	Christina Juan	Andrew Wasylak
Party Affiliation	Greens	SPD	Greens	SPD	SPD	SPD

Policy Similarity:
Issue Area: Education
Policy Stance: Increase Spending

Budget Allocation
% to: _____ issue area

Special Program:

Tax Cut
Issue Area:

Specifics:

Amount:

$ spent on what issue area:

Tax Raise
Issue Area: Public Services

Specifics: Targets upper income bracket

Amount: 5%

$ spent on what issue area: Education

has an opportunity to make, accept, or reject an offer. When an offer is accepted, parties fill out a coalition-agreement form (See Figure 4). This form indicates what parties have made the agreement and what the agreement acknowledges. For example, does the agreement concern a cabinet position or positions? Does it concern policy coordination? Do the parties propose a tax cut or an increase? What issues will receive more resources? All of these questions may be answered using a coalition-agreement form. I post the agreements on the web for future reference. Eventually, parties fill out several forms, make agreements and form a government. During the simulation, party members are encouraged to correspond with the party leaders—specifically, to recommend to make, accept, or reject offers.[20] Party members should be just as active as the group leaders.[21]

In this stage, students must process information rapidly, quickly determine the costs and benefits of various possibilities, and make immediate, binding decisions. As a result, students experience many of the same motivations and constraints experienced by politicians trying to form a government. The students acquire a firsthand understanding of the election and formation of coalition governments, not just in the German sense, but in the general sense.

Results: Spring 2001[22]

In Spring 2001, I asked the plurality party, in this case the SPD (six seats), to begin negotiations with the other parties. The goal was to form a majority-supported government (at least 11 of 20 representatives) in the mock Bundestag. In the first round of negotiations, the SPD deferred making an offer and instead decided to hear all preliminary offers from each of the four parties. With five potential Green seats to the left and five potential FDP seats to the right, the SPD would ultimately coalesce with one or the other; the PDS and CDU (located at opposing ideological poles), with only two seats each, had little to offer to the SPD. It was inevitable that the SPD would choose between the FDP and the Greens, as both were ideologically close, and both offered the same number of seats.

After negotiations narrowed to the FDP/Greens decision, more detailed negotiations regarding mutual policy coordination followed. The major issues concerned economic and education policies. To begin, unemployment in Germany was on the rise and both the Greens and FDP offered policy prescriptions. In line with their campaign platform, the Greens repeated their slogan, "Ecology creates jobs." They proposed that jobs be created from ecological advances. In contrast, the FDP called for "earned income tax credits" to motivate individuals to seek minimum-wage employment opportunities.

In addition, education played an important role in negotiations. The Greens proposed a tax increase that would provide more funds to education. However, the FDP generally opposed tax increases. In regards to education, the FDP proposed to allow schools more autonomy in making decisions about finances, personnel, and curricula. Similarly, the FDP favored more freedoms for business and less bureaucracy—the invisible hand of the marketplace. Meanwhile, the more radical Greens proposed to limit individuals to one plane flight a year as well as increase gasoline prices.

In the end, the SPD preferred more Green policies, such as the tax hike to increase education spending and the ways in which ecological advances could create jobs. They also favored more of the proposed cabinet appointments.[23] However, negotiations nearly collapsed when the Greens began fighting over cabinet ministries. At one point, the FDP almost broke back into the game. However, realizing a possible shutout from the government over the labor ministry, the Greens acquiesced and conceded the labor post to the SPD. Before long a Red-Green coalition formed (see Figure 4).[24] In short, the SPD realized that the Greens were the closest to their party platform, and that with five seats the Greens provided the minimum number of seats to form a majority government. The CDU and PDS experienced feelings of frustration because they could not get one party to consider any of their suggestions. At the same time, the Greens, the SPD, and the FDP learned that politics is a trade-off.

Debriefing

After a government forms, I hold a debriefing session. We discuss many of the moves made by each party and their impact on the coalition process, as well as the possibility of different scenarios and outcomes than what took place in the classroom simulation. For example, could the FDP have done anything else to get into government? If so, would the

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FDP have agreed with the necessary actions taken to receive cabinet posts? Students ask questions and clarify the proceedings. The session ends with a discussion of which theories apply to the results.[25]

Tasks: Reaction Paper

The simulation process ends with a third assignment, a reaction paper. First, the student reflects on his or her concrete experience, reviews some of the aforementioned concepts (PR, fusion of powers, etc.), and discusses how those concepts relate to German government, our government, and parliamentary and PR systems in general. Second, the student recalls the coalition-formation theories we learned in class and relates the coalition simulation to those theories. Third, the student compares and contrasts the German system with other countries we have studied. Finally, the student offers normative opinions on parliamentary, presidential, PR, and SMD systems.

Student Evaluations: Do the Students Enjoy Active Learning? Do They Learn from It?

Many students, surveyed in the free-response sections of a university evaluation, mention the mock election as a positive experience and report such things as, "The mock election helped to cement everything for me," or, "The mock election was the best example of a concept that I have experienced in my four years at FSU" (anonymous students, University student evaluations, 6/14/2001).

In an opened-ended anonymous midterm evaluation that I construct and conduct, students generally respond positively to the simulations. I ask them to identify both the advantages and disadvantages of the simulations; to tell me what they have learned from the simulation; and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.[26] One responded, "This is not like most of my classes. Though the simulations take up class time, I learned much more from my experiences than if I had just read the book" (Anonymous student, Midterm evaluation spring 2001). This type of response implies that students who "say and do" something learn and remember more as opposed to those who simply "read or hear" something.[27]

Instructor's Evaluation

Overall, I am pleased with the simulations themselves as well as the students' preparation for the concrete exercises. The students generally study their roles, bring their imagination to the simulation, and act strategically in a well thought-out manner. I feel (thus far in my experiences) that students have risen to the challenge. Finally, based on my evaluation of the students' reaction papers, the students understand the inner workings of parliamentary governments with PR electoral systems. I feel the simulations highlight the important concepts and processes that I seek to teach my students. Thus, I believe that the election and coalition simulations, to borrow a word from one of my pupils, "cement" the political processes for the students.

Advantages of the Mock Election and Coalition-Formation Simulation

Overall, there are seven advantages to the simulations. First, active learning and simulations enable students to retain more information (Stice 1987) and give students a "deeper level of insight into the political process," as compared to traditional note taking and listening exercises (Smith and Boyer 1996). Second, the exercise provides a break from the ordinary lecture but does not consume an inordinate amount of class periods. The actual simulation only takes up three hours of class time. Third, it allows students to apply their knowledge from lecture to real circumstances. Fourth, it allows students to experience a new method of electing government officials. Fifth, it may spark interest in comparative politics and help my department to acquire new majors. Sixth, the minimum number of students required for the simulation to function is around 30, but there is no maximum. Large lecture classes of 300 or more are suitable for such an endeavor, as are small, more intimate classes. Seventh, the simulations provide information about other aspects of government and political science, such as ideological scaling, public opinion (voter ideology), and public policy (the allocation of budgets/tax cuts/raises). Overall, the simulation provides a fun and stimulating educational environment and students learn as a result.

Notes

* I would like to thank Georg Vanberg, Lanny Martin, and anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and suggestions.

1. The simulations are used solely as a pedagogic tool. They are in no way intended for the purposes of scientific and/or experimental research.
2. I encourage the students to form their own normative opinions about PR, SMD, presidential, and parliamentary systems.
3. The Federal Republic combines a single-member district (SMD) system with a proportional representation list system. Therefore, the system allows students to learn both PR and SMD systems separately as well as the mixed system as a whole.
4. Why 722? 656 – 262 = 394; 394 + 328 = 722 (see Conradt 2001, 148–49).
5. Before the mock election, I take several preparatory steps. First, I teach several sessions on German Parliamentary democracy and the "personalized proportional representation" electoral system. Second, the class examines the results of many historical German elections. Third, I go over the results of the previous class's election. The examples provide the basic foundations for understanding both how votes turn into seats and the impacts of several German electoral rules (excess mandates, electoral thresholds, three mandate waivers). Fourth, I teach a brief lesson on tactical voting. I cover various possible strategies voters in certain types of situations might employ. In conjunction with the tactical voting lesson, I conduct a pilot voting exercise in which we trace specific voter's votes to examine how they impact the results. This enlightens the students about how tactical voting may play a role in determining the electoral results in the German system and other PR-type systems.
6. For example, the students vote in the election and I determine the results. Thus, I can alter the results if they do not conform to desirable standards.
7. The written instructions for the exercise appear on the web (<http://garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~sms6202/mockelec.htm>). Also on this website are links to each of the party's websites, the site of the Bundestag, the official ballots from the election, a state-and-district list of representatives, and eventually, the election results, and coalition agreements.
8. The PDS and the FDP do not post English translations of their platforms. However, through contact with representatives of the PDS and FDP, I obtained copies of English versions of their party manifestos and they are posted on my website (see note 8) solely for instructional purposes.
9. The assignments differ slightly for voters versus party representatives. See <http://garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~sms6202/mockelec.htm>.
10. The class and/or voting population may also participate. This is typically a free-for-all, but it energizes the students and generates heated debate.
11. Note in Figure 2 that the state lists are repetitive across districts within the state. For example, the East Land party list is the same for District 1 and District 2, while the "West Land" party list is the same for District 3 and District 4.
12. In Germany at least half of the representatives are elected by single-member districts, but with the limited number of students in my class I thought four districts and two states would function the best.
13. One might have to manipulate the results in such a way that no party controls more than 50% of the seats. However, the actual results usually work fine.
14. In reality, the chancellor is elected (Conradt 2001, 178). However, to keep the exercise on track, I designate the largest party as the formateur, which is most often the result of such elections in German history.

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15. Due to space considerations and the focus placed on explaining and describing the simulations, see the references for more information. Also see Martin and Stevenson (2001) for empirical tests of many coalition theories existent in the literature.

16. I use the average rankings—which are mailed only to me—to determine the class's view of each party's ideology on separate dimensions, and to assess coalition negotiations later in the exercise.

17. First, I do not disclose this information prior to coalition formation. Second, these ideological scales are useful in thinking about Laver and Shepsle's (1996) spatial game-theoretic models on coalition formation. They generate a number of new hypotheses about the ability of certain kinds of parties to obtain a place in the government, assuming that ministers have dictatorial control over the dimension of policy associated with their ministry. Essentially, they posit the concept of cabinet equilibrium. When in equilibrium, no party that wants to bring down the government can, and no party that can bring down the government wants to. Using their spatial models, they designate two main types of parties: very strong (VSP) and merely strong (MSP) parties. A VSP is a party to which a majority coalition prefers to give all the government portfolios rather than support any other government alternative, whereas an MSP has a veto over all coalitions majority-preferred to a coalition in which it controls all the portfolios. Thus, according to Laver and Shepsle, an MSP should always be able to get into a coalition. Strong parties are advantaged in coalition negotiations because they can veto any cabinet proposed by the other parties. These parties are judged VSP and MSP based on their size and centrality (ideology) in relation to the other parties in policy space (Laver and Shepsle 1996, 184–86).

18. The class is also aware that many deputies in the actual Bundestag are civil servants and interest group leaders.

19. It is understood that the issue that receives the largest percentage of money is the party's and/or coalition's most important issue.

20. During the negotiations, I perform a number of functions such as answering questions, refereeing, monitoring, and coaching.

21. The party leader is most powerful and signs off on all final decisions. In the classroom setting, party members share power in order to magnify the active-learning environment.

22. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate some of the actions taken by the students and the resulting outcomes. The results are not presented in support of a theory or research program.

23. Though the Chancellor appoints ministers directly, in order for him to remain in power, the coalition must support his choices. Thus, the parties negotiate minister appointments at the time of government formation.

24. There were a number of coalition-agreement forms filled out. However, for the ease of illustration, I chose to designate all the cabinet agreements on one form and supplement the tax raise with them.

25. It turns out that the agreement fits many of the coalition theories such as Axelrod's (1970) minimal winning connected coalition and Laver and Shepsle's (1996) VSP and MSP theories (at least in two-dimensional policy space). Again, the results should not be taken as corroboration for academic theories.

26. The open-ended evaluation is a modified version of Smith and Boyer's (1996) recommended evaluation.

27. This would indicate corroboration for the study performed by Stice (1987).

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