

POLS 103 A

Comparative Politics

Class 16:
Legislatures

Recap

- Constitutions
- Constitutional design:
 - Flexible and rigid constitutions
 - Parliamentary sovereignty and judicial review
 - Federal and unitary systems
- Nigeria's political history:
 - Precolonial era and colonization
 - Post-independence political tensions and political mobilization of collective identities:
 - Biafra War and military rule
 - Clientelism and neopatrimonialism
 - Federal experimentation

Plan for today

- Legislatures
- Functions and types of legislatures
- British and Chinese legislatures

What is a legislature?

Legislature

- Assembly or body of representatives with law-making authority



What political entities have
legislatures?

Political entities with legislatures

- Countries
- Subnational administrative divisions:
 - Federal units, e.g. states
 - Municipalities

What are some examples of legislatures?

What do legislatures do?

Functions of legislatures

- Law-making
- Setting for debates and bargaining about political decisions
- Selection of officeholders in the executive and judicial branches of government
- Oversight
- Representation of electoral district interests

What is the difference
between bicameral and
unicameral legislatures?

Types of legislatures

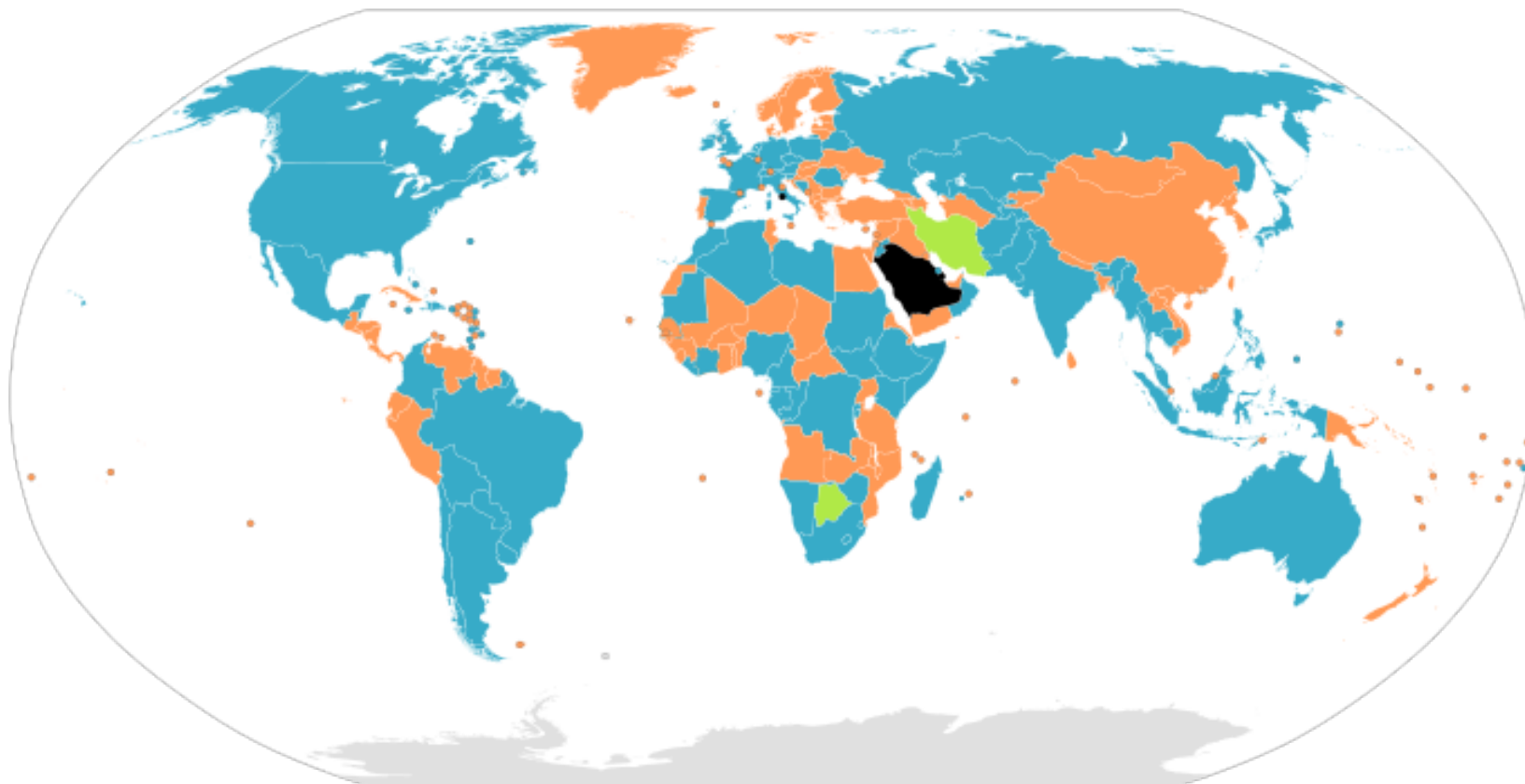
- Bicameral:
 - Comprised of two chambers, typically:
 - Lower chamber: typically more powerful, larger, and with composition more closely approximating the population
 - Upper chamber: typically less powerful, smaller, and representative of specific territories and groups
 - More common in larger and democratic countries

Types of legislatures

- Bicameral:
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 - Lower chamber: typically more powerful, larger, and with composition more closely approximating the population
 - Upper chamber: typically less powerful, smaller, and representative of specific territories and groups
 - More common in larger and democratic countries
- Unicameral:
 - Comprised of a single chamber
 - More common in smaller, more homogenous countries, and authoritarian countries

What are some examples of legislatures of both types?

Geographic distribution of the types of legislatures



The Parliament of the United Kingdom

- Bicameral:
 - Lower chamber:
 - House of Commons
 - Elected body, 650 Members of Parliament (MPs)
 - Upper chamber:
 - House of Lords
 - Membership (786 Lords in April 2020):
 - Appointed Lords Temporal:
 - Life peers
 - Hereditary peers
 - Lords Spiritual—26 bishops of the Church of England
 - Powers limited to reviewing, amending, and delaying bills passed by the House of Commons
- + Sovereign (Queen-in-Parliament)

The Parliament of the United Kingdom



Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbLTwQwXqWc>

How many legislatures does
the United Kingdom have?

Legislatures of the United Kingdom

- Parliament
- Scottish Parliament
- National Assembly for Wales (→ Welsh Parliament)
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- (and, until very recently, European Parliament)



The National People's Congress of China

- Unicameral
- 2,980 members who meet for two weeks per year
- Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, with 175 members who meet in continuous session
- *De jure* legislative and oversight powers, but *de facto* a rubber-stamping body

The National People's Congress of China



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lholv0U0nSg>

In what ways do the British and Chinese legislatures conform to the general design of legislatures, and in what ways do they differ from the norm?

What are the benefits and disadvantages of bicameral and unicameral legislatures?

What kind of legislature
should Nigeria have? Why?

What kind of legislature should Nigeria have? Why?

- Team A:
 - Nigeria would benefit from having a unicameral legislature because...
 - Gigi, Ford (William B.), Rett (Ian), River, Blake, Eloise, Sheldon
- Team B:
 - Nigeria would benefit from having a bicameral legislature with a strong lower chamber and weak upper chamber because...
 - Virginia, Caroline, Evan, Anna, Thomas M., David (James), Samuel
- Team C:
 - Nigeria would benefit from having a bicameral legislature with a weak lower chamber and strong upper chamber because...
 - Alex (Christian), Cody, Audrey, William, Thomas R., Sydney

The National Assembly of Nigeria

- Bicameral:
 - House of Representatives:
 - 360 Representatives
 - Senate:
 - 109 Senators, 3 per state + 1 for the Federal Capital Territory



Why do legislatures matter?

Takeaways

- Legislatures
- Functions:
 - Law-making, debating, and bargaining
 - Officeholder selection and oversight
 - Representation
- Types:
 - Bicameral, e.g. UK parliament
 - Unicameral, e.g. China's NPC