

Special Topics

SODA 496

Instructor Information

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Pond Lab 303
Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-5:00 and Thursday 2:30-3:30

Course Description

One of the defining features of a democratic political system is the existence of free and fair elections. There is wide variation among democratic systems in electoral rules, that is, the way in which votes are translated into seats. Electoral rules shape the incentives of candidates and voters, hence they have important implications for democratic representation. There is an extensive political science literature that studies the effect of electoral rules on the alternatives that are available in the elections, the success of different types of candidates, and the policy decisions of the representatives. The goal of this course is to provide you with guidance to write a research proposal that contributes to the literature on electoral rules.

Requirements and Evaluation

Paper Reports - 25 points

You will write five reports on the required journal articles on the schedule. Each report is worth 5 points. I expect you to answer the following questions in your reports. These questions provide an outline for a research paper, and they will serve as a guide while you are reading the articles. The reports will be 1-3 double-spaced pages long (12 font, 1 inch margins) and paper copies are due at our meeting on the dates listed on the schedule.

- What is the research question?
- How does the paper contribute to the existing literature?
- What are the hypotheses?
- How are the outcome and the explanatory variables measured?
- What is the unit of analysis?
- Which cases are included in the analysis? How generalizable are the findings?
- Which methods are used to analyze data? Do the authors control for alternative explanations?
- What are the substantive conclusions? Based on the analysis, are the conclusions convincing?
- What are the limitations of the study? What are your suggestions for future research?

Replication - 25 points

You will choose a published journal article, acquire the data and reproduce the analysis of the article using statistical software. Before working on the analysis, please let me know which article you would like to replicate. I expect you to send me the reference of the article by October 5. The replication report will be 3-5 double-spaced pages long (12 font, 1 inch margins). It should briefly summarize how the paper answered the research question, and how you replicated the analysis. It should also include the tables and the figures you produced, and the computer code you used (as an appendix). The pdf copy of the report is due at 5pm on October 26th.

Research Proposal - 50 points

Research proposal provides a plan for answering a research question. It should include all the sections of a journal article except the discussion of results. In other words, the research proposal needs to answer the questions listed for the paper reports except the one about the conclusions. Throughout the semester, we will set up individual meetings to discuss your progress on the research proposal. A more detailed timeline is listed below. The research proposal will be 8-12 double-spaced pages long (12 font, 1 inch margins). The pdf copy of the report is due at 5pm on December 14th. If you would like written feedback on a draft of your proposal, you need to send it to me by December 4th.

Grading scale

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥94	A	≥83	B	≥ 73	C	≥60	D
≥90	A-	≥80	B-	≥ 70	C-	<60	Fail
≥87	B+	≥77	C+	≥ 67	D+		

Schedule

Literature Review

August 24 Introduction

August 31 Majoritarian Electoral Systems

- *Required:* Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2012. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2 edition. pp. 535-563.

September 7 Proportional and Mixed Electoral Systems

- *Required:* Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona N. Golder. 2012. *Principles of Comparative Politics*. 2 edition. pp. 564-598.

September 14 Electoral Rules and The Number of Parties

*Paper Report 1 due.

- *Required:* Neto, Octavio Amorim, and Gary W. Cox. 1997. “Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties.” *American Journal of Political Science* 41(1):149-174.
- *Recommended:* Clark, William Roberts, and Matt Golder. 2006. “Rehabilitating Duverger’s Theory: Testing the Mechanical and Strategic Modifying Effects of Electoral Laws.” *Comparative Political Studies* 39(6):679-708.
- *Recommended:* Tavits, Margit. 2008. “Party Systems in the Making: The Emergence and Success of New Parties in New Democracies.” *British Journal of Political Science* 38(1):113-133/
- *Recommended:* Singer, Matthew M., and Laura B. Stephenson. 2009. “The Political Context and Duverger;s Theory: Evidence at the District Level.” *Electoral Studies* 28(3):480-491.
- *Recommended:* Crisp, Brian F., Joshua D. Potter, and John J. W. Lee. 2012. “Entry and Coordination in Mixed-Member Systems: A Controlled Comparison Testing the Contamination Hypothesis.” *Journal of Politics* 74(2):571-583.

September 21 Electoral Rules and The Ideological Position of Parties

*Paper Report 2 due.

- *Required:* Golder, Matt. 2003. “Explaining Variation In The Success Of Extreme Right Parties In Western Europe.” *Comparative Political Studies* 36(4):432-466.
- *Recommended:* Monroe, Burt L., and Amanda G. Rose. 2002. “Electoral Systems and Unimagined Consequences: Partisan Effects of Districted Proportional Representation.” *American Journal of Political Science* 46(1):67-89.
- *Recommended:* Calvo, Ernesto, and Timothy Hellwig. 2011. “Centripetal and Centrifugal Incentives under Different Electoral Systems.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1):27-41.

September 28 Electoral Rules and Congruence

*Paper Report 3 due.

- *Required:* Carey, John M, and Simon Hix. 2011. “The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2):383-397.
- *Recommended:* Golder, Matt, and Jacek Stramski. 2010. “Ideological Congruence and Electoral Institutions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 54(1):90-106.

October 5 Electoral Quotas and The Political Participation of Women

*Paper Report 4 due.

*E-mail the reference of the article for the replication exercise.

- *Required:* Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie A. 2009. “Making Quotas Work: The Effect of Gender Quota Laws On the Election of Women.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 34(1):5-28.
- *Recommended:* O’Brien, Diana Z., and Johanna Rickne. 2016 “Gender Quotas and Women’s Political Leadership.” *American Political Science Review* 110(1):112-126.

October 12 Policy Consequences of Electoral Rules

*Paper Report 5 due.

- *Required:* Carey, John M. 2007. “Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting.” *American Journal of Political Science* 51(1):92-107.

Replication Exercise

October 16 - October 20

*Set up an appointment to discuss any issues with the replication exercise.

October 26 Replication Exercise

*Replication Report due at 5pm.

Research Proposal

October 30 - November 3

*Set up an appointment to discuss your research question. E-mail three research question ideas the day before our meeting.

November 13 - November 17

*Set up an appointment to discuss your literature review. E-mail the references the day before our meeting.

November 20 - November 24

*Set up an appointment to discuss data and measurement.

November 27 - December 1

*Set up an appointment to discuss data analysis method.

December 4 - December 8

*Set up an appointment to discuss any questions about your research proposal. If you e-mail me a draft proposal by December 4, I can give you written feedback.

December 14

*Research Proposal due at 5pm.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Disability Accommodation

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/>).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: See documentation guidelines (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS)

<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>: 814-863-0395

Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses

<http://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Educational Equity/Report Bias

Penn State University has adopted a "[Protocol for Responding to Bias Motivated Incidents](#)" that is grounded in the policy that the "University is committed to creating an educational environment which is free from intolerance directed toward individuals or groups and strives

to create and maintain an environment that fosters respect for others.” That policy is embedded within an institution traditionally committed to [academic freedom](#). Bias motivated incidents include conduct that is defined in [University Policy AD 91: Discrimination and Harassment, and Related Inappropriate Conduct](#). Students, faculty, or staff who experience or witness a possible bias motivated incident are urged to report the incident immediately by doing one of the following:

* Submit a report via the Report Bias webpage <http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>

* Contact one of the following offices:

University Police Services, University Park: 814-863-1111

Multicultural Resource Center, Diversity Advocate for Students: 814-865-1773

Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity: 814-865-5906

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs: 814-865-0909

Affirmative Action Office: 814-863-0471

* Dialing 911 in cases where physical injury has occurred or is imminent