

# The Median Voter Theorem

ECO1028 — Politics Without Romance

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Introduction: Why Do FF and FG Sound the Same?

The Theory: Why the Median Wins

Application 1: Taxation and Inequality

Application 2: The Efficiency Problem

Challenges: Identity, Assumptions, and Polarization

Conclusion

## **Introduction: Why Do FF and FG Sound the Same?**

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# Before We Begin: A Diagnostic Question

## Quick poll — think about Irish politics:

On a left-right economic scale (1 = far left, 10 = far right):

- Where would you place Fianna Fáil?
- Where would you place Fine Gael?
- Where would you place yourself?

**Common complaint:** “I can’t tell the difference between FF and FG!”

**Today’s question:** Is this convergence a bug or a feature of democracy?

# The Central Puzzle

## Tyler Cowen (2010):

*“Any politician who strays too far from voters at the philosophical center will soon be out of office.”*

*“There is a dynamic that pushes politicians to embrace the preferences of the typical or ‘median’ voter, who sits squarely in the middle of public opinion.”*

## The Median Voter Theorem says:

- In democratic competition, parties converge to the center
- The median voter gets exactly what they want
- FF FG might be what theory predicts!

# A Simple Illustration: Picking a Restaurant

Al, Bob, and Charlie pick lunch by majority rule:

- **Al** prefers: \$5.00 lunch
- **Bob** prefers: \$10.00 lunch
- **Charlie** prefers: \$20.00 lunch

Voting outcomes:

Options	Al	Bob	Charlie	Result
\$20 vs. \$5	\$5	\$5	\$20	\$5 wins
\$10 vs. \$20	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$10 wins
\$10 vs. \$5	\$5	\$10	\$10	\$10 wins

**Pattern:** Bob (the median voter) always votes for the winner! \$10 beats any alternative.

# From Restaurants to Elections

**Same logic applies to candidate competition:**

**If candidates can choose positions:**

- Each tries to get closer to median voter than opponent
- If A positions left of median, B positions just right of median
- Then A moves right to beat B...
- This continues until...

**Equilibrium:** Both candidates locate exactly at median voter's position!

- Both get 50% of votes
- Median voter gets their ideal policy regardless of who wins

**Historical context:**

- Duncan Black (1948): First formal statement
- Anthony Downs (1957): Applied to electoral competition

## **The Theory: Why the Median Wins**

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# The Key Assumption: Single-Peaked Preferences

## Single-Peaked Preferences

**Definition:** Preferences are single-peaked if:

- Alternatives can be ordered on a single dimension
- Each voter has one ideal point (their "peak")
- Utility declines moving away from ideal point in either direction

## Examples that work:

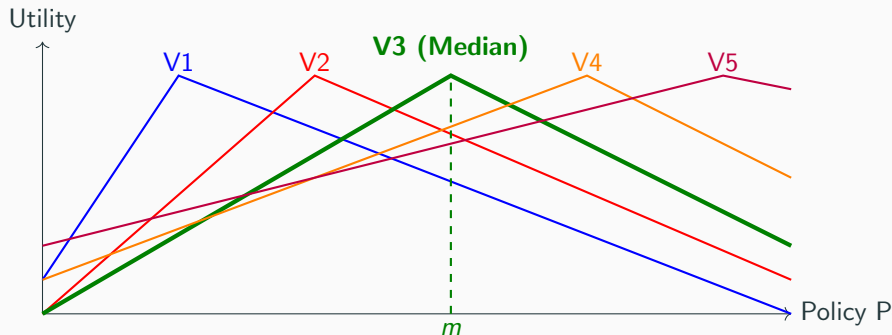
- Tax rates (0% to 100%)
- Education spending (0 to X per student)
- Left-right ideology

## Examples that don't work:

- Paint colors (no natural ordering)
- Band selection (preferences not ordinal)

# Visual Proof: Why Median Beats Any Alternative

Five voters with different ideal points:



**The logic:**

- Voters 3, 4, 5 prefer  $m$  to any proposal  $< m$  (that's a majority: 3 out of 5)
- Voters 1, 2, 3 prefer  $m$  to any proposal  $> m$  (also a majority: 3 out

# Why This Matters: Connection to Arrow's Theorem

**Kenneth Arrow (1951, Nobel 1972):**

No voting system can satisfy all desirable properties simultaneously (unanimity, non-dictatorship, independence, unrestricted domain).

**But single-peaked preferences provide an escape!**

- With single-peaked preferences, majority rule has a Condorcet winner
- Stable, predictable outcomes
- No voting cycles
- This is a huge deal for democratic theory!

**The catch:** Single-peakedness is a domain restriction

- Not all issues have single-peaked preferences
- When preferences are multidimensional, MVT breaks down
- We'll return to this later...

# The Intensity Problem

## A fundamental feature (or bug?) of democracy:

*"Your vote counts the same whether you're passionate about an issue or completely indifferent."*

### Markets:

- "Dollar votes"
- Can express intensity through willingness to pay
- Efficient allocation

### Voting:

- One person, one vote
- No intensity mechanism
- Equal but potentially inefficient

This matters for efficiency, as we'll see next...

## **Application 1: Taxation and Inequality**

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# The Meltzer-Richard Model (1981)

**Question:** Why do democracies redistribute income?

**Setup:**

- Society chooses tax rate  $t$  (0 to 100%)
- Revenue redistributed equally to all citizens
- Person  $i$  with income  $y_i$  receives:  $(1 - t)y_i + t \cdot \bar{y}$

**Key insight:**

- If your income  $<$  average income: you benefit from redistribution
- If your income  $>$  average income: you lose from redistribution
- The **median voter's income** determines the tax rate

# Meltzer-Richard: The Prediction

## Case 1: Low inequality ( $y_{\text{median}} = \bar{y}$ )

- Median voter pays in exactly what they receive back
- Redistribution is pure deadweight loss
- **Prediction:**  $t = 0$  (no redistribution)

## Case 2: High inequality ( $y_{\text{median}} < \bar{y}$ )

- Median voter earns less than average
- Benefits from redistribution (net recipient)
- Trade-off: redistribution benefit vs. deadweight loss
- **Prediction:** Positive tax rate, more redistribution

**Main Result:** Greater inequality  $\rightarrow$  larger gap between median and mean  $\rightarrow$  median voter demands more redistribution  $\rightarrow$  higher taxes and social spending

# Numerical Example

## Example 1: Equal society

- Incomes: €40k, €45k, €50k, €55k, €60k
- Median = €50k, Mean = €50k
- Median voter: no net benefit from redistribution
- **MVT prediction:**  $t = 0$

## Example 2: Unequal society

- Incomes: €20k, €30k, €40k, €60k, €100k
- Median = €40k, Mean = €50k
- At  $t = 50\%$ : Median gets  $(0.5)(40k) + (0.5)(50k) = 45k$
- That's €5k more than with no redistribution!
- **MVT prediction:** High tax rate, significant redistribution

**Empirical evidence:** Mixed. Positive relationship in some studies, weak in others. US puzzle: high inequality but small welfare state.



# Irish Context: Water Charges (2014-2016)

## A recent test of median voter power:

- 2014: Government introduces water charges (€60-€160/household)
- Rationale: User-pays principle, fund infrastructure
- **Massive public opposition** (60-70% opposed in polls)
- Mass protests, non-payment campaigns
- 2016: Charges suspended → 2017: Abolished

## MVT interpretation:

- **Misjudgment:** Government assumed median voter was a “Fiscal Responsibility” voter.
- **Reality:** Median voter was actually an “Anti-Austerity” voter.
- **Result:** Electoral pressure forced reversal. (Median wins!)

**Question for Week 4 presentations:** Do Irish governments generally respond to median voter? Or was this exceptional?

## **Application 2: The Efficiency Problem**

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# Does Median Voter = Social Optimum?

Does the median voter outcome produce **efficient** results?

**In other words:**

- Markets (ideally) maximize total surplus
- Does majority voting maximize social welfare?
- When do median voter preferences = efficient outcome?

**Spoiler:** Not always! Let's see a concrete example...

# The Bridge Project i

## Setup:

- Bridge would serve 10 people
- 6 people value it at €50 each
- 4 people value it at €100 each
- Cost: €60 per person  $\rightarrow$  Total cost = €600

## Median voter analysis:

- Median value = €50 (6th person when ordered)
- Median voter's net benefit = €50 - €60 = -€10
- Majority vote (6-4): Bridge NOT built

## Efficiency analysis:

- Total benefit =  $(6)(50) + (4)(100) = 700$
- Total cost = €600
- Net social benefit = +€100
- **Efficient outcome:** Bridge SHOULD be built

**Conclusion:** Median voter rejects a socially beneficial project!

# When Does MVT Produce Efficiency?

## The problem in the bridge example:

- Preferences are **skewed** (6 low-value, 4 high-value)
- Median (€50)  $\neq$  Mean (€70)
- Median voter doesn't represent average benefit

## Special case where MVT is efficient:

- Preferences are **symmetrically distributed**
- Normal distribution around mean
- Then: Median = Mean
- Maximizing median welfare = maximizing average welfare
- **MVT produces efficient outcomes**

## Why can't we use better mechanisms?

- Lindahl pricing: everyone pays their valuation  $\rightarrow$  efficient
- But: preference revelation problem (incentive to lie)
- We're stuck with imperfect mechanisms

## **Challenges: Identity, Assumptions, and Polarization**

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# Challenge 1: Identity Matters — Indian Villages

**Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004):**

**Setup:** India randomly assigned some villages to reserve chief position for women

**MVT prediction:**

- Same constituency → same median voter
- Gender of leader shouldn't matter
- Same policies regardless

**Finding:** Leaders invest in infrastructure matching their gender's needs

- West Bengal: Women complain about water/roads → Female leaders invest more in water/roads
- Rajasthan: Women complain about water (not roads) → Female leaders invest more in water, less in roads

**Lesson:** Identity of leader matters, not just constituency! MVT is incomplete.



## Challenge 2: Party Matters — US Evidence

Same constituency, different parties = different votes:

**US Senate (Poole & Rosenthal 1996):**

- 2 senators per state = same constituency
- When one is Democrat, one Republican: they vote very differently
- Party > Constituency

**US House Close Elections (Lee, Moretti, Butler 2004):**

- Regression discontinuity: 49.9% vs 50.1%
- Virtually identical constituencies
- Huge gap in voting records (ADA scores differ by 60-80 points)
- Party identity > Median voter

**Why?** Party discipline, career incentives, primary electorates, ideological selection

See detailed evidence in Appendix B

# The Six Critical Assumptions

**MVT assumes:**

**1. Single-dimensional voting**

- Reality: Economic + cultural + identity + globalization dimensions

**2. Only two candidates**

- Reality: Multi-party systems (Ireland's PR-STV!)

**3. No ideology** (pure office motivation)

- Reality: Politicians care about policy, not just winning

**4. No selective voting** (everyone votes)

- Reality: Base mobilization vs. median voter appeal trade-off

**5. No money in politics**

- Reality: Donors pull candidates to extremes

**6. Full information**

- Reality: Rational ignorance, polls are imperfect

All six are violated to varying degrees. This explains deviations from MVT!

# Modern Polarization: Has the Median Voter Lost Power?

## Diane Coyle (2015):

*“Why does the mainstream middle of the political spectrum appear to have been hollowed out, with extreme parties... doing well, and the greater polarisation of major parties?”*

## Evidence: US polarization (1880-present)

- 1970s: Peak MVT era — parties overlapped
- 1980-present: **Dramatic polarization**
- 2020s: Almost zero overlap between parties

**Why?** Three main explanations...

# Explanation 1: Social Media Fragmentation

## How technology changed incentives:

1. **Echo chambers** → No shared information environment
2. **Outrage amplification** → Extreme content gets engagement
3. **Direct communication** → Bypass media, appeal to base
4. **Filter bubbles** → Different voters see different “facts”

**Result:** Harder to build centrist coalitions when voters live in different information universes

## Explanation 2: Primary Elections & Activists

**The median primary voter   median general voter:**

- Primary voters are more ideological
- Donors are more extreme (especially small donors)
- Party activists punish moderation
- Electoral incentives now pull toward **base**, not center

**Example:** US Republican primaries

- Moderate Republicans lose primaries to conservatives
- “RINO” (Republican In Name Only) becomes insult
- Candidates optimize for primary, not general election

# Explanation 3: Multidimensional Politics

**Politics is no longer just left-right:**

**Multiple dimensions:**

- Economic (redistribution)
- Cultural (liberal-conservative)
- Immigration (open-closed)
- Globalization (integrate-protect)
- Climate (action-skepticism)

**Problem:**

- In multidimensional space, **no stable median**
- No clear “center” to converge to
- Chaos theorems (McKelvey, Schofield)

**Examples:**

- Brexit: Cut across traditional left-right (age, education, urban/rural)
- Trump: Economic moderate, cultural extreme

# When Does MVT Work? When Doesn't It?

## MVT Works Better:

- Single issue
- Local elections
- Weak parties
- Referendums
- Two-party systems

## MVT Struggles:

- Multiple dimensions
- Strong party discipline
- Primary elections
- Multi-party (PR systems)
- Polarized environments

## Bottom line:

- MVT captures real electoral forces
- But it's **incomplete**
- Parties, institutions, identity, and multidimensionality all matter
- Use MVT as baseline, then adjust for context

## Conclusion

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# Who Becomes a Politician? (Dal Bó et al 2016)

**Quick detour: Does democracy attract competent leaders?**

**Economic theory:** Lower opportunity cost → adverse selection

**Evidence from Sweden:**

1. Politicians are **smarter and better leaders** than average
2. Representation across social classes is **remarkably even**
3. Higher salaries attract more competent candidates
4. But ideology and public service also matter

**Relevance:** If politicians are ideologically committed, less likely to converge to median

See detailed findings in Appendix C

# Summary: When Does MVT Work?

## Strong predictions when:

- Single-dimensional issues
- Two-party competition
- Single-peaked preferences
- Strong electoral accountability
- Local public goods

## Weak predictions when:

- Multidimensional politics
- Strong party discipline
- Primary electorates matter
- Money influences positions
- Ideological politicians

## George Box:

*“All models are wrong, but some are useful.”*

### **MVT is useful because it:**

- Provides clear baseline predictions
- Shows forces pushing toward convergence
- Helps us understand when/why reality deviates
- Clarifies requirements for democratic stability

### **But it's incomplete:**

- Parties, institutions, identity, multidimensionality matter
- Use as building block, not complete theory

## Before next week:

- Review MVT readings on Loop/GitHub
- Prepare for Week 4 Irish Context presentation:
  - Do FF/FG/SF converge toward median Irish voter?
  - How does PR-STV change predictions?
    - (Hint: Does coalition formation force parties back to the median?)
  - Is Sinn Féin's rise consistent with MVT?

**Next week:** Political Competition and Macroeconomic Performance

Open discussion!

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# Appendices

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## **Additional material for those interested:**

- Appendix A: Formal Algebraic Proof of MVT
- Appendix B: Detailed Evidence Against MVT
- Appendix C: Political Selection (Dal Bó et al)
- Appendix D: Complete Bibliography

# Appendix A: Formal Proof — Setup

**What to prove:** The median voter's ideal  $m$  defeats any  $x$  in pairwise vote

**Setup:**

- $n$  voters (assume odd:  $n = 2k + 1$ )
- Voters indexed by ideal points:  $x_1^* \leq x_2^* \leq \dots \leq x_n^*$
- Median voter:  $m = k + 1$ , ideal point  $x_m^*$
- All have single-peaked preferences

**Claim:** For any  $x \neq x_m^*$ , at least  $\frac{n+1}{2}$  voters prefer  $x_m^*$  to  $x$

[Return to main lecture](#)



# Appendix A: Formal Proof — Part 1

## Case 1: $x < x_m^*$ (alternative left of median)

Voters who prefer  $x_m^*$  to  $x$ :

- Voter  $m$  (median):  $x_m^*$  is their ideal
- All voters  $i > m$ : Their ideal  $x_i^* > x_m^* > x$
- By single-peakedness: they prefer  $x_m^*$  (closer to ideal)

Count: Voters  $m, m + 1, \dots, n$

- Total:  $n - m + 1 = n - (k + 1) + 1 = n - k = k + 1$
- Since  $n = 2k + 1$ : This equals  $\frac{n+1}{2}$
- A majority!

## Appendix A: Formal Proof — Part 2

### Case 2: $x > x_m^*$ (alternative right of median)

Voters who prefer  $x_m^*$  to  $x$ :

- All voters  $i \leq m$ : Their ideal  $x_i^* \leq x_m^* < x$
- By single-peakedness: they prefer  $x_m^*$  (closer to ideal)

Count: Voters  $1, 2, \dots, m$

- Total:  $m = k + 1 = \frac{n+1}{2}$
- A majority!

**Conclusion:**  $x_m^*$  defeats  $x$  in pairwise vote. QED.  $\square$

[Return to main lecture](#)

# Appendix B: Evidence Against MVT

## Three main sources challenging MVT:

### 1. Indian Villages (Chattopadhyay & Duflo 2004)

- Random gender quotas → different infrastructure investments
- Female leaders prioritize women's complaints

### 2. US Senate (Poole & Rosenthal 1996)

- Same-state senators vote very differently by party
- DW-NOMINATE scores show huge gaps

### 3. US House RD Design (Lee, Moretti, Butler 2004)

- 49.9% vs 50.1% vote share
- Identical constituencies, different parties
- ADA scores differ by 60-80 points

**Common theme:** Identity, party, and institutions matter beyond constituency preferences

# Appendix B: Why Party Discipline Matters

## Institutional features that empower parties:

### 1. Whip systems

- Party leaders enforce voting discipline
- Punishments: committee assignments, campaign support

### 2. Career concerns

- Advancement requires party loyalty
- Future candidacies depend on party

### 3. Primary elections

- Party base chooses nominees
- Base general electorate
- Incentive to appeal left/right, not center

### 4. Ideological selection

- People who become politicians already ideological
- Not randomly assigned to parties

# Appendix C: Dal Bó et al (2017) — Full Findings

## **Data: Swedish municipal politicians linked to:**

- Military conscription records (IQ, leadership tests)
- Tax records (income, family background)

## **Finding 1: Positive selection on competence**

- Politicians score significantly higher on IQ
- Even higher on leadership ability tests
- Contradicts adverse selection prediction

## **Finding 2: Even representation by class**

- Politicians from all income quintiles
- No elite overrepresentation

# Appendix C: Why Does Sweden Get Both Quality and Representation?

## Institutional features matter:

- **PR electoral system** → Easier for working-class candidates
- **Strong party organizations** → Support and resources
- **Public financing** → Reduces money barrier
- **Union representation** → Working-class voice in left parties

## Why competent people enter despite opportunity cost:

- **Material:** Higher salaries attract talent
- **Intrinsic:** Ideology, public service motivation
- **Screening:** Parties select capable candidates

**Lesson:** Well-designed institutions can achieve both competence and representation

# Appendix D: Key References

## Foundational Works:

- Black, D. (1948). "On the Rationale of Group Decision-making." *JPE*.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.
- Arrow, K. (1951). *Social Choice and Individual Values*.

## Applications:

- Meltzer & Richard (1981). "Size of Government." *JPE*.
- Corcoran & Evans (2010). "Inequality and School Expenditure." *JUE*.
- Miller (2008). "Women's Suffrage and Child Survival." *QJE*.

## Challenges:

- Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004). "Women as Policy Makers." *Econometrica*.
- Lee, Moretti, Butler (2004). "Do Voters Affect or Elect Policies?" *QJE*.
- Dal Bó et al (2017). "Who Becomes a Politician?" *QJE*.

# Complete Bibliography

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# Bibliography Overview

## Comprehensive reading list organized by topic:

- Foundational Works (1940s-1960s)
- Theoretical Development (1970s-1990s)
- Empirical Evidence: Supporting
- Empirical Evidence: Challenging
- Political Selection & Representation
- Polarization & Contemporary Issues
- Textbooks & Surveys
- Irish Context & Electoral Systems
- Online Resources & Popular Books

# Foundational Works (1940s-1960s)

1. Wicksell, K. (1896). *Finanztheoretische Untersuchungen*. ["A New Principle of Just Taxation"]
2. Black, D. (1948). "On the Rationale of Group Decision-making." *Journal of Political Economy*, 56(1), 23-34.
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4. Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
5. Buchanan, J. M., & Tullock, G. (1962). *The Calculus of Consent*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
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**These are the classics** that established Public Choice and the median voter framework.

# Theoretical Development (1970s-1990s)

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11. Poole, K. T., & Daniels, R. S. (1985). "Ideology, Party, and Voting in the US Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 79(2), 373-399.
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# Empirical Evidence: Supporting MVT

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14. Levitt, S. D., & Snyder, J. M. (1997). "The Impact of Federal Spending on House Election Outcomes." *Journal of Political Economy*, 105(1), 30-53.
15. Dutt, P., & Mitra, D. (2002). "Endogenous Trade Policy Through Majority Voting." *Journal of International Economics*, 58(1), 107-133.
16. Miller, G. (2008). "Women's Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(3), 1287-1327.
17. Corcoran, S. P., & Evans, W. N. (2010). "Income Inequality, the Median Voter, and the Support for Public Education." *Journal of Urban Economics*, 68(2), 221-236.
18. Kose, E., Kuka, E., & Shenhav, N. (2021). "Women's Suffrage and Children's Education." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 13(3), 374-405.

# Empirical Evidence: Challenging MVT

19. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India." *Econometrica*, 72(5), 1409-1443.
20. Lee, D. S., Moretti, E., & Butler, M. J. (2004). "Do Voters Affect or Elect Policies? Evidence from the U.S. House." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 119(3), 807-859.
21. Feddersen, T. J. (2004). "Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(1), 99-112.

22. Dal Bó, E., Finan, F., Folke, O., Persson, T., & Rickne, J. (2017). "Who Becomes a Politician?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(4), 1877-1914.
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# Polarization & Contemporary Challenges

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25. Fiorina, M. P. (2017). *Unstable Majorities: Polarization, Party Sorting, and Political Stalemate*. Hoover Institution Press.
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# Irish Context & Electoral Systems

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40. Gallagher, M. (2005). "Ireland: The Discreet Charm of PR-STV." In *The Politics of Electoral Systems*, ed. M. Gallagher and P. Mitchell. Oxford University Press.

# Online Resources: Academic

## Lecture Notes & Courses:

- Benjamin Olken. 14.75 Political Economy and Economic Development. Fall 2012. MIT OpenCourseWare. <https://ocw.mit.edu>
- Emmanuel Saez lecture notes:  
[http://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/course131/political\\_ch09\\_new.pdf](http://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/course131/political_ch09_new.pdf)

## Journalism & Commentary:

- Cowen, T. (2010). "In Politics, Sometimes the Middle Way Really Is the Best." *New York Times*.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/business/economy/07view.html>
- Coyle, D. (2015). "Has the median voter lost her power?" *Financial Times*.  
<https://www.ft.com/content/7ab73ad8-21ec-39f3-ab8d-a559a110d210>

## Data Resources:

- **Voteview.com** — DW-NOMINATE scores for US Congress
- **ANES** — American National Election Studies
- **European Social Survey** — Cross-national data
- **Houses of the Oireachtas** — <https://www.oireachtas.ie>

# Popular Books for General Audience

## On Median Voter & Public Choice:

- Caplan, B. (2007). *The Myth of the Rational Voter*. Princeton University Press.
- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press.

## On Polarization:

- Klein, E. (2020). *Why We're Polarized*. Avid Reader Press.
- Fiorina, M. P., with Abrams, S. J., & Pope, J. C. (2010). *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Bishop, B. (2009). *The Big Sort*. Mariner Books.

## On Electoral Systems:

- Farrell, D. M. (2011). *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. Palgrave.
- Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of Democracy*. Yale University Press.

## On Irish Politics:

- Coakley, J., & Gallagher, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (6th ed.). Routledge.

# Cultural Resources: Films & TV

## Political Competition & Strategy:

- **The West Wing** (Season 3) — Polling and campaign positioning
- **The War Room** (1993) — Clinton campaign documentary
- **Veep** — Satirical campaign positioning
- **Parks and Recreation** — Local government and median voter
- **Borgen** (Danish series) — Coalition politics in PR system

## Polarization & Contemporary Issues:

- **The Social Dilemma** (Netflix) — Social media effects on democracy
- **Get Me Roger Stone** (Netflix) — Partisan strategy
- **Brexit: The Uncivil War** (2019) — Campaign strategy and data

**Watch with MVT in mind:** Are politicians appealing to median voter? What prevents convergence?

# Cultural Resources: Podcasts & Blogs

## Political Economy Podcasts:

- **EconTalk** (Russ Roberts) — Episodes with Morris Fiorina, Bryan Caplan on voting and polarization
- **The Ezra Klein Show** — Polarization, electoral systems, multidimensional politics
- **Planet Money** — “The Median Voter” episode
- **FiveThirtyEight Politics** — Electoral analysis and polling

## Irish Context:

- **The Irish Politics Podcast**
- **Oireachtas TV** — Dáil debates

## Blogs & Commentary:

- **Marginal Revolution** (Tyler Cowen) — [marginalrevolution.com](http://marginalrevolution.com)
- **Irish Economy blog** — [www.irisheconomy.ie](http://www.irisheconomy.ie)

# How to Use This Bibliography i

## **For the core theory:**

- Start with: Black (1948), Downs (1957)
- Then: Meltzer-Richard (1981) for applications

## **For empirical evidence:**

- Supporting: Corcoran & Evans (2010), Miller (2008), Dutt & Mitra (2002)
- Challenging: Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004), Lee et al. (2004)

# How to Use This Bibliography ii

## **For contemporary issues:**

- Polarization: McCarty et al. (2016), Fiorina (2017)
- Selection: Dal Bó et al. (2017)

## **For Irish context:**

- Gallagher et al. (2018) — Comprehensive Irish politics
- Farrell (2011) — PR-STV electoral system

## **Best comprehensive textbook:**

- Mueller (2003) *Public Choice III*, Chapter 11