

Electoral Accountability

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General Information

Moodle: <https://moodle.hu-berlin.de/course/view.php?id=104864>.

Moodle enrolment key: "BarroFerejohnFearon".

We will be distributing readings and assignments via Moodle at least one week in advance.

Where/When We meet weekly **Friday, 12.15-13.45**, via Zoom: <https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/j/65131559632>. Create a Zoom account linked to your HU account before the first session. See <https://hu-berlin.zoom.us>. There is no password. Mute your microphone if you are not speaking (hold space bar to unmute).

Sessions will be recorded and uploaded at: <https://box.hu-berlin.de/library/9e9162b8-1ec7-4a66-9b42-4e0a2d5fElectoral%20Accountability%202021/>

Office Hours Monday 2-3 pm: <https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/j/63534457667>

Overview

A central normative justification for representative democracy is that elections allow citizens to control over the actions of their representatives. In this course we will examine to what extent and under what conditions elections give citizens control over their leaders. The seminar will combine methodological sessions introducing the design-based approach to causal inference with substantive sessions where we review recent advances in the literature. Substantively, the course will cover important barriers to accountability in democratic polities: (1) access to information, (2) institutional barriers, (3) the availability of strong competence signals, and (4) behavioral constraints.

Prior knowledge of hypothesis testing and linear regression is required.

Learning Outcomes

First, students will be introduced to the theory and central concepts on electoral accountability. The empirical evidence will be assessed using the tools of causal inference. To do so, students will understand the potential outcomes framework, and the key assumptions underlying causal inference, and will be able to choose appropriate methods for a variety of research questions posing different identification challenges.

Assessment

The assessment consists of student presentations (40%) and a research design essay on a topic related to electoral accountability (60%), in which students will outline how they would address a causal research question of their choice using methods introduced in class. The research design should be structured like a pre-analysis plan (PAP) and include a short literature review, hypotheses, research design, and estimation.

Prerequisites

Linear Regression, hypothesis testing

Involvement Participation includes coming to class; turning in assignments on time; thinking and caring about the material and expressing your thoughts respectfully and succinctly in class. As much as possible, we will be working in groups during the class meetings. This work will require that you have done the assigned reading in advance and that you are an active collaborator.

Student Presentation Students should prepare a 30 min presentation for a paper of your choice. Please sign up here: <https://box.hu-berlin.de/f/2cc06cb369fc4f56a696/>

Final Paper The central assignment for the class is a research design paper in a form of a pre-analysis plan. The final paper should be divided into seven sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Theory and Hypothesis; 3) Identification 4) Estimand and Estimation Strategy; 5) Implications; 7) . I'll provide more information on this as we go along. Hand in research design paper by **August 31st, 2021** via moodle.

Schedule

Week 1 (Apr. 16): Welcome and Overview

Topics: Introduction

Week 2 (Apr. 23): Theory: Retrospective Voting

Topics: Causal Inference, Randomized Experiment

Reading: [Healy and Malhotra \(2013\)](#)

Week 3 (Apr. 30.): Theory: Contract Theory

Topics:

Reading: [Achen and Bartels, 2017](#), Ch. 4, [Ashworth \(2012\)](#),

Week 4 (May 7.): Methodological Brush Up I

Topics: Causality as counterfactuals, Potential outcomes, Identification and estimation, Causal estimands

Reading: [Keele \(2015\)](#), [Ashworth et al. \(2021\)](#)

Week 5 (May 14): Methodological Brush Up II

Topics: Randomized Experiments

Reading: [Angrist and Pischke, 2014](#), p. 17-33; [Gerber and Green, 2012](#), Ch. 2.7-3: p. 39-86

Week 6 (May 21): Methodological Brush Up III

Topics: Observational Studies & Matching

Reading: [Angrist and Pischke \(2014, p. 47-79\)](#); [Gelman and Hill \(2007\)](#), [Sekhon, 2009](#)

Week 7 (May. 28): Methodological Brush Up IV

Topics: Panel Data, Fixed Effects, Diff-in-Diff

Reading: [Angrist and Pischke, 2014](#), Ch. 5: p. 178-204

Week 8 (Jun. 4): Information and Performance

Topics: Does performance information influence voting behaviour?

Reading: [Bhandari et al. \(2019\)](#), [Dunning et al. \(2019\)](#)

Week 9 (June. 11) : Social Welfare Provision & Voting

Topics: Do voters reward targeted social spending?

Paper: [De La O \(2013\)](#), [Imai et al. \(2020\)](#)

Week 10 (June. 18) : Executive Action

Topics: What types of public policies get rewarded by voters?

Applied: [Bechtel and Hainmueller \(2011\)](#), [Healy and Malhotra \(2009\)](#)

Week 11 (June. 25): Credit Claiming & Vote Buying

Topics: How can politicians influence performance voting through credit-claiming and vote buying?

Reading: [Cruz and Schneider \(2017\)](#), [Cruz et al. \(2018\)](#)

Week 12 (July. 2): Attribution & Expectations

Topics: How can attributions and changed expectations influence performance voting?

Paper: [Harding \(2015\)](#), [De Kadt and Lieberman \(2017\)](#)

Week 13 (July. 9): Priorities and trade-offs

Topics: social norms and collective actions, multidimensional utility functions

Reading: [Boas et al. \(2019\)](#), [Boas et al. \(2020\)](#)

Week 14 (July. 16): Behavioral Limitations & Meta-Analysis

Topics: Biases and cognitive limitations

Reading: [Incerti \(2020\)](#), [Huber et al. \(2012\)](#)

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