Course Overview & "First Attempts" at American Democracy

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Agenda

Syllabus & Course Materials

Course Logistics & Structure

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- ▶ GitPage: https://calgara.github.io/pol1f2017.html

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- ▶ Participation Question: What do you think political science entails & how does it differ from civics?
- ▶ Importance of *theoretical models* to explain observed political phenomena
- ▶ Scientific method to evaluate models:
  - ▶ Observables
  - ▶ Formulating hypothesis explaining phenomena: **IV → DV**
  - ▶ Gathering *empirical* & *measurable data* to address hypothesis
  - ▶ Testing hypothesis & revisiting model (alternative explanations?)

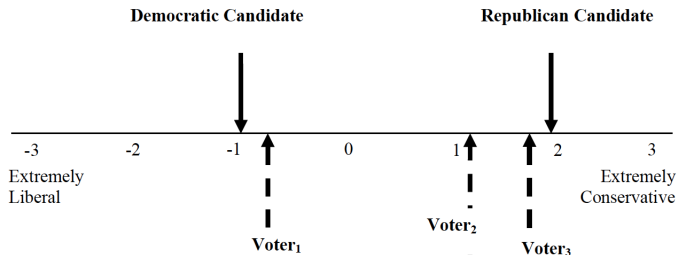# Ex: What explains how people vote in American elections?

Spatial Model of Voters & Candidates
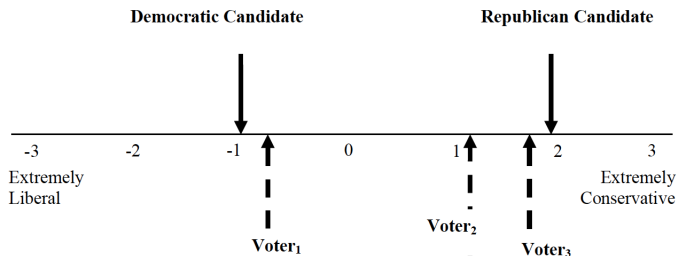
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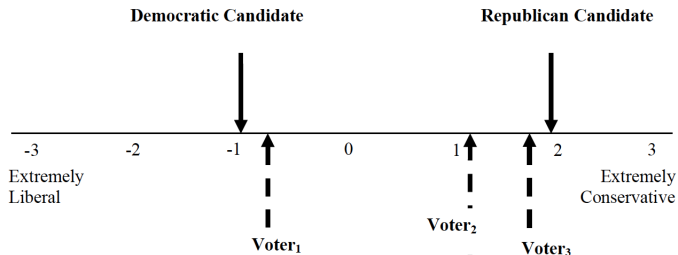
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- ▶ What's the independent and dependent variable in the model?

Ex: What explains how people vote in American elections?

Spatial Model of Voters & Candidates

Democratic Candidate   **Republican Candidate**

| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | | 2 | 3 |

Extremely
Liberal

Extremely
Conservative

Voter₁   **Voter₂**   **Voter₃**

- ▶ What do we observe?
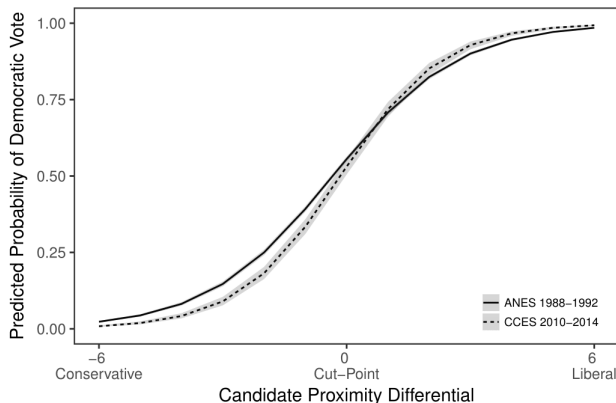- ▶ What's the independent and dependent variable in the model?
- ▶ How would we test the hypothesis derived from model?

Proximity Voting in U.S. Senate Elections, 1988-1992 & 2010-2014
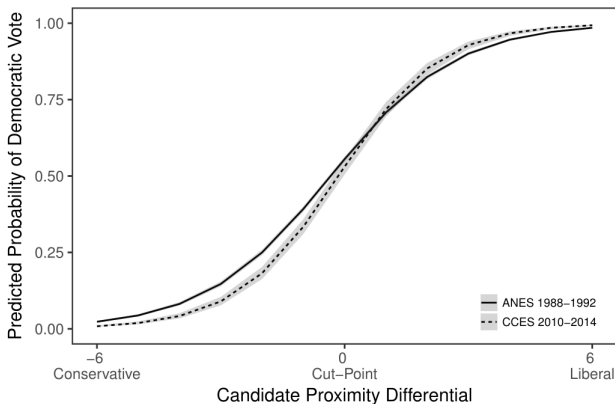
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Proximity Voting in U.S. Senate Elections, 1988-1992 & 2010-2014

- ▶ Support for model?
- ▶ Will touch on other models of vote-choice later in the course...think like political scientists!

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Fighting the Collective Dilemma:

- ▶ What do we mean by the collective dilemma?

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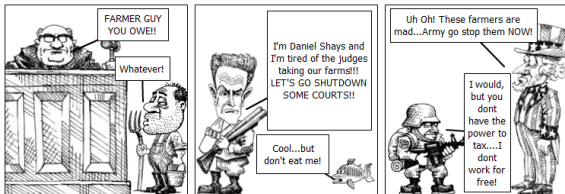
Key Points:

- ▶ Collective action problems shapes all political behavior, both in individuals and collective institutions.
- ▶ Collective action problems provide framework for our *understanding* of political behavior
- ▶ Allows us to make assumptions of rational political behavior by units of interest
- ▶ Institutions help mitigate collective action problems! But design critical to avoid principal-agent problems
- ▶ Institutions help shape *incentives* for responsive agents
- ▶ Institutional choice requires trade-offs between transaction costs & conformity costs