
Explaining Political Preferences

Theory, Empirics & Applications

Specialization Module (Vertiefungsseminar), HU Berlin, Summer 2018

Logistics

Time: Wed, 10:15 - 13:45

Location: Universitätsstr. 3b, Room 217

Moodle enrollment key: *tba*

Instructor

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Course Description

Most theories of voting behavior agree that voters' decisions at the ballots are driven by their desire to promote policy outcomes in line with their preferences – that is, in line with what they want. In order to understand voting behavior, we thus need to understand political preferences: Who wants what, and why?

Covering literatures from political economy, political sociology and (social) psychology, we will study a broad array of preferences on salient issues of our time, including preferences for social policy (e.g., income redistribution and social insurance), immigration restriction, European integration, and legal equality for homosexual couples. Aside from studying the causes of these preferences, we will also study their effects – that is, we will investigate how different preference sets affect voting behavior for different parties under varying political contexts.

To equip participants with the required tools to conduct their own research (on political preferences and beyond), this seminar assigns equal weight to the substantive treatment of the seminar literature on the one hand and to training in research design and applied quantitative methods on the other. In terms of research design, we will contrast observational studies, quasi-experiments and lab experiments to elicit their respective costs and benefits. In terms of applied methods training, we will cover techniques for measuring preferences (e.g., factor analytical and item response theoretical approaches) as well as techniques for explaining preferences (e.g., generalized linear models and hierarchical models).

The general language of instruction and communication in this class is English. The final paper (Modulabschlussprüfung) may be submitted either in English or in German. This class requires that participants are familiar with the methods covered in *Statistik I + II* (or equivalent).