

Office Contact Information

Department of Economics
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Doctoral Studies:

PhD Economics, University College London, 2009 to present.
Expected date of completion: Summer 2015.

Research Interests:

Political Economics, Applied Game Theory

Previous Education:

MSc Economics, University of Warwick, distinction, 2009.
Visiting research student on full scholarship, Jesus College, Oxford, 2007/08.
Diploma in Economics, University of Trier, equivalent BSc first class honours, 2007.

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Assistant, Department of Economics, University College London

2010/11	Microeconomics (MSc Economic Policy), Advanced Microeconomics (MSc Economics)
2011/12	Advanced Microeconomics (MSc Economics)
2012/13	Public Economics (MSc Economics) <i>Award for Best Teaching Assistant on an MSc Optional Module</i>
2013/14	Microeconomics (MSc Economics), Health Economics (MSc Economics)

Research Experience and Professional Activities:

Research Assistant to Aureo de Paula on "Identification and estimation of preference distributions when voters are ideological"
Referee for Economic Journal

Working Papers:

“How Political Parties Shape Electoral Competition” - Job Market Paper

Across established democracies a particular pattern can be observed: Political competition is intense in national elections, but much less so at regional levels. In fact, it is not uncommon that a single party monopolizes a regional office over long periods of time. In this paper I present a model of party formation that is able to explain this pattern. A key feature is that voters are poorly informed about the policies that individual candidates stand for at regional levels. As in Snyder & Ting (2002), parties provide some of this information by allowing only certain types of politicians to join. In order to compete a party therefore needs to attract and retain the right kinds of politicians. I find that national parties are able to monopolize regional elections through offering career prospects at the national level to local politicians. This prevents the formation of more extremist parties targeting particular states. Preventing entry of this kind is important to national parties, as they would otherwise risk losing their core support in the general election. This leads to the existence of a two party equilibrium, one centre-left and one centre-right, where the threat of entry deters either party from moderating itself. An equilibrium where only a single party is formed, on the other hand, does not exist. Such a party would create too much internal competition for nominations, making at least some politicians willing to defect to an entering party.

“Competing Candidates, Competing Interest Groups, and the Efficacy of Political Threats”

Interest groups seem to achieve large policy favours for small sums of campaign contributions. This has long puzzled observers. I provide an explanation of this so called “Tullock paradox” that is robust to competition among opposing interests. In the model, I allow interest groups to specify their donations as very general functions of policies and donations by other groups. This allows potential donors to influence the policy choice of an incumbent through threats of contributions to the campaign of a challenger. It is therefore possible that the incumbent chooses policies that favour a particular interest group even if this group has not made any actual donations. When lobbies face a small amount of uncertainty about the policy that the incumbent will choose, I am able to provide a clear characterisation of equilibrium. Policies are always skewed in favour of the group with deeper pockets. This group may also use actual donations on top of threats in order to increase its influence over policies. The weaker lobby, on the other hand, does not promise any money for any policy the incumbent may implement. Outcomes nevertheless differ from the case with only one interest group as the weaker group can become active if the stronger group tries to exert even more pressure.

“Who Emerges from Smoke-Filled Rooms? Political Parties and Candidate Selection”

This paper presents a model of candidate selection through political parties where politicians differ in terms of their quality and their favored policies. The central assumption is that political parties are better informed about their potential candidates than voters are. Questions of interest include whether voters can gain information about candidates by observing the party's choice and to what extent parties select the candidates preferred by the median voter. The results depend crucially on how competitive the race is. Under strong competition, nominating a politically more extreme politician is a signal of high quality. Sufficient competition also induces parties to act in the interest of the median voter most of the time, even when parties attach very little intrinsic value to quality. As ideological alignment between the median voter and a party reduces the degree of competition that this party faces, the median voter can be better off when parties are polarized.