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Year 3 Module; Spring Trimester 2020

Parties and Party Competition

Last update: September 30, 2019

Term: Spring Trimester 2020

Time: TBC

Location: TBC

ECTS: 5.0

Format: Lecture; group work and class discussion

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Module Description

How can we identify differences between party systems, determine party positions, and measure public opinion? Do parties keep their promises or are politicians “pledge breakers”? Are promises in certain policy areas more likely to be fulfilled? In what policy areas do parties differ in terms of their positions and issue emphasis? And do parties respond to changes in public opinion?

In this module, we first discuss the main functions of political parties, outline features of representative democracies, and identify ways of measuring public opinion. Next, we assess whether parties keep their promises, whether the “mandate model of democracy” is a desirable and realistic mode of political representation, and how existing studies on election pledge fulfilment can be improved. Afterwards, we investigate parties’ willingness and capacity to respond to changes in public opinion. Fourth, we discuss different approaches of measuring party positions, political ideology, and the salience of policy areas. Based on these methodological approaches, we identify the circumstances under which parties change their positions and issue emphasis. Finally, we briefly discuss alternative types of political participation that go beyond representative government and electoral democracy.

Learning Outcomes

1. Extensive knowledge of central theories of representation, the mandate model of democracy, and party competition
2. Detailed insights into past and current approaches to study questions about pledge fulfilment, party positions, responsiveness and issue ownership

3. Critical reading and discussing complex academic literature and diverse quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches

Indicative Module Content

The following topics will be covered in this course: parties and party systems; the “mandate model of democracy”; measuring and aggregating public opinion; economic voting; the cost of governing; responsiveness; party competition; party positions, salience, and issue ownership; deliberative and direct democracy

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

- Active and task-based learning
- Group work and discussions
- In-class debates
- Problem-based learning

Assessment

- 2,500–3,000 word essay from a choice set of questions: 70%
- 1,000 word response paper: 30% each

Feedback Strategy

- Feedback individually to students, post-assessment

Introductory Readings

The seminar does not build on a single text book, but relies mostly on papers and chapters of books. For a general overview of the course content, I recommend the following books:

- G. Bingham Powell (2000). *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Russell J. Dalton, David M. Farrell, and Ian McAllister (2011). *Political Parties and the Democratic Linkage: How Parties Organize Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elin Naurin, Terry J. Royed, and Robert Thomson (2019). *Party Mandates and Democracy: Making, Breaking, and Keeping Election Pledges in Twelve Countries*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Andrea Volkens, Judith Bara, Ian Budge, Michael D. McDonald, and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds. (2013). *Mapping Policy Preferences From Texts: Statistical Solutions for Manifesto Data Analysts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.