
Electoral Politics

Spring 2020

Location: Tarbutton Hall 120A

Hours: Fridays 10:00am-1:00pm

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Description

This graduate seminar will survey recent theoretical and empirical work on electoral politics. We will examine models that study the role of elections as accountability-enhancing mechanisms and take a look at empirical evaluations of their predictions. We will also explore some of the challenges of electoral competition in developing democracies. The focus of this part of the course will be on electoral manipulation and on how such manipulation interferes with the accountability-enhancing role of elections.

Learning goals

At the end of the semester, you will be able to recognize the main substantive questions driving this literature. Although this is not a methodology course, we will spend time understanding the formal modeling and statistical techniques used in our readings. This will be an opportunity to see a more direct connection between what you learned in your formal modeling and statistics classes and applied research. Your set of methodological tools will also be expanded after carefully reviewing papers that do not use standard methodological techniques. Finally, and most importantly, you will identify gaps in the literature and start developing a research project.

Prerequisites

Students must have completed the following courses:

- Regression Analysis (POLS 509)
- Introductory Game Theory (POLS 513)

Grading

- 40% Presentations
- 15% Participation
- 45% Research proposal divided as follows: final research proposal (30%) and mid-semester research proposal first draft (15%)

Course logistics and requirements

- Presentations: in a typical session we will cover two papers. A student will be in charge of giving a long-format presentation of one of these papers (45 minutes approx). The presentations should address the central question of the article, methodology, findings, and conclusions. All technical aspects of the paper should be carefully discussed. For example, if a student is assigned a formal model paper, the presentation should include the derivation of the main proofs. If it is an empirical paper, the student is expected to explain in detail the research design, case selection, measurement issues, and the rationale behind main robustness tests. Importantly, the student should discuss related questions that remain unresolved and offer comments or informed criticisms. If you are unsure about what you should include in the presentation or you have questions about an assigned article, you are encouraged to come to office hours before your presentation. At the beginning of the semester, I will present a couple of papers to give you an idea of the level of detail that I expect from the presentations. Presentations will be followed by group discussions on the articles. If you are not presenting, you should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material.
- Research proposal first draft: You are expected to meet with me the week after the spring break to discuss research ideas and to present your progress. The week before spring break you will submit a short document (maximum three pages) that includes up to two potential research ideas. For each of them you should tell me: 1) how the proposed project is different from existing work and why it is important to answer the question; 2) descriptions of potential research designs and data sources. If it is a formal paper, I expect you to include a basic model structure (number of players, timing, informational environment, and actions) in addition to discussing the paper's contribution to the literature. You do not have to have results, but you are encouraged to try to solve your model or a simpler version of it by then.
- Research proposal: you will submit a final research proposal at the end of the semester. These proposals will be presented the last week of classes. You are expected to motivate the project (why does this matter?), point out the contribution of your project to the literature, describe the proposed research analysis, and discuss data sources and potential challenges. If it is a formal theory paper, you should have some baseline model with a basic result. Students will present their proposals the final week of classes.

Outline

Required readings appear with an asterisk.

- Introduction and Review of Econometric Tools (January 17)
Brief review of experiments, selection on observable techniques, instrumental variables, and regression discontinuity designs.
 - Angrist and Pischke (2015) Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5.*
 - Angrist and Pischke (2009) Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6.
- Accountability Theory I (January 24)

Elections can be seen as punishment devices for bad performance while in office or as filters that separate the good candidates from the bad ones. How and when do elections align the incentives of politicians with those of the voters?

- Alesina and Tabellini (2007)*
- Austen-Smith and Banks (1989)
- Ferejohn (1986)*
- Maskin and Tirole (2004)
- Accountability Theory II (January 31)
 - Ashworth (2012)
 - Banks and Sundaram (1993)
 - Besley (2007) 3.1-3.4.5 and 3.5.*
 - Fearon (1999)

- Electoral Incentives and Accountability (February 7)

Electoral accountability models identify the value of holding public office, term limits, and information about the candidates as key determinants of the ability of elections to induce good behavior from politicians. Are the data consistent with those predictions?

- Ferraz and Finan (2011)*
- Ferraz and Finan (2008)
- Grossman (2014)
- Bobonis, Camára Fuertes and Schwabe (2016)
- Brollo et al. (2013)*
- Lim (2013)
- Clientelism and Vote Buying (February 14)

It is common in developing democracies for parties to provide excludable goods and services that are conditional on electoral support. How are these informal and illegal contracts enforced? How do the lessons from the standard electoral accountability model change when politicians can circumvent the rules by buying votes or by engaging in other forms of manipulation?

- Finan and Schechter (2012)*
- Duarte et al. (2019)*
- Larreguy, Marshall and Querubin (2016)
- Stokes et al. (2013) Chapters 2-5
- Rueda (2017)
- Rueda and Ruiz-Guarin (2019)

- Rundlett and Svolik (2016)
- Monitoring Elections (February 21)

How do parties defend themselves from electoral manipulation? What is the role of the international community in protecting the integrity of elections? Do the international electoral monitoring organizations have the incentives and the capabilities to do so?

 - Ichino and Schundeln (2012)*
 - Kelley (2012) Chapters 3-5 and 7-8
 - Hyde (2007)
 - Ascencio and Rueda (2019)*
 - Ofosu (2019)
 - Callen and Long (2015)*
- Media, Campaigns, and Persuasion I (February 28)

Can the media and the information it provides change electoral outcomes? Who are the voters most likely to be influenced by new information about candidates?

 - Chiang and Knight (2011)
 - Gentzkow, Shapiro and Sinkinson (2011)
 - Snyder and Strömborg (2010)*
 - Lim, Snyder Jr and Stömberg (2012)
 - Gregory and Yurukoglu (2017)*
- Media, Campaigns, and Persuasion II (March 6)

Research proposals first drafts are due

 - DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007)
 - Spenkuch and Toniatti (2018)
 - Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya (2011)*
 - Gerber et al. (2011)
 - Huber and Arceneaux (2007)
 - Kendall, Nannicini and Trebbi (2015)*
- Money in Politics (March 20)

There is a general belief that campaign contributions buy policy favors and lucrative government contracts. On the other hand, voters can be more informed about the candidates preferences during the campaign thanks to the advertising bought with donations money and by the identity of those contributing. How do the benefits of having a more informed public compare to the costs of policy favors benefiting donors? Is there actually evidence that money buys influence?

- Kalla and Broockman (2016)*
 - Fox and Rothenberg (2011)
 - Coate (2004)
 - Ashworth (2006)
 - Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo and Snyder (2003)
 - Fouirnaies and Hall (2018)*
 - Gulzar, Rueda and Ruiz-Guarin (2019)
- Electoral Violence (March 27)

Does greater political representation of excluded groups reduce conflict? How do violent experiences shape political participation of the victims?

 - Fergusson et al. (2019)*
 - Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos (2013)
 - Blattman (2009)*
 - Fafchamps and Vicente (2013)
 - Robinson and Torvik (2009)
- Incumbency Advantages and Disadvantages (April 3)

What are the sources of the observed electoral advantage of incumbents in industrialized democracies? Why do we find electoral disadvantages in developing democracies?

 - Fowler and Hall (2014)*
 - Gordon and Landa (2009)
 - Klasnja (2015)*
 - Hirano and Snyder (2009)
 - Klašnja and Titiunik (2017)
- Students' Presentations (April 10)
- Research proposals are due April 24

Other

- The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the teacher is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

- Emory University is committed under the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Amendments and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide me with an accommodation notification letter from Access, Disabilities Services and Resources office. Students are expected to give two weeks-notice of the need for accommodations.

References

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