

Party Competition in Advanced Democracies

210083 SE BAK13: State Activity, Policy and Governance Analyses

Overview

This course is intended for bachelor level students and serves as an introduction to concepts and theories employed in the comparative study of political parties and electoral competition. Over the 13 weeks of this course, we will engage in the theoretical discussions about how parties strategically choose among policy appeals (positions, emphasis and competence) and how that will likely impact their electoral payoffs. We will start with an introduction to the institutional foundations of party competition, specifically the electoral system and the party system. Then we will examine whether and how party positioning responds to changing preferences among voters. Finally, we will focus on how voters react to the actions of parties: Do voters reward parties for their strategies? Are they even paying attention to them? It is my hope that this will inspire some of you to write bachelor theses on similar topics.

The course is also designed to help you practice your English academic writing and become more familiar with the initial stages of research e.g. reading for new ideas, reviewing literature, synthesizing arguments, and coming up with interesting research questions. For this purpose we will have two pop-up workshops at the end of the course.

Prerequisites and language

This course is intended for bachelor level students. There are no official prerequisites, but a pre-existing knowledge of and interest in qualitative and/or comparative analysis is highly recommended. The syllabus contains many state-of-the-art empirical research articles, and we will devote substantial time and effort in class to go through these in great detail.

The seminar is held in English. This includes all kinds of communication (e.g. email, Moodle, assignments etc). English may not be your first language, and you will probably make mistakes.

That is perfectly okay! I will not be judging your language skills, but rather the quality of your ideas and arguments. However, be aware that the readings are challenging, so I do recommend a decent level of literacy in English.

Learning objectives

- Students can account for the main theories related to the party competition literature.
- Students can critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses of theoretical arguments.
- Students can formulate hypotheses and methodological strategies for a viable independent research project.
- Students can communicate theories, hypotheses, and preliminary results as well as write in a concise and engaging academic language.
- Students can provide feedback and discuss research ideas in a respectful, constructive, and helpful manner.

Course organization

Class will take place on Thursdays 15:00-16:30 in Seminarraum 5 in Kolingasse 14-16. All course material will be available on Moodle. Readings can be downloaded from the library website or Google Scholar. **Please upload all assignments on Moodle as PDF's on time**

Course assessment

The final assessment will be based on the following components:

- Active participation (10%)
- One handout (10%)
- One short literature review (20%)
- Peer feedback (10%)
- Research proposal (50%)

All components are strictly mandatory You must complete each of the five components in order to earn a positive grade. The final grade is primarily based on the research proposal. However, I strongly encourage active participation since this is the best and most efficient way of mastering the material. Do not miss the opportunity to get good feedback before the final exam!

The assessment criteria are as follows:

- 90 – 100 = 1. Excellent
- 80 – 89 = 2. Good
- 70 – 79 = 3. Satisfactory
- 60 – 69 = 4. Sufficient
- < 60 = 5. Fail

Active participation (10%)

You should be on time and stay for the entire session. **You are allowed to miss a maximum of two class**, any absence beyond that will result in a failing grade. Students are expected to engage actively in class room discussion. Students are expected to read all assigned material carefully prior to class each week. Students are expected to be able to account for and discuss the quality of the theoretical argument, the hypotheses, the data sources, the methodological approach, and the conclusion. As preparation for class, **you are required to submit at least one discussion question to the course website 24 hours ahead of class every week**. Again, you are allowed to miss a maximum of two discussion questions. This requirement does not apply to the first and the last class, and neither to the class on May 19th nor on June 23th - for these classes you will get a different assignment.

Handout (10%)

On the first day of the course, you will sign up to make a handout based on one of the topics of the class. In a group, you will digest the assigned readings and produce a handout (500-1000 words) with brief summaries of the main theoretical arguments. Importantly, **the handout should include at least five questions to get class discussion started**. Handouts are due 24 hours before class.

Literature review (10%)

You should write a literature review based on a topic of your own choice. The goal is to critically assess the state-of-the-art with an eye to moving the literature forward: What are so problems/gaps in the current literature, and how can we deal with them in a constructive way? You are required to familiarize yourself with the literature outside of the assigned readings. **The literature review should include at least three references not included in the syllabus** as required readings. These essays could be the first steps toward developing an independent research project. The literature review should be concise (1500-2000 words excl. references). They are **due at midnight on May 17th 2022**. Plagiarism will be assessed with the Turnitin software.

Peer feedback (10%)

Following the instruction of the writing assistant, you will have a chance to read the literature review of another student in the class. You will then be tasked with providing constructive written feedback, which should help your classmate his/her ideas for the research proposal. Feedback is **due at midnight on May 31st 2022**.

Research proposal (50% of grade)

Based on the class readings, students should generate a new research idea and a viable research strategy. Students are expected to write a full research proposal, including a research question, a brief literature review, a novel theoretical argument, a hypothesis (or several), an account of the available data, and a strategy for how to analyze it. The theory section can be partially recycled from the literature review. The proposal should be 2500-3000 words excluding references. Research proposals are **due at midnight on July 21st 2022** i.e. three weeks after the last class. Plagiarism will be assessed with the Turnitin software.

Weekly Readings

March 10th: Introduction

March 17th: Electoral systems

Required readings

- Bowler, Shaun (2016). “Institutions and Voter Choice: Who Chooses, What Do They Choose Over, and How Do They Choose”. In Arzheimer, Kai, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*. SAGE.
- Grofman, Bernhard (2016). “Perspectives on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19, 523-540.

Supplemental readings

- Riker, William H. (1982). “The Two-party System and Duverger’s Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science.” *American Political Science Review*, 753-766.
- Blais, André, and Marc André Bodet. (2006) “Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence between Citizens and Policy Makers?” *Comparative Political Studies* 39.10, 1243-1262.
- Singer, Matthew M. (2013). “Was Duverger correct? Single-member district election outcomes in fifty-three countries.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 201-220.

March 24th: Party systems

Required readings

- Schoultz, Asa (2016). “Party Systems and Voter Alignments”. In Arzheimer, Kai, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*. SAGE.
- Ford, Robert, and Will Jennings (2020). “The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 23.1: 295-314.

Supplemental readings

- Lipset, Seymour M., and Rokkan, Stein (1967). “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction.” In *Party systems and voter alignments: Cross-national perspectives* (Vol. 7). Free press. 1-64
- Inglehart, Ronald (1984). “The changing structure of political cleavages in western society.” In *Electoral change in advanced industrial democracies: realignment or dealignment*, 25-69.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Matrin Dolezal, Simon Bornschie, and Timothy Frey (2006). “Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared.” *European Journal of Political Research*. 45: 921-56.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Rehm, Philipp (2018). “Determinants of Dimension Dominance”. In Manow, Philip, Bruno Palier, and Hanna Schwander, eds. *Welfare Democracies and Party Politics: Explaining Electoral Dynamics in Times of Changing Welfare Capitalism*, 61-88

March 31st: Responsiveness

Required readings

- Esaiasson, Peter, and Christopher Wlezien (2017). “Advances in the study of democratic responsiveness: an introduction.” *Comparative political studies* 50.6: 699-710.
- Ezrow, Lawrence, Timothy Hellwig, and Michele Fenzl (2020). “Responsiveness, If You Can Afford It: Policy Responsiveness in Good and Bad Economic Times.” *The Journal of Politics* 82.3: 1166-1170.

Supplemental readings

- Ezrow, Lawrence, et al. (2011). “Mean voter representation and partisan constituency representation: Do parties respond to the mean voter position or to their supporters?” *Party Politics* 17.3 : 275-301.
- Van der Velden, Mariken, Gijs Schumacher, and Barbara Vis (2018). “Living in the past or living in the future? Analyzing parties’ platform change in between elections, the Netherlands 1997–2014.” *Political Communication* 35.3: 393-412.
- Klüver, Heike, and Spoon, Jae-Jae (2016). “Who responds? Voters, parties and issue attention.” *British Journal of Political Science* 46(3), 633-654.

- Pereira, Miguel M. (2020). "Responsive Campaigning: Evidence from European Parties." *The Journal of Politics* 82.4: 1183-1195.
- Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Lukas F. Stoetzer (2020). "How parties react to voter transitions." *American Political Science Review* 114.3: 940-945.
- Bischof, Daniel, and Wagner, Markus (2017). "What makes parties adapt to voter preferences? The role of party organization, goals and ideology." *British Journal of Political Science*, 1-11.
- Erikson, Robert S. (2015). "Income inequality and policy responsiveness." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 11-29.

April 7th: Multidimensionality and salience

Required readings

- De Sio, Lorenzo (2017). "The Geometry of Party Competition: Parties and voters in the issue space." In Fisher, Justin, et al., eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*
- Gidron, Noam (2020). "Many ways to be right: cross-pressured voters in Western Europe." *British Journal of Political Science*: 1-16.

Supplemental readings

- Stokes, Donald E. (1963). "Spatial models of party competition". *American political science review*, 57(2), 368-377.
- Hanretty, Chris, Benjamin E. Lauderdale, and Nick Vivyan. (2020) "A Choice-Based Measure of Issue Importance in the Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 64.3: 519-535.
- Hartevelde, Eelco (2016). "Winning the 'losers' but losing the 'winners'? The electoral consequences of the radical right moving to the economic left." *Electoral Studies*, 44, 225-234.

- Hjorth, Frederik, and Martin Vinæs Larsen (2021). “When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration.” *British Journal of Political Science*: 1-9.

April 28th: Issue ownership and valence

Required readings

- van der Brug, Wouter (2016). “Issue Ownership: an Ambiguous Concept” In Arzheimer, Kai, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*. SAGE.
- Johns, Robert, and Ann-Kristin Kölln (2020). “Moderation and Competence: How a Party’s Ideological Position Shapes Its Valence Reputation.” *American Journal of Political Science* 64.3: 649-663.

Supplemental readings

- Van der Brug, Wouter (2004). “Issue ownership and party choice”. *Electoral studies*, 23(2), 209-233.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Lefevere, Jonas, and Tresch, Anke (2012). “The Associative Dimension of Issue Ownership.” *Public opinion quarterly*, 76(4), 771-782.
- Hobolt, Sara B., and De Vries, Cathrine E. (2015). “Issue Entrepreneurship and Multiparty Competition.” *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(9), 1159-1185.
- Jung, Jae-Hee, and Margit Tavits (2021). “Valence Attacks Harm the Electoral Performance of the Left but not the Right.” *The Journal of Politics* 83.1

May 5th: Niche and challenger parties

Required readings

- Meguid, Bonnie M. (2005). “Competition between Unequals. The Role of Mainstream Parties in Niche Party Success.” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3: 347-59.

- Bergman, Matthew E., and Flatt, Henry (2020). “Issue diversification: which niche parties can succeed electorally by broadening their agenda?.” *Political Studies*, 68(3), 710-730.

Supplemental readings

- Adams, James, Michael Clark, Lawrence Ezrow, and Garrett Glasgow (2006). “Are niche parties fundamentally different from mainstream parties? The causes and the electoral consequences of Western European parties’ policy shifts, 1976-1998.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 50, 3: 513-29.
- De Vries, Cathrine E., and Hobolt, Sara B. (2012). “When dimensions collide: The electoral success of issue entrepreneurs.” *European Union Politics*, 13(2), 246-268.
- Wagner, Markus, and Thomas M. Meyer (2016). “The Radical Right as Niche Parties? The Ideological Landscape of Party Systems in Western Europe, 1980-2014.” *Political Studies*.
- Abou-Chadi, T. (2016). Niche party success and mainstream party policy shifts—how green and radical right parties differ in their impact. *British Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), 417-436.
- Rovny, Jan (2013). “Where do radical right parties stand? Position blurring in multidimensional competition.” *European Political Science Review*, 5(1), 1-26.
- Somer-Topcu, Zeynep (2015). “Everything to Everyone: The Electoral Consequences of the Broad-Appeal Strategy in Europe.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 59(4), 841-854.
- De Sio, Lorenzo, and Romain Lachat (2020). “Making sense of party strategy innovation: challenge to ideology and conflict-mobilisation as dimensions of party competition.” *West European Politics* 43.3: 688-719.

May 12th: Accountability and retrospective voting

Required readings

- Healy, Andrew, and Neil Malhotra. (2013) “Retrospective voting reconsidered.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 285-306.

- Plescia, Carolina, Kritzinger, Sylvia, and Spoon, Jae-Jae (2021). Who's to blame? How performance evaluation and partisanship influence responsibility attribution in grand coalition governments. *European Journal of Political Research*.

Supplemental readings

- Powell Jr, G. Bingham, and Guy D. Whitten. (1993) "A cross-national analysis of economic voting: taking account of the political context." *American Journal of Political Science*: 391-414.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Mary Stegmaier. (2000) "Economic determinants of electoral outcomes." *Annual review of political science* 3.1: 183-219.
- Hobolt, Sara, James Tilley, and Susan Banducci. (2013) "Clarity of responsibility: How government cohesion conditions performance voting." *European Journal of Political Research* 52.2: 164-187.
- Duch, Raymond M., and Randy Stevenson. (2005) "Context and the economic vote: a multilevel analysis." *Political Analysis*: 387-409.
- Harden, Jeffrey J., and Justin H. Kirkland. (2019) "Does transparency inhibit Political Compromise?." *American Journal of Political Science* .
- Fortunato, David, Lin, Nick C., Stevenson, Randolph T., and Tromborg, Mathias W. (2021). "Attributing policy influence under coalition governance. *American Political Science Review*, 115(1), 252-268.
- Hjerimitslev, Ida (2020). "The electoral cost of coalition participation: Can anyone escape?." *Party Politics*, 26(4), 510-520.

May 19th: Attention + peer-feedback pop-up

Required readings

- Adams, James, Ezrow, Lawrence, and Somer-Topcu, Zeynep (2011). Is anybody listening? Evidence that voters do not respond to European parties' policy statements during elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(2), 370-382.

Supplemental readings

- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer (2007). “The growing importance of issue competition: The changing nature of party competition in Western Europe.” *Political Studies* 55.3: 607-628.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, and Rune Stubager (2010). ”The political conditionality of mass media influence: When do parties follow mass media attention?.” *British Journal of Political Science*: 663-677.
- Holt, Kristoffer, et al. (2013). “Age and the effects of news media attention and social media use on political interest and participation: Do social media function as leveller?.” *European Journal of Communication* 28.1: 19-34.
- Haselmayer, Martin, Thomas M. Meyer, and Markus Wagner (2019). “Fighting for attention: Media coverage of negative campaign messages.” *Party Politics* 25.3: 412-423.

June 2nd: Government formation and coalition voting

Required readings

- Gschwend, Thomas and Meffert, Michael (2016) “Strategic voting”. In Arzheimer, Kai, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*. SAGE.
- Adams, James, Simon Weschle, and Christopher Wlezien. (2021) “Elite interactions and voters’ perceptions of parties’ policy positions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 65.1: 101-114.

Supplemental readings

- Bargsted, Matias A., and Orit Kedar. (2009) “Coalition-targeted Duvergerian voting: how expectations affect voter choice under proportional representation.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53.2: 307-323.
- Angelova, Mariyana, Thomas König, and Sven-Oliver Proksch. (2016) “Responsibility attribution in coalition governments: Evidence from Germany.” *Electoral Studies* 43: 133-149.

- Meffert, Michael F., and Thomas Gschwend (2010). “Strategic coalition voting: Evidence from Austria.” *Electoral Studies* 29.3, 339-349.
- Martin, Lanny W., and Georg Vanberg. (2020) “What You See Is Not Always What You Get: Bargaining before an Audience under Multiparty Government.” *American Political Science Review* 114.4: 1138-1154.
- Plescia, C., and Eberl, J. M. (2019). ‘Not my government!’ The role of norms and populist attitudes on voter preferences for government formation after the election. *Party Politics*.
- Fortunato, D., and Adams, J. (2015). How voters’ perceptions of junior coalition partners depend on the prime minister’s position. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54(3), 601-621.
- Bawn, Kathleen, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu (2012). “Government versus opposition at the polls: How governing status affects the impact of policy positions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56.2: 433-446.

June 9th: Party leaders and personal voting

Required readings

- Garzia, Diego (2016) “Voter Evaluations of Candidates and Party Leaders” In Arzheimer, Kai, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour*. SAGE.
- Fernandez-Vazquez, Pablo, and Zeynep Somer-Topcu. (2019) “The informational role of party leader changes on voter perceptions of party positions.” *British Journal of Political Science* 49.3: 977-996.

Supplemental readings

- Somer-Topcu, Zeynep (2017) ”Agree or disagree: How do party leader changes affect the distribution of voters’ perceptions.” *Party Politics* 23.1: 66-75.
- O’Brien, Diana Z. (2019) “Female leaders and citizens’ perceptions of political parties.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 29.4: 465-489.

June 23th: Research question pop-up

June 30th: Q&A