DEMOCRATIC RESPONSIVENESS-G8442

Instructor: Prof. M. Victoria Murillo
Email: mm2140@columbia.edu
Office hours: Weds 2-3:30pm.
Meeting time for the class: Thursday 12:10-2pm

Objectives:
This PhD seminar will focus on democratic responsiveness to voters from the perspective of comparative politics. Along with accountability, responsiveness is a crucial component of representative democracy as it relates voters’ preferences to politicians’ offers or policy choices. As voters select their representatives, they seek their attention. However, politicians do not pay equal attention to all voters; nor do they respond to voters’ demands exclusively by following their policy preferences. Even when seeking to maximize votes, politicians’ linkages to voters are quite diverse depending on the political context. This class focuses on democratic responsiveness seeking to assess its empirical operationalization and its implications with an emphasis on electoral mechanisms linking voters and politicians in representative democracies. Departing from a theoretical discussion of the concept, we will analyze the diverse dimensions affecting voters’ decisions—including ideological and non-ideological dimensions—to assess the incentives of political parties to respond to voters’ policy preferences or to supply other political offers. In so doing, we will discuss the process of policy preference formation as well as congruence between politicians and voters’ preferences and the impact of voter heterogeneity of politicians’ strategy of vote maximization. The emphasis of the class is on theory analysis, application to puzzles of interest to students, and testing with the expectations that final papers will be used as an opportunity for exploring theory building, hypothesis generation, and concept operationalization on topics related to democratic responsiveness.

Class requirements

- Class participation: graduate students will be graded for the class participation based on their critical reading of the required texts. The grade for class participation also includes the evaluation of the presentation of the third short paper.
- 3 short papers discussed below. All The short-papers are due either in the instructor office or by email 24hs before the class meeting (Wednesday at noon).
  - One short paper (2-3 double-space pages), which does not summarize the arguments of the week but make a cogent argument providing a critical viewpoint of the one or more of the readings discussed in that section.
  - One short paper (2-3 double space pages), which using one of the theories discussed that week, derives a testable hypothesis for an empirical puzzle of interest for the student but not discussed by the literature.
  - One short paper (3-4 double space pages) on concept operationalization. This paper should derive a hypothesis from a theory discussed that week and describe the operationalization of the relevant variables to test it, including a discussion of empirical indicators and their expected range of variation. This paper includes a 5 minute presentation in class.
• Paper proposal (5-6 pages) stating the puzzle of your research paper, your hypothesis and alternative hypothesis derived from the literature discussed in class as well as your research design. Paper proposals are due on week 12. The topic should be approved by the instructor. Paper proposals will be presented and discussed with colleagues in class.

• Final paper (25-35 double space pages, 12 point font, normal margins), which is due a week after the last class meeting. Any type of methodology can be used in testing your argument, but you should provide empirical evidence for your argument.

Class Schedule

Week 1: presentation (9/5)

Week 2: Democracy and Electoral Representation (9/12)


Week 3: Ideology and Policy Responsiveness (9/19)


Week 4: Non-Spatial Determinants of the Vote I: Valence, Partisanship and Networks (9/26)


**Week 5: Non-Policy Determinants of the Vote II: Competence, Economic Performance & Economic Constraints (10/3)**

• Raymond Duch and Randolf Stephenson. *The Economic Vote* (Cambridge 2008), chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6.


**Week 6: Non-Policy Determinants of the Vote III: Targeted Distribution (10/10)**


Week 7: Congruence on Policy Preferences (10/17)


Week 8: Discussing Public Opinion and Policy Preferences (10/24)


Week 9: The Supply Side of Responsiveness: Political Parties and Electoral Competition (10/31)

- James Adams, Samuel Merrill, and Bernard Grofman, A Unified Theory of Party Competition: a cross-national analysis integrating spatial and behavioral factors (2005), chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- Wolfgang Muller and Kaare Strom, Policy, Office or Voters? (Cambridge UP 1999), chapter 1.
- Calvo and Murillo, Responsiveness and Responsibility, unpublished manuscript, chapters TBA.

Week 10: Institutions & Party Dynamics (11/7)

• David Samuels and Matthew Shugart, Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers (Cambridge UP 2011), chapter 8.

Week 11: Inequality and Biased Responsiveness (11/14)

• Larry Bartels, Unequal Democracy. The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age. (Princeton 2008), chapters TBA
• Juan Pablo Luna, Segmented Representation. Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies, unpublished manuscript, chapters TBA.

Week 12: paper proposal presentations (11/21)

11/8 - Thanksgiving.
