

## **POP88154: Political Behaviour**

**Hilary Term 2026**

**Day and Time: TBD**

**Room: TBD**

**Lecturer:** Asli Ceren Cinar

**Email:** TBC

**Office hours:** TBD

**Office:** TBD

This module studies citizen vote choice and political participation. The module will begin by introducing students to the general theories of political opinion formation and change. It will also look at the electoral system and party competition as factors that affect how citizens vote in elections. The next part of the module will consider policy issues as key factors that shape the vote choice and help us understand election outcomes. We will finally consider unequal political participation, its causes and its consequences. We will also discuss what can be done to reduce inequalities in political participation and how politically feasible these responses might be. Discussion of the assigned reading material will consider the theoretical perspectives employed and the assumptions inherent in these theories, the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and methodologies employed, and the implications of these empirical results for democratic theory.

### **Learning outcomes**

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Describe the different approaches to opinion formation and vote choice
- Explain and critically evaluate the major factors shaping citizens' voting behaviour
- Understand the causes and consequences of inequalities in political participation
- Construct arguments concerning current debates about how citizens vote in elections

### **Participation (20%)**

Student participation and discussion is a central aspect of the seminar. This means that it is necessary to do the readings. Students should come prepared with topics of discussion and questions. The assessment of participation will be based on the quality of input into class discussions. To prepare for discussion you should: identify the theory or argument of the readings, identify the method used by the authors in the readings to test their arguments, and evaluate the strength of these methods for testing the authors' argument; and you should think of possible extensions or alternatives to the arguments put forward in the readings.

### **Response Papers (20%)**

Students are required to submit two response papers. Each paper should be at most 800 words long and **worth 10%**. Each paper should be related to a topic covered in the module

(weeks 2-5). Students can choose the two weeks (out of four possible weeks) in which they write their response papers but have to submit them through Turnitin on Blackboard **before the start of class** in these two weeks. Building on the readings from that week, the response papers should discuss a potential research design that improves on this literature. Please do not write a summary of a particular week's readings. Instead, **identify a weakness or limitation in the articles and offer suggestions on how to improve the research**. The critical evaluation may focus on the empirical or theoretical aspects of the readings or both. In these response papers, the student should:

1. Identify a research question.
2. Provide brief theoretical intuitions that generate one or more hypotheses (for this, you are likely to draw on the readings for a given week – there is no need to draw on outside sources).
3. Describe how they would answer that question. What they propose can be ambitious but should also be feasible for the student to execute.

The purpose of the response papers is to begin brainstorming ideas for potential research projects.

### **Final Paper (60%)**

The research paper is due by **TBD**. It should not exceed 2,500 words in length, including footnotes but not the list of references. I have no preference for any particular citation style, but please make sure you use citation procedures consistently throughout. You should double-space the essay and provide the word count at the beginning. The paper should outline a research design for a larger project, be creative, and also feasible for the student to carry out. The paper should follow a clear structure:

1. What is the motivating question?
2. How does the project relate to existing work?
3. What are the hypotheses? These should flow naturally from good theory.
4. What relevant data are available, or could feasibly be collected?
5. What methods would be used to test the hypotheses? This could include any combination of comparative case studies, interviews, statistical analysis, etc.

### **Readings**

Details of readings for individual topics are given separately. The following items will occur on the reading for specific topics or are of general relevance and usefulness.

Campbell, Angus, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- A pathbreaking book on the determinants of vote choice (in particular, on the role of partisanship) whose theory became known as the Michigan Model. A classic of the voting behaviour literature.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.

- This book presents a rational choice theory of voting. Another classic of the voting behaviour literature.

Duch, Raymond M., and Randolph T. Stevenson. 2008. *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results*. Cambridge University Press.

- A book on what the political science literature calls “economic voting.”

Singh, Shane P. 2021. *Beyond Turnout: How Compulsory Voting Shapes Citizens and Political Parties*. Oxford University Press.

- The most comprehensive and up-to-date book on compulsory voting and debates around its political consequences.

Fieldhouse, Edward, Jane Green, Geoffrey Evans, Jonathan Mellon, Christopher Prosser, Hermann Schmitt, Cees van der Eijk. 2019. *Electoral Shocks: The Volatile Voter in a Turbulent World*. Oxford University Press.

- This book focuses on explaining recent electoral shifts and changes in the UK.

### **Academic integrity**

Please do not plagiarize. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter, with serious consequences that can result in receiving no credit for an assignment, a failing grade for the module, and even expulsion from the programme. It is never permissible to turn in any work that contains others' ideas without proper acknowledgment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (see <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism/calendar>). Useful information is available at <http://tcd-ie.libguides.com/plagiarism>. If you are paraphrasing, cite the source. If you are quoting, use quotation marks and appropriate citation. In addition, we strongly recommend that you visit <http://www.plagiarism.org/> for more information on what is and is not plagiarism. Lastly, students are required to only submit “new work” in each module, which means work that has not been submitted previously in any other university module. Students who wish to use previously submitted work as part of a new project will need the approval of the lecturer. The Assignment Submission Form available from the Departmental website ([https://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/assets/word/Plagiarism%20cover%20sheet.docx](https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/assets/word/Plagiarism%20cover%20sheet.docx)) should be filled out and included as the first page of all your submissions. All written assignments are to be submitted through Turnitin in Blackboard.

### **Disability policy**

Students with a disability are encouraged to register with the Disability Service to seek supports where the disability could affect their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the course.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1. Opinion formation and change: Theoretical perspectives

Rational choice, psychological and sociological approaches to voting.

Downs, A., 1957. "An economic theory of political action in a democracy." *The Journal of Political Economy*, pp. 135-150.

Johnston, Richard. 2006. "Party Identification: Unmoved Mover or Sum of Preferences?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 329-351.

Lenz, Gabriel. 2009. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4): 821-837.

#### Further reading (optional):

Berelson, B., et al. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 6-7, 11-12, 14

Campbell, A., et al. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-4, 6-7, 19-20.

Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Ch. 1, 3.

Bartels, L. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24(2):117-150.

### Week 2. How electoral systems and party competition affect the vote choice

Adams, James. 2012. "Causes and electoral consequences of party policy shifts in multiparty elections: Theoretical results and empirical evidence." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15(1), pp.401-419.

Meguid, Bonnie. 2005. "Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 347-99.

Krause, Werner, Denis Cohen, and Tarik Abou-Chadi. "Does accommodation work? Mainstream party strategies and the success of radical right parties." *Political Science Research and Methods* 11.1 (2023): 172-179.

van Spanje, Joost, and Nan Dirk de Graaf. 2018. "How established parties reduce other parties' electoral support: the strategy of parroting the pariah." *West European Politics* 41 (1): 1-27.

**Further reading (optional):**

Kedar, Orit. 2005. "When Moderate Voters Prefer Extreme Parties: Policy Balancing in Parliamentary Elections." *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 185-199.

De Vries, Catherine E. and Sara Hobolt. 2020. *Political Entrepreneurs: The rise of challenger parties in Europe*. Princeton University Press. Part 1 chapters 1 & 2.

**Week 3. Policy-voting 1: Economic issues**

Guiso, Luigi, Helios Herrera, Massimo Morelli, and Tommaso Sonno. 2024. "Economic insecurity and the demand for populism in Europe." *Economica* 91, no. 362: 588-620.

Elizabeth Ivarsflaten. 2008. "What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? Re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases." *Comparative Political Studies*, 41: 3 –23.

Colantone, Italo, and Piero Stanig. 2018. "The trade origins of economic nationalism: Import competition and voting behavior in Western Europe." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (4): 936-53.

Autor, David, David Dorn, Gordon Hanson, and Kaveh Majlesi. 2017. "A note on the effect of rising trade exposure on the 2016 presidential election." *MIT Working Paper*  
<https://economics.mit.edu/files/12418>

**Further reading (optional):**

Powell, Jr, G.B. and G. D. Whitten. 1993. "A Cross-National Analysis of Economic Voting: Taking Account of the Political Context." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (1993): 391-414.

Kramer. G.H. (1971). "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964." *American Political Science Review* 65: 131-143.

Evans, G & Anderson, R (2006). "The Political Conditioning of Economic Perceptions" *Journal of Politics* 68: 194-207.

Lewis-Beck, M. S. (2006) "Does Economics Still Matter? Econometrics and the Vote". *Journal of Politics* 68:208-212.

#### **Week 4. Policy-voting 2: Cultural issues**

De La O, Ana L. and Jonathan A. Rodden. 2008. "Does Religion Distract the Poor?" *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4-5): 437-476.

Mutz, Diane. 2018. "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115(19): E4330-9.

Chou, Winston, Rafaela Dancygier, Naoki Egami and Amaney Jamal. 2021. "Competing for Loyalists? How Party Positioning Affects Populist Radical Right Voting." *Comparative Political Studies* 54(12): 2226–2260.

Hooghe, Marc, and Ruth Dassonneville. 2018. "Explaining the Trump vote: The effect of racist resentment and anti-immigrant sentiments" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(3): 528-534.

#### **Further reading (optional):**

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. 2016. HKS Research Paper.

Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, and Robert P. Jones, 2017. PRRI/The Atlantic Report.

Eefje Steenvoorden and Eelco Harteveld. 2018. *West European Politics*, 41:1, 28-52.

Tjitske Akkerman. 2015. *Party Politics*, 21(1): 54–67.

Christopher Cochrane and Neil Nevitte. 2014. *Comparative European Politics* 12(1): 1-32.

#### **Week 5. Voter turnout**

Gerber, Alan S and Donald P Green. 2000. "The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment." *American political science review* 94(3):653–663.

Foos, Florian and Peter John. 2018. "Parties are no civic charities: Voter contact and the changing partisan composition of the electorate." *Political Science Research and Methods* 6(2):283–298.

Fowler, Anthony. 2013. "Electoral and Policy Consequences of Voter Turnout: Evidence from Compulsory Voting in Australia." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8(2):159–182.

Ferwerda, Jeremy. 2014. "Electoral Consequences of Declining Participation: A Natural Experiment in Austria." *Electoral Studies* 35: 242 – 252.

Gallego, A. 2010. "Understanding unequal turnout: Education and voting in comparative perspective." *Electoral Studies*, 29(2), 239-248.

**Further reading (optional):**

Green, Donald P and Alan S Gerber. 2019. *Get out the vote: How to increase voter turnout*. Brookings Institution Press.

Bechtel, Michael M., Dominik Hangartner, and Lukas Schmid. 2016. "Does Compulsory Voting Increase Support for Leftist Policy?" *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3): 752–767.

Brady, H.E., et al. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation" *American Political Science Review* (89): 271-294.