

POU44623— Elections, Parties and Public Opinion in Ireland

Module Information	
Module Code	<i>POU44623</i>
Module Title	<i>Elections, Parties and Public Opinion in Ireland</i>
Department	<i>Political Science</i>
Year Group	<i>Senior Sophister</i>
Module Personnel	<i>Gail McElroy</i>
Academic Year	<i>2026-27</i>
Credit Weighting	<i>5 credits</i>
Semester	<i>Semester 1</i>
Contact Hours	<i>One 90-minute seminar per week</i>

Module Content	
Module Description	This module examines public opinion, voting behaviour, and party politics in the Republic of Ireland. The module explores how public opinion is formed and shaped and how these dynamics translate into voting choices and party competition. Through a combination of theoretical and applied approaches, students will develop the analytical tools needed to critically assess electoral and public opinion trends. The module is particularly suited to students interested in Irish politics and comparative political behaviour.
Module Learning Aims	This module aims to students with a critical understanding of public opinion, voting behaviour, and party politics in Ireland, situated within a broader comparative context. It examines key theoretical frameworks for explaining how public opinion is formed and how it shapes electoral outcomes, while developing participant's ability to design, interpret, and critically assess public opinion research, including survey and polling data. Overall, the module seeks to build both analytical and methodological skills that enable students to engage critically with contemporary debates on public opinion and electoral politics.
Learning Outcomes	Upon successful completion, students will be able to:

Module Content

	• Critically evaluate major theories of public opinion formation and change, including political socialisation, media effects, and elite cues, applying these frameworks to the Irish case and, where relevant, drawing comparisons with other democracies. • Analyse voting behaviour in Irish elections using key explanatory models accounting for turnout and vote choice under Ireland's unusual electoral system, with reference to comparative patterns elsewhere. • Assess the evolution of party competition and the changing nature of the party system in Ireland, situating these developments within broader comparative trends. • Critically evaluate public opinion research and interpret Irish polling data with an awareness of its limitations.
Indicative Reading / Resources	Gallagher, M., O'Malley, E. and Reidy, T. eds., 2025. <i>How Ireland Voted 2024: The New Normal?</i>. Springer Nature. Marsh, M., Farrell, D.M. and Reidy, T. eds., 2018. <i>The post-crisis Irish voter: Voting behaviour in the Irish 2016 general election</i>. Manchester University Press. Marsh, M., Farrell, D.M. and McElroy, G. eds., 2017. <i>A conservative revolution?: electoral change in twenty-first-century Ireland</i>. Oxford University Press.

Assessment

Assessment Components	<i>Presentation 10%, Assignment 30%, Exam 60%</i>
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Additional Information

Prerequisites	<i>POU33031 or POU33032</i>
Co-requisites	<i>None</i>