Voters, Public Opinion, and Policymaking
Syllabus
(Version: August 23rd, 2023)

Winter semester 2023-24
Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:30
IBW building, 2nd floor, room S103

Instructor: Paul Michel
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Office hours: after class and by appointment
Office: IBW building, 3.29

1. Course description
In representative democracies, elected politicians are supposed to aggregate voter preferences and thereby translate public opinion into policy decisions. However, diverse actors have recently challenged whether policymaking genuinely reflects the electorate's views, suggesting democracy may be falling short of its promises. Against this backdrop, this course examines the factors shaping citizens' preferences and the degree to which and how public opinion influences policymaking.

The seminar will introduce students to fundamental theoretical concepts and empirical research related to several key questions: What drives mass preferences over policies? How does public opinion affect policymaking? And, what explains the unequal representation of voters' views in politics?

By delving into these issues, the course aims to deepen the students' understanding of democratic governance and the role of public opinion therein. Moreover, the seminar has a strong empirical focus with multiple hands-on exercise sessions. In these sessions, participants advance their knowledge in quantitative empirical research methods and their application using the statistical software package R.

2. Prerequisites
To participate in this seminar, foundational knowledge of political science concepts, theories, and elementary skills in regression analysis and statistical inference are required. Prior experience in working with statistical software (e.g., Stata or R) is not necessary, but advantageous. Students should be able to comprehend and articulate themselves in English, as it will be the primary language used in class. Moreover, students are required to bring their laptops to the lab sessions.

3. Requirements and Coursework
This seminar is highly interactive and thus depends on student's active and regular participation. Students will be expected to complete the required readings prior to each session and contribute to the discussions in class.

Examination: The final grade is composed of the following components:
- Paper presentation (30)
- Term paper (70)
- Bonus credits (5)

Grade	Point Total
1,0	> 95
1,3	90-94
1,7	85-89
2,0	80-84
2,3	75-79
2,7	70-74
3,0	65-69
3,3	60-64
3,7	55-59
4,0	50-54
5,0	< 50

<u>Paper presentation</u>: Each student has to prepare a presentation on an assigned article. The allocation of papers will be made during the first session. The presentation should…

- inform the audience about the article's key motivation and contribution.
- briefly explain the theoretical argument and the main predictions.
- summarize the research design.
- highlight the key finding(s).
- identify ways in which one could improve the article.
- offer two discussion questions.

The presentation should last about 15 minutes. Subsequently, the presenter will lead a discussion of 15 minutes. Students send their slides before the session to michel@wiso.uni-koeln.de. The file should be named "Pres_SURNAME".

<u>Term Paper:</u> Students will write an empirical term paper with a length of about 3,500 words (+/- 10%), excluding title page, table of contents, and list of references. Based on the conceptual and empirical literature discussed in class, students will develop a specific empirical research question, which they examine using statistical methods and data obtained during the lab sessions. The lab sessions will equip students with the practical skills, code templates, and data to conduct their quantitative research.

The deadline for submitting the term paper is February 29th, 2023, 2pm. The paper should be submitted as a pdf file via email to michel@wiso.uni-koeln.de. The file should be named "TermPaper_SURNAME". Papers submitted after the deadline will not be accepted and result in a fail. Please consult the information on "how to write a term paper" provided by CCCP (https://cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/teaching/information-for-students). The use of text-generating AI tools such as ChatGPT is not allowed.

Bonus points: Students can earn bonus points by submitting three discussion questions on any of the readings in five different sessions. These should be sent by Monday, 12am, before the respective session.

4. Aims of the Course

The specific aims of this course are as follows: Students...

- develop an understanding of how mass preferences evolve and how they affect policymaking.
- know and understand common concepts and methods of Political Economy.
- deepen their understanding of regression analysis and its application using R.
- can derive an empirical research question from theoretically sound considerations.
- devise a basic empirical model and discuss various sources of statistical bias.
- communicate continuously and purposefully within learning groups.
- establish and evaluate independently developed positions.
- communicate in English.
- design their learning and working processes independently.
- reflect on their own performance and implement feedback constructively.

5. Resources for Students

The CCCP at the University of Cologne offers informational documents and recommendations on writing, good scientific practice, plagiarism, and assessment criteria. See: https://cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/teaching/information-for-students.

The University has several institutions offering support for students in various areas (e.g., general study guidance, administration, discrimination, sexualized violence, and bullying). See for an overview: https://wiso.uni-koeln.de/en/studies/service-wiso-faculty/central-guidance-services.

The WiSo Student Service Point (WiSSPo) is the first, central point of contact for questions about studying at the WiSo Faculty and bundles services and advice in one place. This also includes questions about examination matters. See: https://wiso.uni-koeln.de/en/studies/service-wiso-faculty.

6. Detailed schedule and reading list

1st session   October 10th, 2023   Introduction

   No readings. Students are required to bring their laptops.

2nd session   October 17th, 2023   Preferences, group choice, and representation

   Urbinati, Nadia, and Mark Warren, 2008. "The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory," Annual Review of Political Science, 11: 387–412.

   Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010). "Analyzing Politics." 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton. (Chapter 4, pp. 53-86).

3ʳᵈ session   October 24ᵗʰ, 2023   Elections I: Spatial model and median voter theorem

Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010). „Analyzing Politics." 2ⁿᵈ edition. New York: W.W. Norton. (Chapter 5, pp. 90-155).

Hinich, Melvin J., and Michael C. Munger (1997). Analytical Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2, pp. 21-49).

4ᵗʰ session   October 31ˢᵗ, 2023   Elections II: Electoral systems

Alós-Ferrer, Carlos, and Đura-Georg Granić. 2012. "Two Field Experiments on Approval Voting in Germany." *Social Choice and Welfare* 39(1): 171-205.

Norris, Pippa, ed. 2004. "Classifying Electoral Systems." In *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 39–65.

5ᵗʰ session   November 7ᵗʰ, 2023   Lab session 1: Intro to R and basic statistics recap

No readings. Students are required to bring their laptops.

6ᵗʰ session   November 14ᵗʰ, 2023   Retrospective voting

Bechtel, Michael M., and Jens Hainmueller. 2011. "How Lasting Is Voter Gratitude? An Analysis of the Short- and Long-Term Electoral Returns to Beneficial Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(4): 852–68.

Stokes, Leah C. 2016. "Electoral Backlash against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 958–74.

7ᵗʰ session   November 21ˢᵗ, 2023   Determinants of preferences I: self-interest

Colantone, Italo, Livio Di Lonardo, Yotam Margalit, and Marco Percoco. Forthcoming. "The Political Consequences of Green Policies: Evidence from Italy". *American Political Science Review*.

Cooper, Jasper, Sung Eun Kim, and Johannes Urpelainen. 2018. "The Broad Impact of a Narrow Conflict: How Natural Resource Windfalls Shape Policy and Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 80(2): 630–46.

Gaikwad, Nikhar, Federica Genovese, and Dustin Tingley. 2022. "Creating Climate

Coalitions: Mass Preferences for Compensating Vulnerability in the World's Two Largest Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 116(4): 1165–83.

8th session   November 28th, 2023   Determinants of preferences II: ideology and partisanship

Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. "Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis." *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 849–60.

Mullinix, Kevin J. 2016. "Partisanship and Preference Formation: Competing Motivations, Elite Polarization, and Issue Importance." *Political Behavior* 38(2): 383–411.

9th session   December 5th, 2023   Determinants of preferences III: political communication

Broockman, David E., and Daniel M. Butler. 2017. "The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 208–21.

Druckman, James N., Erik Peterson, and Rune Slothuus. 2013. "How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation." *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 57–79.

Stokes, Leah C., and Christopher Warshaw. 2017. "Renewable Energy Policy Design and Framing Influence Public Support in the United States." *Nature Energy* 2(8): 1–6.

10th session   December 12th, 2023   Lab Session 2: Data management

No readings. Students are required to bring their laptops.

11th session   December 19th, 2023   Responsiveness

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2015. "From Mass Preferences to Policy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 147–65.

Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. 2018. "Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936–2014." *American Political Science Review* 112(2): 249–66.

12th session **January 9th, 2024** **Representational inequality**

Dassonneville, Ruth, Fernando Feitosa, Marc Hooghe, and Jennifer Oser. 2021. "Policy Responsiveness to All Citizens or Only to Voters? A Longitudinal Analysis of Policy Responsiveness in OECD Countries." *European Journal of Political Research* 60(3): 583–602.

Pacheco, Julianna, and Christopher Ojeda. 2020. "A Healthy Democracy? Evidence of Unequal Representation Across Health Status." *Political Behavior* 42(4): 1245–67.

Rigby, Elizabeth, and Gerald C. Wright. 2013. "Political Parties and Representation of the Poor in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 552–65.

13th session **January 16th, 2024** **Issue salience**

Gause, LaGina. 2022. "Revealing Issue Salience via Costly Protest: How Legislative Behavior Following Protest Advantages Low-Resource Groups." *British Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 259–79.

Klüver, Heike, and Iñaki Sagarzazu. 2016. "Setting the Agenda or Responding to Voters? Political Parties, Voters and Issue Attention." *West European Politics* 39(2): 380–98.

14th session **January 23rd, 2024** **Lab Session 3: analysis and outputting regression tables**

No readings. Students are required to bring their laptops.

15th session **January 31st, 2024** **Summary, term paper Q&A, and evaluation**

No readings.

Recommended textbooks for building up your methods and coding skills:

Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke (2009). "Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion." Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cunningham, Scott. 2021. "Causal Inference: The Mixtape." New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. [freely available here: https://mixtape.scunning.com/]

Pearl, Judea, and Dana Mackenzie. (2018). "The Book of Why: The New Science of Cause and Effect." Basic Books.

Wickham, Hadley, Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel, and Garrett Grolemund. 2023. "R for Data Science: Import, Tidy, Transform, Visualize, and Model Data." 2nd edition. Heidelberg: O'Reilly. [freely available here: https://r4ds.hadley.nz/]