1 Overview

This course surveys recent research on elections and political representation in democracies, with a focus on topics most salient in poor and middle-income countries. Topics include political consequences of electoral rules, the organization of parties, how the territorial organization of the state affects politics, the relationship between politics and distribution, ethnicity and electoral politics, and the role of fraud and violence in elections. Note that the readings are not exclusively about politics in the non-industrialized world, but rather are chosen because of their theoretical or empirical relevance to the themes of the course. The emphasis of the class is on recent research so as to give you sense of what cutting edge work in this area looks like.

The reading list is methodologically eclectic, with research deploying a variety of types of quantitative and qualitative evidence. In addition, I deliberately included a substantial amount of formal theory. A good deal of the empirical literature draws on formal models of elections to motivate their hypotheses, so it is important to have a basic conceptual understanding of canonical models. I do not expect you to have a background in formal models and will explain all necessary concepts in class, but you may want to have a good game theory text to reference when doing the readings. I recommend the following texts if interested:

2 Assignments

Reading Summaries
Each week you are required to write and circulate a 2-3 paragraph memo commenting on a theme or problem you found to be of most interest in the readings that week. I’m not looking for an essay, but rather conjectures, arguments, and critiques designed to motivate discussion. The response need not touch on all the readings, just whatever article, book, or theme that you find to be of greatest interest. This requirement is designed both to improve discussion and also serve as an accountability device for yourself to get a start on the readings. (15% of the total grade).

Participation
Seminar discussions are the heart of the class and thus I expect everyone to participate. I reserve the right to call on you to summarize or critique the readings. Being able to talk about work that you are only barely familiar with is an important skill to have as an academic and I expect you to cultivate it in this class. (20% of the total grade)

Papers
The paper that you write for this course should advance your scholarly career in some way. Work on what you think will be most productive, including a research design, a critical literature review, collecting a new dataset, performing a replication, or writing a full blown research paper. I am most interested in you doing something useful that will eventually contribute either to your dissertation or to a scholarly publication. To ensure that you are making timely progress on your paper, we will have the following milestones:
  • Brainstorming Session: March 6 (5%)
  • Progress Report: April 10 (5%)
  • Class Presentation: May 8 and May 15 (20%)
  • Final Paper: May 26 (35%)

Required Books
All readings will be made available on the class website, except for the following books, which you should purchase or otherwise obtain:
  • L. Blaydes. 2010. Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt. Cambridge University Press
3 Class Schedule

February 13 Theory: Representation

- Chapters 1 and 2 in Adam Przeworski. 2016. “What Can We Expect of Elections?” Unpublished Manuscript

February 21 Theory: Accountability


February 27 Theory: Behavioral Models


March 6 Parties


March 13 Elections and the State


March 20 Distributive and Redistributive Politics


April 3 Clientelism


April 10 Ethnic Politics

by Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson, 84–109. Cambridge University Press (CUP)


April 24 Electoral Fraud and Election-Related Violence


May 1 Elections and Representation in Authoritarian Regimes

- Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7 in L. Blaydes. 2010. Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt. Cambridge University Press

May 8 Presentations

May 15 Presentations