

Voting and Elections
Political Science 9535B
University of Western Ontario
Winter 2025

Class Information:

Monday, 9:00am-12:00pm

SSC 72XX

Note: There is a Brightspace site for this course.

Instructor Information:

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Office Hours: Monday, 1-3:00pm or by appointment

Course Description:

Elections and voting, because of their intrinsic importance to government, policy, and the representation of citizens, are fascinating topics. Even more fascinating is attempting to understand how individuals come to make their vote choice: what role do parties, interest groups, campaigns, issues, information and institutions have on the entire process? This course is intended to introduce students to the academic study of elections and political behaviour at different levels of government. This course will survey some of the vast number of issues surrounding elections and voting that are significant for the study of politics in any country, such as electoral systems, political participation, theories of vote choice, party organization, partisan identification, and interest groups. Special emphasis will be placed on understanding how these topics are studied empirically using individual-level data.

Learning Objectives:

The objectives of this course are twofold, and each class will be divided into two parts.

First, students will learn about the academic study of voting and elections. This will entail a review of some of the major topics that have been studied around the world and at different levels of government. We will focus on analysis at the individual level, but not exclusively. By the end of the course students will understand the evolution of this subfield, be able to describe the main models of voting behaviour, and understand the regularities (and irregularities) that have been demonstrated in the literature. They will have a basic understanding of what motivates voters when faced with having to decide how to vote.

The second objective is to gain an understanding of the data that is used to study voting and elections at the individual level. For the most part, this means election surveys. A significant part of the course will include hands-on examination of survey data in order to look at how some of the theories play out in particular elections and at different levels of government. By the end of the course students will have conducted their own analyses for a research project and will be familiar with the types of data that are commonly included in election studies.

Required Readings:

There is no textbook for the course. All readings will be available through Brightspace or the library electronically.

In addition to those required each week, I will provide a list of important pieces in the literature that you should be aware of if you want to study further on this topic. For the purposes of a comprehensive exam, I would consider them “required”.

Assignments:

MA

Participating in Class Discussion – 15%

Comparative Election Report – 15%

Short Paper – 15%

Paper Outline – 5%

Discussant Comments and Presentation – 10%

Research Paper – 40%

PhD

Participating in Class Discussion – 15%

Comparative Election Report – 15%

Data Analysis – 15%

Research Paper

- Paper Outline – 5%
- Discussant Comments and Presentation – 10%
- Final Paper – 40%

Participating in Class Discussion (MA and PhD) – 15%

Participation will be awarded for coming to class having done the readings and contributing to discussion.

Comparative Elections Assignment (MA and PhD) – 20%

The purpose of this assignment is to go beyond the class materials to learn more about how specific concepts in the study of elections and voting are realized in different elections. The goal here is to also think about how voters can be influenced by differences across countries or levels of government. The expectation is that students will consider a narrow research question in the context of at least two elections that have unique contextual features (institutions, society, economy, etc.). The assignment is to take the form of a 5-10 page report that compares empirical analyses conducted in both contexts. The report must include an explanation of the research question, a short literature review that explains the hypotheses/expectations, an original empirical data analysis (PhD) OR an interpretation of existing empirical analyses (MA), and a discussion of the results.

Due: February 3

Short Paper (MA) – 15%

You can choose one of the two options below. Papers should be 5 pages long, double-spaced, and are **due by 8:30am on the day of the relevant class** (submitted to Brightspace).

Article Review

Choose a peer-reviewed article related to one of the weekly topics (in consultation with me for appropriateness). The article should contribute to the week's discussions and either illustrate, extend or challenge the assigned readings. You will be responsible for presenting the article to the class and critically assessing the research design and conclusions drawn from the results. Some questions you will want to consider include: Was the data appropriate? Were the indicators valid? Are there alternative explanations to consider? Are the results generalizable?

Reflection Paper

Reflect on the normative implications of one of the weekly topics. How does the topic fit into our understanding of a strong, ideal-type democracy? Do the empirical findings matter for the quality of a

democratic system? Outside sources and a bibliography are required for this paper and a clear definition of an ideal democracy must be provided.

Data Analysis (PhD) – 15%

This assignment is designed to illuminate some aspects of survey design through a hands-on examination of data. A list of specific topics that can be studied with the 2019 and/or 2021 Canadian Election Study will be provided for students to choose from. Students must produce a data analysis report (drawing upon skills developed in PS9590 or elsewhere) of approximately 3-6 pages that includes an explanation of the issue, an empirical data analysis, and an interpretation of the results.

Due: February 24

Research Paper (MA and PhD)

Outline - 5%

Students must submit their topic with a brief outline (1-2 pages). The outline should contain the research question, an explanation of the hypotheses that will be investigated, the data source(s) to be used, and a data analysis plan (if appropriate).

Due: March 10

Discussant Comments and Presentation – 10%

Students must submit draft papers to an assigned discussant by **March 24**. Discussants must provide 2-3 pages of comments to help their colleague improve the draft for final submission. Discussants will be responsible for presenting the paper and their comments to the class on **March 31**. Comments must also be submitted to Brightspace by 8:30am on March 31.

Final Paper - 40%

Students will write a research paper on a question of their choice. Papers are expected to include original data analysis but skills will be considered and alternatives can be discussed if necessary. This paper (15-20 pages) is expected to be written as an academic article. Students are encouraged to look to course readings and browse journals for examples of how researchers usually structure such papers.

Due: April 14

Resources:

The Writing Support Centre at UWO is available to help students with their assignments (<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?main>).

Various support services are also available through UWO. You can access information about the Registrar's Office at <http://www4.registrar.uwo.ca> and Student Development Services at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca>.

Topics and Readings:

January 6: Introduction

1. LeDuc, Lawrence. 2012. "To Ann Arbor...and Back: A Comparative Perspective on Election Studies." In *The Canadian Election Studies? Assessing Four Decades of Influence*, ed. Mebs Kanji, Antoine Bilodeau and Thomas J. Scotto, 44-68. Vancouver: UBC Press.

January 13: Studying Elections

1. Knight, Kathleen and Michael Marsh. 2002. "Varieties of election studies," *Electoral Studies* 21: 169-187.
2. Kritzing, Sylvia. 2018. "National Election Studies: Valuable Data Machineries and their Challenges." *Swiss Political Science Review* 24(4): 565-574.
3. Johnston, Richard and Henry E. Brady. "The rolling cross-section design." *Electoral Studies* 21(2): 283-295.
4. Pereira, Alvaro and Laura Stephenson. 2024. "The 2019 Canadian Election Study: A Mode Comparison in Electoral Studies." *C-Dem Report #2024-05-15*. https://c-dem.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Mode-Comparison_CDemReport.pdf
5. Morin-Chassé, Alexandre, Damien Bol, Laura B. Stephenson, and Simon Labbé St-Vincent. 2017. "How to survey about electoral turnout? The efficacy of the face-saving response items in 19 different contexts." *Political Science Research and Methods* 5(3): 575-584.
6. Van der Eijk, Cees, Wouter van der Brug, Martin Kroh and Mark Franklin. 2006. "Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behaviour: On the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities." *Electoral Studies* 25: 424-447.

Dataset: American National Election Study Cumulative File https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var_20211118.pdf

January 20: The Electoral Process: Ballots and Institutions

1. Plescia, Carolina, André Blais, and John Högström. 2020. "Do people want a 'fairer' electoral system? An experimental study in four countries." *European Journal of Political Research* 59: 733-751. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12372>
2. Reynolds, Andrew and Marco Steenbergen. 2006. "How the world votes: The political consequences of ballot design, innovation and manipulation." *Electoral Studies* 25(3): 570-598.
3. Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to cultivate a personal vote: A rank ordering of electoral formulas." *Electoral Studies* 14(4): 417-439.
4. Aldrich, John H., André Blais and Laura B. Stephenson. 2018. "Strategic Voting and Political Institutions." In *The Many Faces of Strategic Voting*, ed. Laura B. Stephenson, John H. Aldrich and André Blais, 1-27. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
5. Liñeira, Robert, and Pedro Riera. "Why Do Majoritarian Systems Benefit the Right? Income Groups and Vote Choice across Different Electoral Systems." *Political Science Research and Methods* 12, no. 4 (2024): 857-69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2024.18>.
6. Skorge, Ø.S. 2023. "Mobilizing the Underrepresented: Electoral Systems and Gender Inequality in Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science*, 67: 538-552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12654>

Dataset: CSES Module 5 <https://cses.org/data-download/cses-module-5-2016-2021/>

January 27: Turnout

1. Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Ch. 3, 14
2. Blais, André. 2000. *To Vote or Not to Vote*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Introduction only.
3. Blais, André. 2006. "What affects voter turnout?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 111-125.
4. De Miguel, Carolina, Amaney A. Jamal, and Mark Tessler. 2015. "Elections in the Arab world: why do citizens turn out?" *Comparative Political Studies* 48(11): 1355-1388.
5. Dassonneville, Ruth and Marc Hooghe. 2017. "Voter turnout decline and stratification: Quasi-experimental and comparative evidence of a growing educational gap." *Party Politics* 37(2): 184-200.

6. Kostelka, Filip, and André Blais. 2021. "The Generational and Institutional Sources of the Global Decline in Voter Turnout." *World Politics* 73 (4): 629–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887121000149>.

Dataset: Making Electoral Democracy Work

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/RRONNQ>

February 3: Duty and Norms

1. Blais, André and Jean-François Daoust. 2020. *The Motivation to Vote*. Vancouver: UBC Press. Ch. 4 only.
2. Mullinix, Kevin J. 2018. "[Civic Duty and Political Preference Formation](#)." *Political Research Quarterly* 71(1): 199-214.
3. Weinschenk, A. C. (2014). Personality Traits and the Sense of Civic Duty. *American Politics Research*, 42(1), 90-113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X13484172>
4. Shulman, Hillary C. and Timothy R. Levine. 2012. "Exploring Social Norms as a Group-Level Phenomenon: Do Political Participation Norms Exist and Influence Political Participation on College Campuses?" *Journal of Communication*, 62(3): 532–552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01642.x>
5. Alvarez-Benjumea, Amalia, and Vicente Valentim. 2024. "The Enforcement of Political Norms." *British Journal of Political Science* 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123423000716>.
6. Coulombe, Maxime. 2023. "Does it matter whether people will know that I did not vote? The role of social norms and visibility." *Electoral Studies* 81: 102579.

Dataset: British Election Study https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data/#.Yap89_HMJmA

February 10: Compulsory Voting

1. Panagopoulos, C. 2008. "The Calculus of Voting in Compulsory Voting Systems." *Political Behavior* 30, 455–467. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9058-9>
2. Córdova, Abby, and Gabriela Rangel. 2017. "Addressing the Gender Gap: The Effect of Compulsory Voting on Women's Electoral Engagement." *Comparative Political Studies* 50(2): 264-290.
3. Volacu, Alexandru. 2020. "[Democracy and Compulsory Voting](#)." *Political Research Quarterly* 73(2): 454-463.
4. Singh, Shane P. 2021. *Beyond Turnout: How Compulsory Voting Shapes Citizens and Political Parties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3.
5. Oprea, Alexandra, Lucy Martin and Geoffrey H. Brennan. 2024. "Moving toward the Median: Compulsory Voting and Political Polarization." *American Political Science Review* 118(4): 1951-1965.
6. Kostelka, Filip, Shane P. Singh and André Blais. 2024. "Is compulsory voting a solution to low and declining turnout: Cross-national evidence since 1945." *Political Science Research and Methods* 12: 76-93.

Dataset: MEDW Bavarian Panel Study 2013-14

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/YAHN5S/QPJ6LF&version=1.0>

February 17: Reading Week. *Enjoy some time off!*

February 24: Models of Vote Choice

1. Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2 and 6.
2. Bartels, Larry M. 2010. "The Study of Electoral Behavior." *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, 239-261. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235476.003.0014>

3. Krämer, Jürgen and Hans Rattinger. 1997. "The proximity and the directional theories of issue voting: Comparative results for the USA and Germany." *European Journal of Political Research* 32: 1-29.
4. Sanders, David, Harold D. Clarke, Marianne C. Stewart, and Paul Whiteley. 2011. "Downs, Stokes and the Dynamics of Electoral Choice." *British Journal of Political Science* 41(2): 287–314.
5. Gidengil, Elisabeth. "Voting Behaviour in Canada: The State of the Discipline." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 4 (2022): 916–38. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.1017/S0008423922000531>
6. Dassonneville, Ruth. 2023. *Voters Under Pressure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 6.

Dataset: Comparative Municipal Election Study

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/HK9GJA>

March 3: The Big Three: Age, Gender, Education

1. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2000) "The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective." *International Political Science Review* 21(4): 441-63. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0192512100214007>
2. Peterson, J. C., Smith, K. B., & Hibbing, J.R. 2020. "Do People Really Become More Conservative as They Age?" *The Journal of Politics* 82(2): 600–611. <https://doi.org/10.1086/706889>
3. Rekker, Roderik. 2022. "Young trendsetters: How young voters fuel electoral volatility." *Electoral Studies* 75: 102425.
4. Willeck, Claire and Tali Mendelberg. 2022. "Education and Political Participation." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 25:89-110.
5. Attewell, David. 2022. "Redistribution attitudes and vote choice across the educational divide." *European Journal of Political Research* 61: 1080-1101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12486>
6. Albaugh, Quinn M., Allison Harell, Peter John Loewen, Daniel Rubenson, and Laura B. Stephenson. 2024. "From gender gap to gender gaps: Bringing Nonbinary people into Political Behavior Research." *Perspectives on Politics* (2023): 1-19.

Dataset: Local Parliament Project <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DACHKP>

Take the survey at: https://loewenlab.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8kVV3zuwA0YpC3b?Q_JFE=qdg

March 10: Retrospective Voting, or Throw the Rascals Out

1. Stiers, Dieter. 2022. "Performance voting, retrospective voting, and economic voting. Conceptual clarity and empirical testing." *Social Science Quarterly*. 103: 399-408. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13125>
2. Nadeau, Richard, Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Éric Bélanger. 2012. "Economics and Elections Revisited." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(5): 551-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012463877>
3. Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and Richard Nadeau. 2011. "Economic voting theory: Testing new dimensions." *Electoral Studies* 30(2): 288-294.
4. Dassonneville, Ruth and Michael S. Lewis-Beck. 2017. "Rules, institutions and the economic vote: clarifying clarity of responsibility." *West European Politics* 40(3): 534-559.
5. De Vries, Catherine E., Sara B. Hobolt and James Tilley. 2018. "Facing up to the facts: What causes economic perceptions?" *Electoral Studies* 51: 115-122.
6. MATTHIEß, T. (2020), Retrospective pledge voting: A comparative study of the electoral consequences of government parties' pledge fulfilment. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59: 774-796. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12377>

Dataset: Democracy Checkup 2023 <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DACEAE>

March 17: Partisanship

1. Johnston, Richard. 2006. "Party Identification: Unmoved Mover or Sum of Preferences?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9(1): 329-351.
2. Huddy, Leonie, Alexa Bankert, and Caitlin Davies. 2018. "Expressive Versus Instrumental Partisanship in Multiparty European Systems." *Political Psychology* 39(S1): 173-199.
3. Clarke, Harold D., Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett. 2019. *Absent Mandate*. Chapter 2.
4. Lee, Amber H-Y., Yphtach Lelkes, Carlee B. Hawkins, and Alexander G. Theodoridis. 2022. "Negative partisanship is not more prevalent than positive partisanship." *Nature Human Behavior* 6: 951–963. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01348-0>
5. West, Emily A. and Shanto Iyengar. 2022. "Partisanship as a Social Identity: Implications for Polarization." *Political Behavior* 44: 807–838. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09637-y>
6. Dassonneville, Ruth, Patrick Fournier and Zeynep Somer-Topcu. 2023. "Partisan attachments in a multidimensional space." *West European Politics* 46(4): 678-704.

Dataset: Canadian Election Study 2019 <https://search1.odesi.ca/#/details?uri=%2Fodesi%2FCES-E-2019-online.xml>

March 24: Campaigns and Campaign Effects

1. Johnston, Richard, André Blais, Henry E. Brady, and Jean Crête. 1992. *Letting the People Decide*. McGill-Queen's University Press. *Read Chapters 1, 4, and 8 only*.
2. Iyengar, Shanto, and Adam F. Simon. 2000. "New perspectives and evidence on political communication and campaign effects." *Annual review of psychology* 51(1): 149-169.
3. Fournier, Patrick, Richard Nadeau, André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte. 2004. "Time-of-voting decision and susceptibility to campaign effects." *Electoral Studies* 23(4): 661-681.
4. Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2007. "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment." *The Journal of Politics* 69(4): 1176-1209.
5. Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. "How Do Campaigns Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18:31-47.
6. Guess, Andrew M., et al. 2023. "How do social media feed algorithms affect attitudes and behavior in an election campaign?" *Science* 381: 398-404. DOI: [10.1126/science.abp9364](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abp9364)

Dataset: 1988 Canadian Election Study <https://search2.odesi.ca/#/details?uri=%2Fodesi%2FCES-E-1988.xml>

March 31: Discussant Presentations