Voting and Elections
Political Science 9535B
University of Western Ontario
Winter 2022

Class Information:
Thursday, 9:30am-12:30pm
SSC 4105
Note: you will be invited by email to join a MSTeams site to make file sharing and communication easier

Instructor Information:
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Office: SSC 4228
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-2:30 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.

Course Format:
This course is designed to occur in person, but if that becomes impossible we will move the discussions online. If you are feeling ill or do not pass the UWO campus screening, please do not come to class. We can arrange for a hybrid option that week.

Required Readings:
There is no textbook for the course. All readings will be available through OWL and/or the library electronically.

Assignments:
Overview
Participating in Class Discussion – 10%
Data Analysis Assignment – 25%
Comparative Election Report – 25%
Research Paper – 40%

Participating in Class Discussion – 10%
Participation will be awarded for participating in class and submitting weekly discussion questions.

Every week students are required to submit 2 discussion questions about the week's readings. These questions are meant to show that the students read the material and should indicate any commentary or questions that the student has about the material for the week. The questions must be submitted through MS Teams by **12 noon on the day of class.** Late submissions will not be accepted. There are 11 weeks when discussion questions are due but only 10 will count for your grade; therefore, you can miss a week's submission without penalty. If a student is unable to complete these assignments for an extended period, they should seek Academic Accommodation (see below).

Data Analysis Assignment – 25%
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 Canadian Election Study will be provided for students to choose from. Students must produce a data analysis report (drawing upon skills developed in 9590) of approximately 3-6 pages that includes an explanation of the issue, an empirical data analysis, and an interpretation of the results.

Due: January 27

Comparative Elections Assignment – 25%
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 analysis conducted in both contexts. The report must include an explanation of the research question, a short literature review that explains the hypotheses/expectations, an empirical data analysis, and an interpretation of the results.

Due: March 3

Research Paper - 40%
Students will write a research paper on a question of their choice. Papers are expected to include original data analysis. This paper (15-25 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. Students must submit their topic with a brief outline (1-2 pages) on March 10. 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.

Due: April 7

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
- No readings

January 13: Studying Elections
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: American National Election Study Cumulative File
  https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/anes_timeseries_cdf_codebook_var_20211118.pdf

January 20: Predicting Elections (Guest: Dr. Matt Lebo)
- Readings TBD
- Dataset:

January 27: Turnout
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: Making Electoral Democracy Work
  https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/RR0NNQ

February 3: Electoral Process: Ballots and Institutions
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: CSES Module 5 https://cses.org/data-download/cses-module-5-2016-2021/

February 10: Models of Vote Choice
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: British Election Study
  https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data/#.Yap89_HMJmA

February 17: "Throw the Rascals Out" (Guest: Dr. Matt Lebo)
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: Durr, Robert H. "What Moves Policy Sentiment?" *American Political Science Review* 87:158-170.

February 22: Reading Week. Enjoy some time off!

March 3: Partisanship
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: Canadian Election Study 2019
  https://search1.odesi.ca/#/details?uri=%2Fodesi%2FCES-E-2019-online.xml

March 10: Candidates and Leaders
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: Local Parliament Project
  https://loewenlab.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8kVV3zuwA0YpC3b?Q_JFE=qdg

March 17: Campaigns and Campaign Effects
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: 1988 Canadian Election Study
  https://search2.odesi.ca/#/details?uri=%2Fodesi%2FCES-E-1988.xml

March 24: Multi-level Governance: Second-Order Elections, Voting Cues and Accountability
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: MEDW Bavarian Panel Study 2013-14
  https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/YAHN5S/QPJ6LF&version=1.0

March 31: Low-Information Elections
- Readings TBD
- Dataset: Comparative Municipal Election Study
  https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/HK9GJA