Partisanship, Polarization and Populism: Old Loyalties and New Challenges

Overview

Some scholars believe that politics without political parties is “unthinkable”. It is true that much of what we understand about political behaviour comes from how people identify with (or against) political parties and how that shapes their views of politics. Increased polarization in party systems around the world has led to interesting consequences for more than just the political realm. Further, in many countries traditional party systems have come under fire from populist impulses that have upended much of what we understand about political competition. Partisanship, polarization and populist parties can be a dangerous triad. In this course, students will undertake a survey of the literature that details how people come to identify with a political party, the political and social consequences of that identification, how political polarization interacts with partisan competition, and how support for populist parties relates to these party attitudes, party system stability, and democracy.

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 please do not come to class. We can arrange for a hybrid option that week.

Assignments

1. Participation – 15%

   This includes attending class, taking part in discussions, and sharing your ideas. Students are expected to be respectful of their peers’ views at all times. Disagreement is natural, but thoughtful consideration and listening is required.

2. CCS (Compare, contrast and synthesize) papers (5 to be submitted; 500 words maximum) – 20%

   Students must submit written commentaries (3 pages or 750 words maximum) on at least 3 of the readings covered in five of weeks 2-11 (10 weeks, choose 5). Students should provide an overview of each reading, compare and contrast the theories/approaches/results, and synthesize the material to develop a position on that week's topic.

   When developing the overview of each reading, students should consider these questions (borrowed and paraphrased from Dr. Shane Singh, University of Georgia):
   - Does the reading develop an original theoretical contribution, or does it apply a theory developed elsewhere to a new case?
   - What are the assumptions of the theory? Are they plausible?
   - Are the hypotheses logical extensions of the theory?
   - What data source(s) are used? Are they appropriate?
   - What are the dependent and independent variable(s)? How are they measured? Do the measures used correspond to the theoretical concepts?
   - What empirical method(s) are used to test the hypotheses? Are there better alternatives?
   - Is the interpretation of results sensible and do the results support the expectations?
   - Are there other observable implications of the theory that could be examined?

   Due: By start of class (9am)
3. **Critical Book Review (5 pages) – 15%**

Students must write a critical review of a scholarly monograph. The review should cover the main research question, methods and findings. You will be asked to provide a 5-minute (maximum) overview of the book for your colleagues during the class session. The monographs that students can choose from for this assignment are ones for which a chapter is already assigned as a reading (asterisks below). If you have another book in mind that corresponds to a weekly topic, check with me first.

Due: Variable. By start of class (9am) the week the book chapter is assigned.

4. **Blog post (3 pages or 750 words maximum) - 10%**

Students will use materials from the course to analyze and comment on a current event (in Canada or elsewhere). These should be written in a style similar to what is posted on The Monkey Cage (https://www.washingtonpost.com/monkey-cage/) or Mischiefs of Faction (https://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/). Some general tips are here: https://amyericasmith.org/guidelines-for-writing-blog-posts/.

Due: October 18 (11:59pm)

5. **Original research paper (15-20 pages) – 40%**

This is the major assignment of the course. Students are expected to develop and empirically test (quantitatively or qualitatively) a theoretically-driven hypothesis related to the general topic of the course. Papers should include an introduction, literature review, discussion of data and methodological choices, presentation of results, and discussion/conclusion. For examples of such structure, students can consult a recent issue of Political Behavior or Electoral Studies or another similar journal.

Students will submit a proposal for their paper on week 9 (November 8) and will verbally present in class to get feedback. Full paper drafts will be presented during the last class (December 6). Feedback from your peers will be valuable as you revise the draft for final submission one week later (December 13).

Due: Proposal – November 8, start of class (9am); Draft – December 6 (9am); Final – December 13 (11:59pm)

**Absences, Accommodations and Late Assignments**

Students are expected to come to class and submit assignments on time. However, illnesses and other events may occur. In those cases, please contact me. If you are too ill to come to campus but can work at home, virtual participation can be arranged. If you cannot complete your work on time, alternative due dates can be arranged. I am willing to work with you to make sure you can complete your coursework but only if you maintain communication. If you simply do not hand in work, with no notice or contact in a reasonable time frame, you will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment. If you miss an alternative deadline without notice, the same consequence will occur.

**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.

**Weekly Schedule and Readings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td><strong>Introduction and Overview of the Course</strong></td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Concept Partisanship

Optional:

### Partisanship in different contexts

Optional:

Optional:

5 Oct 11

### Measurement and Stability


Optional:

6 Oct 18

### Negativity and Partisanship


Optional:

### 7 Oct 25 Polarization

Optional:

### 8 Nov 8 Consequences of Polarization

Optional:

### 9 Nov 15 Populism – Concepts, Theories and Measures
1. Mudde, Cas and Crisóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2018. “Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10 Nov 22 | **Populism and Polarization**  
| 11 Nov 29 | **Populism, Citizens and Democracy**  
| 12 Dec 6 | Paper presentations | CCS Paper #10 |