

University of Rochester Political Science

PSC 586
Theory of Voting and Elections

Prof. Mark Fey
Spring 2023

Syllabus & Reading List

This course covers much of the modern game-theoretic literature on models of voting and elections. It is meant to expose students to the techniques and models used in this line of research. The course covers both complete and incomplete information models and thus students must have completed PSC584 (or its equivalent) prior to taking this course.

After a review of the Hotelling-Black one-dimensional model of elections, the course examines the many extensions of this basic model. Such extensions include probabilistic voting, policy-motivated candidates, and issues of commitment and agenda control in elections. The next set of topics for the course focuses on models of multi-candidate elections, including models of candidate entry and strategic voting by members of the electorate. Finally, the remainder of the course deals with issues of information in elections, including uncertainty on the part of voters and candidates, and problems associated with private information in elections.

There are three main obligations for students taking the course. Reading the required articles and participating in class is the first and most important of the obligations. The second obligation is taking a turn presenting one of the topics from the reading list. Assignments of topics will be worked out at the first class meeting. The last requirement for the course is a final paper. The choice of topic for the final paper is left open. Some possibilities include a detailed survey of one of the topics of the course (perhaps linked to your presentation topic), an extension of a model discussed in class, or a new model.

Schedule: Starting on the next page is the list of topics and the scheduled readings for the course. We will focus in class on the readings in **bold**. Naturally, this schedule may change as the semester unfolds.

Week 1 Introductory Thoughts and Review

Week 2 Policy-Motivated Candidates and Probabilistic Voting

- **Calvert (1985)**; Duggan and Fey (2005); **Hinich (1977)**; Banks and Duggan (2005)

Week 3 Candidate Quality

- Ansolabehere and Snyder (2000); **Groseclose (2001)**; Aragonès and Palfrey (2002); **Aragonès and Xefteris (2012)**

Week 4 Voter Turnout Models

- **Ledyard (1984)**; **Palfrey and Rosenthal (1983)**; **Palfrey and Rosenthal (1985)**; Kalandrakis (2009)

Week 5 Candidate Entry

- **Palfrey (1984)**; Greenberg and Shepsle (1987); Weber (1992); **Osborne (1993)**

Week 6 Citizen Candidates and Voting for Policies

- **Feddersen (1992)**; **Osborne and Slivinski (1996)**; Besley and Coate (1997)

Week 7 Career Concerns and Bad Politicians

- **Caselli and Morelli (2004)**; **Mattozzi and Merlo (2008)**; Messner and Polborn (2004)

Week 8 Strategic Voting and Duverger's Law

- **Palfrey (1989)**; **Myerson and Weber (1993)**; Fey (1997); Feddersen et al. (1990); Cox (1994); **Morelli (2004)**

Week 9 Elections with Multiple Candidates and Alternative Voting Systems

- **Cox (1987)**; **Cox (1990)**; **Dellis (2011)**

Week 10 Private Information, the Swing Voter's Curse, and Jury Theorems

- **Austen-Smith and Banks (1996)**; **Feddersen and Pesendorfer (1996)**; Feddersen and Pesendorfer (1997); Fey and Kim (2002)

Week 11 Pandering

- **Canes-Wrone et al. (2001)**; Ashworth and Shotts (2010); **Kartik et al. (2015)**

Week 12 Cheap Talk in Elections

- **Wärneryd (1994)**; Harrington Jr (1992); **Heidhues and Lagerlöf (2003)**; **Kartik and Van Weelden (2019)**

Week 13 Information Acquisition

- **Martinelli (2006)**; Gerardi and Yariv (2008); **Tyson (2016)**

Week 14 Aggregate Uncertainty

- **Myatt (2007)**; **Acharya and Meiwowitz (2017)**; Myatt 2012

Week 15 Populism

- **Acemoglu et al. (2013)**; Eguia and Giovannoni (2019); **Buisseret and Van Weelden (2020)**

Week 16 Polarization and Information

- **Grosser and Palfrey (2014)**; **Di Lonardo (2017)**; Aragonès and Xefteris (2017)

References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Georgy Egorov, and Konstantin Sonin 2013. "A political theory of populism," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128, 771–805.
- Acharya, Avidit and Adam Meirowitz 2017. "Sincere voting in large elections," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 101, 121–131.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen and James M Snyder 2000. "Valence politics and equilibrium in spatial election models," *Public Choice*, 103, 327–336.
- Aragones, Enriqueta and Thomas R. Palfrey 2002. "Mixed equilibrium in a Downsian model with a favored candidate," *Journal of Economic Theory*, 103, 131–161. (link).
- Aragonès, Enriqueta and Dimitrios Xefteris 2012. "Candidate quality in a Downsian model with a continuous policy space," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 75, 464–480.
- Aragonès, Enriqueta and Dimitrios Xefteris 2017. "Imperfectly informed voters and strategic extremism," *International Economic Review*, 58, 439–471.
- Ashworth, Scott and Kenneth W Shotts 2010. "Does informative media commentary reduce politicians' incentives to pander?," *Journal of Public Economics*, 94, 838–847.
- Austen-Smith, David and Jeffrey S. Banks 1996. "Information Aggregation, Rationality, and the Condorcet Jury Theorem," *American Political Science Review*, 90, 34–45. (JSTOR).
- Banks, Jeffrey S. and John Duggan 2005. "Probabilistic Voting in the Spatial Model of Elections: The Theory of Office-motivated Candidates." In Austen-Smith, David and John Duggan, eds., *Social Choice and Strategic Decisions*, pages 15–56. Berlin: Springer. (link).
- Besley, Timothy and Stephen Coate 1997. "An Economic Model of Representative Democracy," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112, 85–114. (JSTOR).

- Buisseret, Peter and Richard Van Weelden 2020. "Crashing the party? Elites, outsiders, and elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 64, 356–370.
- Calvert, Randall L. 1985. "Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model: Candidate Motivations, Uncertainty, and Convergence," *American Journal of Political Science*, 29, 69–95. (JSTOR).
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Michael C. Herron, and Kenneth W. Shotts 2001. "Leadership and pandering: A theory of executive policymaking," *American Journal of Political Science*, pages 532–550.
- Caselli, Francesco and Massimo Morelli 2004. "Bad politicians," *Journal of public economics*, 88, 759–782.
- Cox, Gary W. 1987. "Electoral Equilibrium under Alternative Voting Institutions," *American Journal of Political Science*, 31, 82–108. (JSTOR).
- Cox, Gary W. 1990. "Centripital and Centrifugal Incentives in Electoral Systems," *American Journal of Political Science*, 34, 903–935. (JSTOR).
- Cox, Gary W. 1994. "Strategic Voting Equilibria Under the Single Non-Transferable Vote," *American Political Science Review*, 88, 608–621. (JSTOR).
- Dellis, Arnaud 2011. "The Two-Party System under Alternative Voting Procedures.
- Di Lonardo, Livio 2017. "Valence uncertainty and the nature of the candidate pool in elections," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 29, 327–350.
- Duggan, John and Mark Fey 2005. "Electoral Competition with Policy-Motivated Candidates," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 51, 490–522. (link).
- Eguia, Jon X and Francesco Giovannoni 2019. "Tactical extremism," *American political science review*, 113, 282–286.
- Feddersen, Timothy J. 1992. "A Voting Model Implying Duverger's Law and Positive Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science*, 36, 938–962. (JSTOR).

- Feddersen, Timothy J. and Wolfgang Pesendorfer 1996. "The Swing Voter's Curse," *American Economic Review*, 86, 408–424. (JSTOR).
- Feddersen, Timothy J. and Wolfgang Pesendorfer 1997. "Voting Behavior and Information Aggregation in Elections With Private Information," *Econometrica*, 65, 1029–1058. (JSTOR).
- Feddersen, Timothy J., Itai Sened, and Stephen G. Wright 1990. "Sophisticated Voting and Candidate Entry Under Plurality Rule," *American Journal of Political Science*, 34, 1005–1016. (JSTOR).
- Fey, Mark 1997. "Stability and Coordination in Duverger's Law: A Formal Model of Pre-Election Polls and Strategic Voting," *American Political Science Review*, 91, 135–147. (JSTOR).
- Fey, Mark and Jaehoon Kim 2002. "A Note on the Swing Voter's Curse," *American Economic Review*, 92, 1264–1268. (JSTOR).
- Gerardi, Dino and Leeat Yariv 2008. "Information acquisition in committees," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 62, 436–459.
- Greenberg, Joseph and Kenneth A. Shepsle 1987. "The Effects of Electoral Rewards in Multiparty Competition with Entry," *American Political Science Review*, 81, 525–537. (JSTOR).
- Groseclose, Timothy J. 2001. "A Model of Candidate Location When One Candidate Has a Valence Advantage," *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 862–886. (JSTOR).
- Grosser, Jens and Thomas R Palfrey 2014. "Candidate entry and political polarization: An antimedial voter theorem," *American Journal of Political Science*, 58, 127–143.
- Harrington Jr, Joseph E 1992. "The revelation of information through the electoral process: An exploratory analysis," *Economics & Politics*, 4, 255–276.
- Heidhues, Paul and Johan Lagerlöf 2003. "Hiding information in electoral competition," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 42, 48–74.
- Hinich, Melvin J. 1977. "Equilibrium in Spatial Voting: The Median Voter Result Is An Artifact," *Journal of Economic Theory*, 16, 208–219.

- Kalandrakis, Tasos 2009. "Robust rational turnout," *Economic Theory*, 41, 317–343.
- Kartik, Navin, Francesco Squintani, and Katrin Tinn 2015. "Information revelation and pandering in elections.
- Kartik, Navin and Richard Van Weelden 2019. "Informative cheap talk in elections," *The Review of Economic Studies*, 86, 755–784.
- Ledyard, John O 1984. "The pure theory of large two-candidate elections," *Public Choice*, 44, 7–41.
- Martinelli, César 2006. "Would rational voters acquire costly information?," *Journal of Economic Theory*, 129, 225–251.
- Mattozzi, Andrea and Antonio Merlo 2008. "Political careers or career politicians?," *Journal of Public Economics*, 92, 597–608.
- Messner, Matthias and Mattias K Polborn 2004. "Paying politicians," *Journal of Public Economics*, 88, 2423–2445.
- Morelli, Massimo 2004. "Party formation and policy outcomes under different electoral systems," *Review of Economic Studies*, 71, 829–853.
- Myatt, David P 2007. "On the theory of strategic voting," *The Review of Economic Studies*, 74, 255–281.
- Myerson, Roger B. and Robert J. Weber 1993. "A Theory of Voting Equilibria," *American Political Science Review*, 87, 102–114. (JSTOR).
- Osborne, Martin J. 1993. "Candidate Positioning and Entry in a Political Competition," *Games and Economic Behavior*, 5, 133–151. (link).
- Osborne, Martin J. and Al Slivinski 1996. "A Model of Political Competition with Citizen-Candidates," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 111, 65–96. (JSTOR).
- Palfrey, Thomas R. 1984. "Spatial Equilibrium with Entry," *Review of Economic Studies*, 51, 139–156. (JSTOR).
- Palfrey, Thomas R. 1989. "A Mathematical Proof of Duverger's Law." In Ordeshook, Peter C., ed., *Models of Strategic Choice in Politics*, pages 69–92. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Palfrey, Thomas R. and Howard Rosenthal 1983. "A Strategic Calculus of Voting," *Public Choice*, 41, 7–53.

Palfrey, Thomas R. and Howard Rosenthal 1985. "Voter Participation and Strategic Uncertainty," *American Political Science Review*, 79, 62–78. (JSTOR).

Tyson, Scott A 2016. "Information acquisition, strategic voting, and improving the quality of democratic choice," *The Journal of Politics*, 78, 1016–1031.

Wärneryd, Karl 1994. "Partisanship as information," *Public Choice*, 80, 371–380.

Weber, Shlomo 1992. "On Hierarchical Spatial Competition," *Review of Economic Studies*, 59, 407–425. (JSTOR).