POLITICAL ECONOMY I
ECONOMICS 3363F-001
Department of Economics
University of Western Ontario

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Lectures: T, 2:30-4:30 and Th, 2:30-3:30, UC 2105
Office Hours: Tu 11:30 -1:30 or by appointment (I think these will have to be via Zoom, so send me an email to set up a specific time.)

Registration

You are responsible for ensuring you are registered in the correct courses. If you are not registered in this course, the Department will not release any of your marks until your registration is corrected. You may check your timetable by using the Login on the Student Services website at https://student.uwo.ca/. If you notice a problem, please contact your home Faculty Academic Counsellor immediately.

Prerequisite: The prerequisites for this course are Economics 2260 or Economics 2150.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an anti-requisite course. Lack of pre-requisites may not be used as a basis for appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed.

If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.

Course Summary: The field of economics known as Political Economy has come to mean ‘the economic analysis of political behavior’, which includes the behavior of political leaders, candidates, parties, voters, bureaucrats, office-holders, donors and even the media. This makes it an immense field, forcing me to make choices in putting together this course. I have organized around four ‘Big Questions’ about politics and behavior which are at present not nearly fully resolved. They are:

1. What motivates people to vote or not and to vote for particular candidates when they do, and why has voter turnout declined in many advanced democracies in the last 40+ years?
2. Do electoral systems influence the number and type of candidates who run for office, the policies enacted/espoused by those candidates, and the voting behavior of citizens?
3. What are the impacts on behavior of candidates, voters and office-holders of alternative means of financing political campaigns?
4. What has been the impact, if any, of changes in the news/information industry on political outcomes?
5. What is meant by corruption in government and what conditions cause it to increase or decrease?
**Learning Outcomes:** Students who successfully complete the course will

- at least three times during the term say to themselves; ‘I hadn’t thought of that’.
- be able to explain to non-specialists a variety of motivations for citizens to vote (or not) as well as explain variations across countries in patterns of voting behavior.
- have a more than superficial understanding of key differences in the way different government structures operate and the influences those differences have on policy and the type and number of candidates running for office.
- understand the differences in the incentives to run for office, the likely electoral outcomes and the influences on voting behavior that are implied by alternative voting systems.
- understand the difference between a claim an argument and evidence, and be able to assess the quality of all three in one’s own and in other people’s writing.

**Textbook:** There is no text for the course. It will be organized around a set of readings listed below in the course outline, and available for download from the course website. We will also at times make use of material from the following websites (which are, in any case, full of interesting information for anyone interested in political behavior).

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance - www.idea.int
Center for Responsive Politics (USA) - www.opensecrets.org/
Elections Canada - www.elections.ca/
Federal Elections Commission (USA) - www.fec.gov/
Transparency International - www.transparency.org

**Evaluation:** As this is an essay course, the University requires that you write a minimum of 2500 words to obtain credit. In this course 90% of what you are evaluated on will be written, so you will in fact write more than that. The work to be evaluated will consist of the following:

1. An in-class essay quiz, which will count for 20% of your term mark. This will be open-book, which means: you can have anything on paper on your desk when you write. However - No electronic devices can be on your desk. There will be no make-up quiz. If you miss this quiz for an approved reason, that extra weight will be transferred to your Term Paper mark. This does not mean the quiz is optional; if you miss it without approval you will get a 0 which will count toward your final mark. This quiz will be given in class on November 17, and will cover material from the course up to that point. You will have two hours to write on a set of essay questions.

2. Three take-home writing assignments.

**Essay Assignment 1:** You will get an article and a set of questions about that article on Thursday, September 17. Your answers to those questions are due at the start of class on Thursday, September 26. This first assignment will count for 10% of your mark.

**Essay Assignment 2:** You will get a set of essay questions about the course material to date on October 13, and your answers will be due on October 20 at the start of class. This will also count for 10% of your mark.
Essay Assignment 3: You will write an exposition of some scholarly paper that is related to the course material. The paper you choose cannot be one of the ‘starred’ papers in the course outline, but in any case, you must get the paper you’ve chosen approved by me or the Assignment will not be accepted. Further details on what I expect in Essay Assignment 3 can be found on the website under Resources/Quiz and Assignment Information. This Essay Assignment is due at the start of class on November 24, and will count for 20% of your mark.

No late assignments will be accepted.

3. A term paper. This will be 15+ typed pages (about 3500 words) not counting a title page or reference page or any tables or graphs. Details regarding what I expect for this are on the website under Resources/Quiz and Assignment Information, and it will count for 30% of your course mark. You must inform me of your topic (and have me approve it) no later than Tuesday, December 1, and it is due at 4:00pm on Wednesday, December 16.

Penalty for a late Term paper will be a 20% reduction in the mark if I do not have it in my hand at the due date, and another 20% for each day beyond that.

Plagiarism - is copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own. This includes the words and ideas of your classmates as well as those you find in written or online material. Any instance of plagiarism in this class will result in my doing everything I can to insure the perpetrator receives the maximum penalty.

4. Class participation. This will count for 10% of your course mark. You will lose 1 percent of this total for each of these possible actions. I) Missing class. I will take attendance every day. II) Going through any week without asking a question. Each student must ask at least one substantive question about the course material every week. This can be done verbally, in class, or you can email me a question at any time. If you do the latter, and the question passes the ‘Al thinks this is substantive’ test, then I will put the question before the class and either I or the class will answer it.

Course Outline and Readings

All of the readings listed below can be found on and downloaded from the course website, or from an indicated website. We will not come close to discussing all of the readings on this list. Many are there simply to give you a place to start looking for papers to use for Assignment 3 and the Term Paper. I will keep you abreast of which papers from each section you need to read as we go.

0. Claims, Arguments, Evidence and Understanding Regression Results

Slivinski, Al, 2020, “Basic Notes on Linear Regression”


I. To Vote or Not to Vote? Theory and Data

A. A first look at data on voting

IDEA data on turnout (http://www.idea.int)
*US Census Bureau, 2009, ‘Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008’

*Elgot, J, 2016, ‘Young remain voters came out in force but were outgunned’, The Guardian, July 19.


B. Why do people vote – or not vote? Theories of voting behavior

*Slivinski, A, 2019, ‘Notes on Voting Theory’.


C. Theory meets data


*Statistics Canada, 2016, ‘Reasons for not voting in the federal election, October 19, 2015’


Fowler, A, 2020, “Partisan intoxication or policy voting?” Quarterly Journal of Political Science, 15:


D. Compulsory voting


*‘Compulsory voting around the world: Executive summary’, 2006, The Electoral Commission, United Kingdom


*“Mike Rowe Shares his Wise Opinion on Voting”, October 12, 2016, www.outdoorhub.com


*A. Barton Hinkle, 2016, ‘No, You Don't Have an Obligation to Vote’, Reason.com


E. Strategic voting


Bol, Damien, 2014, 'Strategic voting under PR: Evidence from the 2010 Swedish General Election’, *electoraldemocracy.com*

P R Abramson, J H Aldrich, A Blais, M Diamond, A Diskin, I H Indridason, D J Lee and R Levine, 2010, “Comparing strategic voting under FPTP and PR,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43: 61-90 [Intro is a good summary of the issues connected with strategic voting]


*‘CUPE Slams Leadnow For Encouraging Canadians To 'Vote Together’*,Posted: 04/13/2015, *Huffington Post.ca*

II. Information and the Media in Politics


*‘Does political advertising work?’, The Economist, Feb 6th 2016

*‘Political advertising: Breaking down the battle of the airwaves’, (Methodological details for above), The Economist, Feb 6th 2016


III. Electoral systems and their impact

A. Definitions and Data


*King, C., 2000, ‘Electoral systems’, Georgetown University

B. Why it (might) matter


*‘Why Proportional Representation: A look at the evidence’, 2015, *Fair Vote Canada*


**IV. Financing Electoral Campaigns**


Matter, U and M Slotwinski, 2016, ‘Precise Control over Legislative Vote Outcomes: A Forensic Approach to Political Economics’ CESIFO WORKING PAPER NO. 6007

*Gerson, J. 2016, ‘Putting too tight of a cap on election spending and donations could do more harm than good’, August 10, The National Post


V. Corruption in Government


*‘Corruption Perceptions Index’, 2015, Transparency International

*‘Corruption Perceptions Index: Technical Methodology Note’, 2015, Transparency International


*‘Procurement Spending – Rigging the Bids’, 2016, The Economist


