Representation in Contemporary Democracies  
(PhD Level)  
Professor Lanny Martin

NB: This is a preliminary syllabus. The readings will likely be updated – especially to consider more recent work on government responsiveness to crises, such as COVID-19. Moreover, the number and timing of course meetings will be adjusted to fit with the academic calendar. The course grade will be a function of the research project and class participation in a manner to be determined before the course begins.

Overview. This is a PhD seminar on the politics of representation in contemporary democracies. We begin the course with a discussion of different forms, and contending models, of political representation. In the remainder of the course, we examine how electoral, legislative, and executive institutions affect the quality of representation, specifically in terms of how well they fulfill two objectives: (1) producing representatives who act in accordance with the preferences and interests of the citizens who elected them, and (2) providing mechanisms for citizens to sanction representatives who fail them.

A critical component of the course is the production of a final paper. The ultimate goal of writing the paper is to produce a publication for you in an academic journal or a chapter in your dissertation. Throughout the process of writing your paper, you will receive feedback from me and your peers, in three waves (marked (**)) on the schedule below: (1) the initial idea formulation and motivation, (2) the theory and research design to evaluate your hypotheses, and (3) the results and conclusions of your study. Peer review is a vital component of the publication enterprise. Most of your experience with peer review in academia will involve both submitting manuscripts to political science journals, in which you will have to deal with journal editors and referees evaluating your work, and serving as a referee reviewing the work of others. You will also often be involved in conference/seminar participation, in which you will present your work and defend it before a possibly hostile audience. Surviving peer review is essential to your future success in academia. To this end, you will learn in this course how to evaluate the research of others in a critical (but constructive) manner and how to respond to criticisms of your own research professionally and effectively.

When writing your papers, and evaluating the work of your peers, you might want to keep in mind the following criteria and questions that can make or break your chances of publication:

- **Importance of the question**: Does the research question address notable concerns, problems, or controversies in the study of democratic politics? Is the topic of possible interest to researchers in other subfields of political science?
- **Theory**: Does the paper make original contributions to the current state of theory on the topic being addressed? Are the assumptions and causal mechanisms elaborated clearly? Are the assumptions plausible? Is the theory internally consistent? Do the hypotheses follow logically from the theory?
- **Data**: Do the measures of the dependent and independent variables adequately correspond to the theoretical concepts discussed earlier in the paper? Are better measures possible? Are more reliable data available to test the hypotheses? Does the paper explain the data and construction of measures in sufficient detail so as to permit replication?
- **Methodology**: Is the testing design used appropriate given the nature of the research question and the data? Are there any relevant methodological issues that have not been considered?
- **Findings**: Have the findings been interpreted correctly? Are the interpretations substantively interesting? Has it been clearly explained how the findings fit with theoretical expectations? Are there other possible explanations of the phenomenon of interest that have not been considered?
- **Organization and style**: Is there a clear “story line” in the paper that is carefully developed from beginning to end? Are there points in the paper where the central message gets lost or side-tracked because of poor organization or writing? Does the writing conform to professional academic standards?

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1These criteria apply most appropriately to the dominant types of substantive work in political science, but it is perfectly acceptable to write papers that are predominantly theoretical or predominantly empirical. We can discuss other common criteria for such papers as you are putting together your ideas.
Schedule.

Week 1  Concepts of Representation
Pitkin (1967), 60–91
Mansbridge (2003)
Rehfeld (2009)
Mansbridge (2011)
Rehfeld (2011)

Week 2  Social Cleavages and Party Representation
Lipset and Rokkan (1967)
Inglehart (1971)
Deegan-Krause (2007)

Week 3  Electoral Systems and Preference Aggregation
Riker (1982)
Downs (1957, 114-41)
Cox (1990)
Powell (2000, Chapters 1-2)

Week 4 (**) Electoral Systems and Constituency Linkages
Carey and Shugart (1995)
Kitschelt (2000)
Crisp et al. (2004)

Week 5  Party Strategy and Competition
Przeworski and Sprague (1986), 1–56, 181–85
Meguid (2005)
Abou-Chadi and Wagner (2019)

Week 6  Descriptive Representation
Mansbridge (1999)
Dovi (2002)
Gay (2002)
Kanthak and Krause (2012)
Chauchard (2014)
Carnes and Lupu (2015)

Week 7  Policy Responsiveness
Miller and Stokes (1963)
Page and Shapiro (1983)
Bartels (1991)
Canes-Wrone, Herron and Shotts (2001)
Lax and Phillips (2009)
Martin and Vanberg (2020)

Week 8 (**) Policy Congruence
Powell (2000), 159–229
Golder and Stramski (2010)

Week 9  Accountability and Institutions
Strøm (2000)
Lupia and McCubbins (2000)
Stokes (2001)

Week 10 (**) Accountability and Economic Performance
Duch and Stevenson (2008)
List of Readings


