DESCRIPTION

A study of campaign and elections, with a focus on the strategies and behavior of special interest groups, parties, and candidates. Emphasis on statistical models and empirical tests of formal models.

TIME AND LOCATION

Seminar: Th 1:15–3:30 in 240-101

PREREQUISITES

Students are expected to be comfortable with calculus, probability, statistics, and game theory.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

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Materials and information related to this course will be posted at:

http://polisci322.stanford.edu

Mailing list: polisci322@lists.stanford.edu. See the course webpage for instructions on how to subscribe.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

• Presentations of weekly readings in seminar.

• Paper (approx 10 pages text). Deadline: Due by 4pm, Fri. March 18 in Department of Political Science, Encina Hall West, Rm 100.

TEXTS

See weekly outline for articles. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of the literature. Indeed the subset of the texts which we will treat in detail will be further specified each week. The goal is that the development and relationship between theory and methods be understood in great depth for some difficult problems, rather than achieving superficial breadth.

NOTE: Readings marked with [WWW] are (or will be) available in pdf form on the course page.
Course outline

1. Introduction and overview (Jan 6)

We will discuss some of the main themes and issues which will arise during this course. Though they are dated and are not highly correlate with the materials that we will focus on, the readings provide useful background/history for the campaign finance literature.


2. Candidate strategies (Jan 13)

Candidates are not forced to enter a race, nor are the forced to accept money from SIGs. Moreover, they have a choice of what policies to espouse. Each of these choices, however, affects a candidates likelihood of election and is chosen in a competitive, non-cooperative fashion. Although we will not cover all candidate decisions (nor their consequences) this week, we start with the most fundamental. In this week we consider the entry and exit decisions of candidates, and the types of candidates who choose to run.

Methodological issues: decision vs game theoretic analysis; discrete choice models; endogenous choices/bivariate probit


3. Special Interest Groups (SIG) (Jan 20)

How would you spend your resources if you wanted to purchase a private or particularistic benefit from a candidate?

Methodological issues: comparative statics; linear probability models, power of hypothesis tests.

4. Party and partisan strategies (Jan 27)

What are the incentives/strategies of parties? How should resources be allocated by a group who would like to affect the chances of their preferred type of candidates being elected?

Methodological issues: formal models of tournaments; parametric vs semi/non-parametric estimation of functions/curves


5. Sorting out Investors and Partisans (Feb 3)

Although investor behavior receives the most attention, little attention has been placed on determining the relative importance of investor and partisan money in elections. Even the incorporation of both motives as possible reasons for giving has been limited.

Methodological Issues: testing functional hypotheses; tobit and non-linear models


6. Campaign dynamics and learning (Feb 10)

The models up to now have mostly assumed a rational expectations equilibrium for the outcome. But there is considerable uncertainty about the outcome for a significant fraction of races, and money does not arrive all at once. This week we consider how information might be revealed/learned, how the flow of money arrives, and how two ideas are related.

Methodological issues: hierarchical models; unobserved heterogeneity

7. **Electoral connection: money and voter behavior (Feb 17)**

*Untangling the strategic behavior of incumbents to reactively (or preemptively) raise money poses serious challenges for estimating the effect of money on election outcomes.*


8. **Congress connection: money and legislative behavior (Feb 24)**


9. **Adaptive behavior (Mar 3)**

*With repeated observations of contributors and candidates, we are able to estimate more subtle relationships, as well as to account for time-invariant factors which were ignored in the cross-sectional analysis.*

Methodological issues: panel studies; cross-over designs; treatment effects


10. **Summary and student presentations (Mar 10)**