Course Overview & Defining the “Ideal Citizen” in the American Democratic System

Carlos Algara

✉ calgara@ucdavis.edu
🌐 https://calgara.github.io

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Welcome to Pol 157!

Course Logistics & Structure

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- Important! If you have no experience prior reading social scientific articles, please read this primer from Dr. Amelia Green from Drexel University: How To Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.
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- Participation Question: What do you think political science entails & how does it differ from civics?

- Importance of *theoretical models* to explain observed political phenomena

- Scientific method to evaluate models:
  - Observables
  - Formulating hypothesis explaining phenomena: $IV \rightarrow DV$
  - Gathering *empirical* & *measurable data* to address hypothesis
  - Testing hypothesis & revisiting model (alternative explanations?)
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Ex: What explains how people vote in American elections?

Spatial Model of Voters & Candidates

- What do we observe?
- What’s the independent and dependent variable in the model?
- How would we test the hypothesis derived from model?
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What’s the independent and dependent variable in the model?
How would we test the hypothesis derived from model?
Causes of the Problem

Human Nature & Differing Opinions

“As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed.”

“The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man... a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views.”

Inadequacy of Removing the Cause

“It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire”

“The inference to which we are brought is, that the CAUSES of faction cannot be removed, and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its EFFECTS.”
Formalization of Madison’s “Problem”

Casual Theory of Conflict in Madison’s Federalist 10

- Where does factional conflict come from?
- Is it possible to limit root cause of human nature?
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A Principal-Agent Model as the Solution

Delegation (The *Republic*) as the Solution

“The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government.”

“A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place . . . the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.”

Motivating Political Participation

“. . . By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”
Beware of Agency Loss Through Unwise Representatives

“...pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose. On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may, by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests, of the people.”
Conceptualizing the “Ideal” Citizen

What sort of qualities does the “ideal” citizen of the Republic have according to Madison?

1 Universal participation in politics
2 Informed citizens with respect to preference and knowledge

Representing Faction (Primarily Federalist 10)

- Human Nature \(\rightarrow_1\) Factions \(\leftrightarrow_2\) Representation
- Where: \(\rightarrow_1\) = Self-interest & \(\leftrightarrow_2\) = Elections
- Election & re-election \(\leftrightarrow_2\) critical to theory: protects against agency loss by faction (voters)
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Focusing on “Self-Interest” in Democratic Politics

Tying Madison & Bernard Berelson’s Conception of the “Fundamental Requirement of Democratic Politics”

- What does Berelson posit as the fundamental role of a “citizen” in democratic politics? What is this question asking?

- Why the focus on “electorate decisions” by Berelson? Is this congruent with the logic set-up by Madison?

Theory & Public Opinion

The theorists tell us how a democratic electorate is supposed to behave and we public opinion researchers claim to know something about how the democratic electorate in this country actually behaves.
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- Prerequisites of “Electorate Decisions”:
  1. Personality Structure
  2. Interest & Participation

- Components & Processes of “Electorate Decisions”:
  1. Information & Knowledge
  2. Political Principle
  3. Accurate Observation
  4. Communication & Discussion

- What’s the outcome of “electorate” decisions according to Berelson?

- What does he mean by the “community interest?”
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Pivoting to how political scientists study public opinion

Key Themes

- The usefulness of surveys in studying American Political Opinion
- Challenges of using surveys & necessity for careful measurement
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State of Survey Research

- Why are surveys useful in conducting quantitative research in the social sciences?

- Why is the survey method limited to “correlation work?” What does this mean and how do survey “panels” and experiments useful in tackling questions of causality?

- Why are researchers concerned about the huge reliance on RDD designs? What was the virtue of these designs in previous generational work?

- How have non-probability inter samples “changed the game” in public opinion research? How are these samples “corrected” to be representative of the general population?
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What are the concerns of survey design in tapping citizen attitudes and preferences?

Key Concern: Measurement reliability and validity

Assumptions of the ideal survey respondent: *The Optimizer*
- Respondents as "optimizers": learning each question carefully
- Searching “memory” useful to answering the question
- Translating summary judgment onto the response alternatives

Implications of Survey Respondent “Ideal Type”
- Design questions as easy as possible to answer
- Discourage “satisficing”
- Do not violate “conversational conventions” without explicit warning
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- Open vs. closed questions
  - *Downside*: open ended questions can lead to stark variation
  - Example?
  - Randomizing questioning order & avoiding priming effects
  - Example: partisanship, vote-choice, presidential, and party approval
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Example of Survey Questions: *Open-Ended*

- **Candidate Likes-Dislikes:** Is there anything in particular about Vice President Mike Pence that might make you want to vote for him?

- **Most Important Problems:** What do you think is the most important problem facing the country?

- **Political Knowledge:** Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspaper, and the like. What job or political offices does Nancy Pelosi hold?
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Feeling thermometers: I’d like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. I’ll read the name of a person and I’d like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. The feeling thermometer can rate people from 0 to 100 degrees. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward the person. Rating the person at the midpoint, the 50 degree mark, means you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don’t recognize, you don’t need to rate that person. Just tell me and we’ll move on to the next one.

1. Donald Trump
2. Mitch McConnell
3. Nancy Pelosi
Example of Survey Questions: Differing Scales

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Example of Survey Questions: Ideological Scales

How would you rate each of the following individuals and groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Liberal</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Somewhat Liberal</th>
<th>Middle of the Road</th>
<th>Somewhat Conservative</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Very Conservative</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Example of Survey Questions: Ideological Scales

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as liberal, conservative, moderate, or what?

- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
- I'm not sure
### Example of Survey Questions: Knowledge Scales

**Which party has a majority of seats in...**

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Key Points

1. Fundamental role of citizens to serve as *fully informed principals* in Madison’s *Theory of the Republic*

2. Madison & Berleson posits that citizens motivated to participate in politics by *common impulse of passion or of interest*
   - Political scientists suggest Madison ignores *costs* to participation, information, & rational incentive to abstain from politics

3. Surveys primary mechanism by which political scientists measure citizen attitudes and preferences

4. Importance of survey design critical & involves trade-offs in construction to “optimize” sincere survey responses

5. Survey construction & careful measurement should inform analysis