

PhD in Political and Social Science

Short course

Party Competition in Western European Democracies

Instructor

Daniela Giannetti

Aim of the course

Party competition is at the heart of representative democracy. Starting from the pivotal book by Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) the literature on the topic has developed into a comprehensive framework known as the spatial theory of voting, which expands and/or modifies the original model in multiple ways. This short course will cover the essential principles of the spatial approach and its key analytical tools.

Requirements and Assessment

The evaluation of the course will be based on active preparation and participation. I expect students to have read the **required** readings for each class, and be ready to engage in a discussion of the relevant topics. Students are also encouraged to read **at least some articles** from the short bibliography related to each class. Students must also answer a couple of questions of their choice from a list as a final report of their studies. This assignment may be completed at home and is due within two weeks at the end of the course.

Grading

The final grade will consist of class participation (50%) and the final report (50%).

Calendar

Week 1

19/5/2025

h. 2-5 pm

The basic model of two-party competition

Required

Laver Michael 1997. *Private desires, political action*, London Sage 1997, chapter 5 and chapter 6 from page 110 to page 126.

Suggested

Downs Anthony 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper 1957.

Selected bibliography

Budge Jan and Denis Farlie 1983 *Explaining and Predicting Elections*. London, Allen and Unwin.

Dolezal M. et al. 2014, How parties compete for votes: A test of saliency theory, *European Journal of Political Research* 53: 57–76.

Grofman, Bernard 1993. *Information, Participation and Choice. An Economic Theory of Democracy in Retrospective*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

Petrocik J.R. (1996) "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*, 40: 3 825-850

Rabinowitz G. and S.E. Macdonald (1989). "A Directional Theory of Issue Voting" *The American Political Science Review*, 83:1, 93-121.

Stokes D. (1992) "Valence Politics", in Kavanagh D. (ed) *Electoral politics*, Oxford Clarendon Press.

Week 2
26/5/2025
h. 2-6 pm

Estimating the policy positions of political actors

Required

Laver Michael (ed) 2001 *Estimating the policy positions of political actors*, London Routledge, chapter 1.

Laver Michael and Benoit Kenneth 2006 *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*, London Routledge chapter 1-3.

Selected bibliography

Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J. and Tanenbaum, E. (eds) (2001) *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments, 1945–1998*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gemenis Kostas (2013). What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data, *Political Studies*, 61:1, 3-23

Laver, Michael and Garry, John (2000) 'Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts', *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (3), 619–34.

Mair P. (2001). Searching for the positions of political actors, in Laver Michael (ed) *Estimating the policy positions of political actors*, London Routledge, chapter 2.

Week 3
9/6/2025
h. 2-5 p.m

Multi-dimensional spatial models of party competition

Required

Laver Michael (1997) *Private desires, political action*, London Sage, chapter 6 from page 126 to page 134.

Selected bibliography

Hobolt, S. B., & Tilley, J. (2016). Fleeing the centre: the rise of challenger parties in the aftermath of the Euro crisis. *West European Politics*, 39:5, 971–991.

Meguid B.M. (2005) Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success, *The American Political Science Review* 99:3 347-359

De Sio L. & T. Weber (2014) Issue Yield: A Model of Party Strategy in Multidimensional Space, *The American Political Science Review*, 108:4 870-885

Pardos Prado S. 2012. Valence beyond consensus: Party competence and policy dispersion from a comparative perspective, *Electoral Studies* 31 342–35