

Marble 2021-2022, Fall Semester

Political Polarization

Supervisor: Dr.Luana Russo

Email: l.russo@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Faculty: FASoS

Department: Politics

Spaces available for this project: 2

Which prior courses should students have taken, which affinities, qualities, or experiences should they have, and which language skills should they possess? If applicable, is there an additional selection procedure for this project?

In this MaRBL project course we examine the role played by polarization of voters and parties. Any previous academic knowledge/course/familiarity in comparative politics is a strong asset. A good grasp of basic statistics and basic data management – i.e. Research Methods I (SKI 1004) and Research Methods II (1005) is also recommended (but not mandatory). Some further educational experience in, or affinity with statistics is helpful, but not strictly mandatory. What is required is a strong interest in political behavior and political psychology.

Project description: Broadly speaking, students signing up for this MaRBL project should be interested in topics such as: voting and elections; partisanship and party identification, political psychology and, above all, political polarization.

This course will include readings that consider both theoretical and empirical work that will be drawn from studies of politics in a variety of different political contexts. The course aims at enabling students to bring theory and evidence to bear in answering the following key issues:

- ♣ What is political polarization, and what are its consequences at societal level?
- ♣ What are the differences in the American and the European contexts?
- ♣ Does party polarization influence voters' polarization?
- ♣ At the voters' level what are the differences between ideological and affective polarization?
- ♣ Is polarization higher during elections?
- ♣ Does polarization influence other fundamental aspects of democracy (trust, participation, satisfaction)?

Although these questions can be answered in a number of different ways, in this course students are encouraged to engage in a quantitative approach.

Tasks and expectations in the project:

What should students expect to be doing in this project, and what are the supervisor's expectations of the students?

Students are expected to play a very active role during the course, and to engage in a topic of their choice. Students are expected to participate to a meeting every other week. There are going to be both group and individual meetings. Students can expect guidance both with the literature and with the methods to employ.

About the department:

What is the departmental context for this project? Would you prefer/expect students to work on location?

Students should only be present at meetings (at FASoS) every other week.

Assessment:

How will students be assessed in this project? At UCM, students will have to present their research plan in the form of a poster (ungraded), and in a presentation at the end (20% of the final grade). The supervisor determines the remaining 80% of the grade based on an assessment that fits the students' responsibilities in the project. This can be a single paper, or a series of alternative assessments.

This course is evaluated by a take home research essay (5,000 words in length) or by applied quantitative data management and testing. The paper is intended to be a *research paper*; that is, students should identify a research question, engage the literature for evidence and arguments to support their research question, collect original data or use an existing data source, and apply an appropriate method to answer the question. The quantitative data management can consist in collect new data and/or harmonizing data sources, and then testing innovative hypotheses.

Link to established and on-going research in the field of the supervisor(s):

MaRBL students are expected to genuinely contribute to on-going research or the research agenda of the supervisor or her/his department. Please briefly indicate the contribution of the student(s) to this end.

Students will engage in the specific field of specialization of the instructor, Dr. Luana Russo. This entails that whilst she will be able to guide their research process, she will also be able to steer students' papers towards the new developments in this field. Luana Russo is an Assistant Professor in Quantitative Methods. Her research interests include comparative politics, electoral and political behavior, political participation, electoral geography, political polarization and quantitative methods. She has received her PhD at *Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna* (Pisa, Italy) and she has been a visiting scholar at Columbia University. Before joining FASoS, Luana has worked at Sciences-Po Paris and Université Lille 2. Her articles have been published in *Quality & Quantity*, *Geojournal*, *French Politics*, *Italian Review of Political Science* and other journals.