

**Wilf Family Department of Politics  
New York University  
Fall 2007**

**Theoretical and Empirical Notions of Representation  
in American Politics (G53.3300)**

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Overview: To what extent do those who run American government follow the will of the people when they make policy? We will carefully examine this question through the lenses of positive political theory and the empirical study of American politics. Our focus will be both substantive (measuring and assessing representation in the U.S.) and methodological (the questions that remain, and how scholars should go about answering them). Of course, in the background will lurk important normative questions about representation as well.

Among the topics we'll cover in this seminar are:

- What is representation, and what aspects of this notion are particularly amenable to study by political scientists?
- What sorts of expectations does positive theory provide us about the relationship between elected officials and their constituents?
- How do we empirically measure this relationship given the data at hand, and what do we know about the representative relationship?
- What role can elections play in strengthening representation?
- How can factors such as information asymmetries, campaign contributions, institutional rules, agenda setting, and interest groups change the representative relationship?
- Under what conditions (if any) are the preferences of elected officials able to become the "independent variable" in the representative relationship—that is, when can leaders persuade their constituents to change their minds about policy?

Prerequisites: You should know some game theory and feel comfortable considering questions about politics in this light. Talk to me if you have any hesitations in this regard.

Requirements: Attendance and active participation in seminar. Periodic presentations and reaction papers on seminar readings. A final research paper that advances your own scholarship on a relevant topic.

Readings: The syllabus is still in development, but we will read selections from the following list of representative texts and articles.

## **Clarifying the Concept**

- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. "Rethinking Representation." *APSR* 97:515-528.
- Rehfeld, Andrew. 2006. "Toward a General Theory of Political Representation." *Journal of Politics* 68:1-21.

## **Theoretical Expectations**

- Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds. 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Roemer, John. 2001. *Political Competition: Theory and Applications*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Persson, Torsten and Guido Tabellini. 2002. *Political Economics: Explaining Economic Policy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Adams, James, Samuel Merrill III, and Bernard Grofman. 2005. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## **Measuring Representation**

- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 57 (March) 45-56.
- Achen, Christopher H. 1978. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (August) 475-510.
- Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." *American Political Science Review* 77 (March) 175-190.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup." *American Political Science Review* 85 (June) 457-474.
- Levitt, Steven D. 1996. "How Do Senators Vote? Disentangling the Role of Party Affiliation, Voter Preferences, and Senator Ideology." *American Economic Review* 86: 425-441.
- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice and Ken Shotts. 2004. "The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 48: 690-706.

Wlezien, Christopher. 2004. "Patterns of Representation: Dynamics of Public Preferences and Policy," *Journal of Politics* 66: 1-24.

Burstein, Paul. 2003. "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda." *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (March): 29-40.

### **Do Elections Matter?**

Mayhew, David. R. 1975. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ansolabehere, Steven, James M. Snyder Jr. and Charles Stewart, III. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *AJPS* 45: 136-159.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David Brady and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *APSR* 96:127-140

Snyder, James M. and Michael M. Ting. 2003. "Roll Calls, Party Labels, and Elections." *Political Analysis* 11:419-444.

### **Who Leads Whom?**

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edwards III, George C. 2003. *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *AJPS* 45:313-329.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Michael Herron, and Ken Shotts. 2001. "Leadership and Pandering: A Theory of Executive Policymaking." *AJPS* 45: 532-550.

Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *AJPS* 39:981-1000.