41026

Representation in Contemporary Democracies

Course Director & Instructor
Professor Lanny Martin
Grafton 3-a1-08
lanny.martin@unibocconi.it
Website

Overview. This PhD seminar examines 5 of the most pressing challenges facing modern representative democracies through the lens of cutting-edge theoretical and empirical research in comparative politics. We will explore how political institutions, citizen behavior, and policy conflicts interact to shape democratic performance in diverse domestic contexts. Topics range from the erosion of checks and balances and the rise of populism, to affective polarization, climate policy backlash, and the politics of demographic change.

Evaluation. The course grade will be awarded based on completion of either a research project or an extensive literature review on an assigned question relating to representation (50%) and class participation (50%). As part of class participation, students will be expected (on a rotating basis) to find 4–5 additional article-length studies relevant to the challenge under investigation and give a 30-minute presentation describing how those studies contribute to social science knowledge on the question.

The Honor Code, Discrimination, and the Academic Environment. Università Bocconi conceives of education as an ongoing process that stretches across a person's entire professional life. The University hopes that the entire Bocconi community will respect the values of fairness and correctness associated with it, values which inspire and guide the conduct of all community members as they pursue common objectives and a shared mission. The Università Bocconi Honor Code is published at http://www.unibocconi.eu/honorcode. All students are encouraged to read it.

I am committed to maintaining an academic environment free from all forms of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during class, please feel free to get in touch with me. In addition, students who feel that they have been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Student Ombudsman at garante.studenti@unibocconi.it.

Course Schedule

Sessions 1–2   Greetings & Introductions

CHALLENGE 1: Fewer votes translate to more power way too often: Pathologies in the link between electoral performance and governing authority

Martin and Vanberg (2025a) [BB]
Beramendi, Boix, Guinjoan and Rogers (2025) [BB]

List of Readings

Alesina, Alberto, Armando Miano and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2023. "Immigration and Redistribution." *Review of Economic Studies* 90(1):1–39.

Altay, Sacha, Emma Hoes and Magdalena Wojcieszak. 2025. "Following News on Social Media Boosts Knowledge, Belief Accuracy, and Trust." *Nature Human Behaviour* . https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-025-02205-6.

Anelli, Massimo, Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig. 2021. "Individual Vulnerability to Industrial Robot Adoption Increases Support for the Radical Right." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(47):1–8.

Aruguete, Ernesto Calvo, Carlos Scartascini and Tiago Ventura. 2021. Trustful Voters, Trustworthy Politicians: A Survey Experiment on the Influence of Social Media in Politics. Technical report. Inter-American Development Bank Group. http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0003389.

Beramendi, Pablo, Carles Boix, Marc Guinjoan and Melissa Rogers. 2025. Distorted Democracies. Working paper. Duke University.

Bertsou, Eri, Daniele Caramani and Jelle Koedam. 2025. "The Ideological Profile of the Technocratic Citizen." *European Journal of Political Research* 64(2):626–48.

Buchmeier, Yosuke and Gabriele Vogt. 2024. "The Aging Democracy: Demographic Effects, Political Legitimacy, and the Quest for Generational Pluralism." *Perspectives on Politics* 22(1):168–80.

Colantone, Italo, Livio Di Lonardo, Yotam Margalit and Marco Percoco. 2024. "The Political Consequences of Green Policies: Evidence from Italy." *American Political Science Review* 118(1):108–26.

Cremaschi, Simone and Piero Stanig. 2025. "Voting and Climate Change: How an Extreme Weather Event Increased Support for a Radical-Right Incumbent in Italy." *Journal of Politics* . https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/jknqb.

Fortunato, David, Randolph T. Stevenson and Greg Vonnahme. 2016. "Context and Political Knowledge: Explaining Cross-National Variation in Partisan Left-Right Knowledge." *Journal of Politics* 78(4):1211–28.

Martin, Lanny W. and Georg Vanberg. 2025*a*. From Ballot Box to Cabinet Table: Electoral Performance and Government Participation in Parliamentary Democracies. Working paper. Bocconi University.

Martin, Lanny W. and Georg Vanberg. 2025*b*. *Voter Sophistication and Coalition Politics: How Ideological Awareness Shapes Government Formation in Multiparty Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mason, Lilliana. 2015. "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1):128–45.

Maxwell, Rahsaan. 2019. "Cosmopolitan Immigration Attitudes in Large European Cities: Contextual or Compositional Effects?" *American Political Science Review* 113(2):456–74.

Riedl, Rachel Beatty, Paul Friesen, Jennifer McCoy and Kenneth Roberts. 2025. "Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance." *World Politics* 77(1, suppl.):151–77.

Rodrik, Dani. 2021. "Why Does Globalization Fuel Populism? Economics, Culture, and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism." *Annual Review of Economics* 13(1):133–70.

Svolik, Milan W. 2023. "Voting Against Autocracy." *World Politics* 75(4):647–91.

van der Veer, Reinout and Gustav Meibauer. 2024. "Technocracy, Populism, and the (De)legitimation of International Organizations." *European Journal of International Relations* 30(4):946–71.

Vigna, Nathalie. 2024. "An Urban–Rural Divide of Political Discontent in Europe? Conflicting Results on Satisfaction with Democracy." *European Political Science Review* 16(4):596–611.

Wagner, Markus. 2024. "Affective Polarization in Europe." *European Political Science Review* 16(3):378–92.