

Syllabus

Political scandals, voters' attitudes and behavior: from successful accountability to inconsequence

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Admin

Tue, 14:00 - 16:00
Universitätsstr. 3b, Room 001

Course Number: 53127
Moodle-Link: [\[Click here.\]](#)
Password: **scandalicious**

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Description

In this seminar we will look at empirical research into the effects of political scandals on voters' attitudes and behavior. The media as well as the public in general have strong beliefs about how scandals by politicians do and should impact politics and are quick to connect electoral performance and personal misconduct. The central question of the seminar is whether there is accountability for politicians' misconduct and what parameters influence it. First, we will discuss relevant theories conceptualizing voter behavior as well as voter psychology that might help us explain the empirical findings. Second, we will look at recent empirical research into the effects of political scandals on voters' attitudes as well as their voting decisions. Third, we will cover common methodological approaches and designs for studying scandal effects. In the end, students will have a good overview of the current state of research into the effects of political scandals and will be able to make reasoned assumptions about the underlying explanations. Moreover, attendees will be able to discuss and critique empirical research designs into voter behavior.

Requirements

1. Active Participation (ICP)

This is essential for the seminar to be beneficial for everyone. Come to class prepared, meaning having read the compulsory papers (at least) and having an idea what you have understood and where you still have questions. Only then our sessions can be productive for all attending.

2. Reading (ICP)

Each week, there is one compulsory paper that every participant is expected to read critically. Make note of what you did not understand, where you do support the authors' argument, approach or logic and where you would like to challenge them. Moreover, there is at least one separate presentation text for each session that you are recommended to skim as well. **At the end of this document you will find some notes on reading academic texts.**

3. Discussant (ICP)

Every participant is expected to prepare as a discussant for the compulsory text for one of our sessions. This means:

- You have carefully read the text,
- prepared a 5 bullet point summary of its argument, methods and findings (to be uploaded after the session) and
- can give a 3-5min introduction of the paper at the beginning of our session,
- connecting it to our seminar topic and what we have discussed so far.

After our first session you can enter your name for a specific date via moodle. **There will be more than one discussant per session, still this task is to be prepared individually.**

4. Presentation (ICP)

Every participant is expected to give a presentation (alone or duo) in one of our sessions. Basis for the presentation is the respective presentation text plus any literature you come across in your own research on the topic. **We will allow a maximum time slot of 30min per presentation and you should limit your presentation itself to 10-15min.**

- Briefly introduce the paper's argument, data, methods and findings and comment them critically.
- Connect the paper to the contents of our seminar and our other sessions up to that point.
- Include a one slide "executive summary" of the paper similar to the one detailed under "Discussant", that does not exceed 5 bullet points.
- For our ensuing discussion, prepare a short piece of non-academic input (e.g. song, picture, newspaper article, TV show segment, YouTube video, etc.) that connects with your text's topic, gives background info or puts it into a broader perspective. Feel free to be creative here and include a question or task that engages your fellow students with the input.

After our first session you can enter your name for a specific date via moodle. **Please check in with me one week in advance after our session to tell me about your plans.**

5. Case study (ICP)

Each participant is expected to write a short case study/research proposal (ca. 10.000 characters without spaces, in English or German) on a political scandal of their choice. The paper should include:

- an introduction on the relevance of your selected case
- background info and details on the circumstances and content of your selected scandal
- a summary of existing research on the case (if applicable)
- a research question in regards to the scandal and voters' attitudes and behavior that remains unanswered
- a literature based explanation of your expectations, assumptions or hypotheses regarding your question
- a proposed design (causal inference strategy) of how these assumptions could be tested through research, underlined by example papers with similar methodological approaches and detailing where the required data/material could be found

Beginning after our first session, everyone can enter their selected scandal into a moodle pad with the goal of avoiding duplicates (first come, first serve). **There are 3 relevant deadlines:**

1. Scandal selection **by end of May 2023.**
2. Workshop session on **July 18:** Have a rough outline of your case study and design ready, so you can get valuable feedback by your peers.
3. Deadline for final paper: **September 17, 2023, 23:59**

Sessions

1. 18.04.2023 Welcome Session

2. 25.04.2023 Relevance, definitions, hypotheses

3. 02.05.2023 Economic voters & retrospective voting

Theoretical approaches for explaining voters' decision making.

Compulsory:

Oppenheimer, J. A. (2008). Rational choice theory. *Encyclopedia of political theory*, 3, 1150-1159.

Presentation:

Healy, A., & Malhotra, N. (2013). Retrospective Voting Reconsidered. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16(1), 285–306.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-212920>

4. 09.05.2023 Motivated reasoning

Explanations from political psychology, why voters' might act contrary to rational expectations.

Compulsory:

Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 755–769.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00214.x>

Presentation:

Lebo, M. J., & Cassino, D. (2007). The Aggregated Consequences of Motivated Reasoning and the Dynamics of Partisan Presidential Approval. *Political Psychology*, 28(6), 719–746. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2007.00601.x>

5. 16.05.2023 Rational choice or motivated reasoning?

Which theory is better equipped to explain voting behavior in light of scandals?

Compulsory:

Fischle, M. (2000). Mass Response to the Lewinsky Scandal: Motivated Reasoning or Bayesian Updating? *Political Psychology*, 21(1), 135–159.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00181>

Presentation:

Redlawsk, D. P., Civettini, A. J. W., & Emmerson, K. M. (2010). The Affective Tipping Point: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever “Get It”? *Political Psychology*, 31(4), 563–593.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2010.00772.x>

6. 23.05.2023 Scandals, trust in government and satisfaction with democracy

Impact of scandals on attitudes like trust in government and satisfaction with democracy.

Compulsory:

Bowler, S., & Karp, J. A. (2004). Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government. *Political Behavior*, 26(3), 271–287.

Presentation I:

Ares, M., & Hernández, E. (2017). The corrosive effect of corruption on trust in politicians: Evidence from a natural experiment. *Research & Politics*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168017714185>

Presentation II:

Kumlin, S., & Esaiasson, P. (2012). Scandal Fatigue? Scandal Elections and Satisfaction with Democracy in Western Europe, 1977-2007. *British Journal of Political Science*, 42(2), 263–282.

Additional:

- Maier, J. (2011). The impact of political scandals on political support: An experimental test of two theories. *International Political Science Review*, 32(3), 283–302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110378056>
- Chanley, V. A., Rudolph, T. J., & Rahn, W. M. (2000). The origins and consequences of public trust in government: a time series analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64(3), 239–256. <https://doi.org/10.1086/317987>

7. 30.05.2023 Effects on voting behavior

Impact of scandals on voting behavior in the US and Europe.

Compulsory:

Basinger, S. J. (2013). Scandals and Congressional Elections in the Post-Watergate Era. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(2), 385–398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912451144>

Presentation I:

Vivyan, N., Wagner, M., & Tarlov, J. (2012). Representative misconduct, voter perceptions and accountability: Evidence from the 2009 House of Commons expenses scandal. *Electoral Studies*, 31(4), 750–763.

Presentation II:

Ecker, A., Glinitzer, K., & Meyer, T. M. (2016). Corruption performance voting and the electoral context. *European Political Science Review*, 8(3), 333–354. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773915000053>

Additional:

- Long, N. (2019). The Impact of Incumbent Scandals on Senate Elections, 1972–2016. *Social Sciences*, 8(4), 114. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8040114>

8. 06.06.2023 Parameters I: Politician's character and gender

How are a politician's perceived character and their gender influencing scandal impacts?

Compulsory:

Funk, C. L. (1996). The impact of scandal on candidate evaluations: An experimental test of the role of candidate traits. *Political Behavior*, 18(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498658>

Presentation I:

Basinger, S. J. (2019). Judging Incumbents' Character: The Impact of Scandal. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 18(3), 216–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2018.1525599>

Presentation II:

Barnes, T. D., Beaulieu, E., & Saxton, G. W. (2020). Sex and corruption: how sexism shapes voters' responses to scandal. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 8(1), 103–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441725>

9. 13.06.2023 Parameters II: Scandal topic and economic circumstances

How do scandal topics differ in their impact and what role do outside circumstances play?

Compulsory:

Kauder, B., & Potrafke, N. (2015). Just hire your spouse! Evidence from a political scandal in Bavaria. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 38, 42–54.

Presentation I:

Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., & Miller, M. G. (2011). Are Financial or Moral Scandals Worse? It Depends. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(4), 749–757. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001247>

Presentation II:

Zechmeister, E. J., & Zizumbo-Colunga, D. (2013). The Varying Political Toll of Concerns About Corruption in Good Versus Bad Economic Times. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(10), 1190–1218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012472468>

Additional:

- Doherty, D., Dowling, C. M., & Miller, M. G. (2014). Does Time Heal All Wounds? Sex Scandals, Tax Evasion, and the Passage of Time. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(02), 357–366. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096514000213>

10. 20.06.2023 Parameters III: Information levels and media coverage

How do differently informed voters vary in their reactions to scandal and how does the intensity of media coverage impact scandals?

Compulsory:

Klašnja, M. (2017). Uninformed Voters and Corrupt Politicians. *American Politics Research*, 45(2), 256–279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X16684574>

Presentation I:

Costas-Pérez, E., Solé-Ollé, A., & Sorribas-Navarro, P. (2012). Corruption scandals, voter information, and accountability. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 28(4), 469–484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2012.05.007>

Presentation II:

Darr, J. P., Kalmoe, N. P., Searles, K., Sui, M., Pingree, R. J., Watson, B. K., Bryanov, K., & Santia, M. (2019). Collision with Collusion: Partisan Reaction to the Trump-Russia Scandal. *Perspectives on Politics*, 17(3), 772–787. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719001075>

11. 27.06.2023 Parameters IV: Partisanship and in-group bias

How do people's partisan affiliations impact their reactions to scandal?

Compulsory:

Anduiza, E., Gallego, A., & Muñoz, J. (2013). Turning a Blind Eye. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(12), 1664–1692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013489081>

Presentation I:

Solaz, H., Vries, C. E. de, & Geus, R. A. de (2019). In-Group Loyalty and the Punishment of Corruption. *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(6), 896–926. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018797951>

Presentation II:

Cortina, J., & Rottinghaus, B. (2017). Does Partisanship Stop at Scandal's Edge? Partisan Resiliency and the Survival of Political Scandal. *American Review of Politics*, 36(1), 2–29. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2374-779X.2017.36.1.2-29>

Additional:

- Wolsky, A. D. (2022). Scandal, Hypocrisy, and Resignation: How Partisanship Shapes Evaluations of Politicians' Transgressions. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 9(1), 74–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2020.36>

12. 04.07.2023 Parameters V: Spillover effects and longevity

How do scandals affect the implicated politicians' parties and colleagues and do the effects last?

Compulsory:

Sikorski, C. von, Heiss, R., & Matthes, J. (2020). How Political Scandals Affect the Electorate. Tracing the Eroding and Spillover Effects of Scandals with a Panel Study. *Political Psychology*, 41(3), 549–568. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12638>

Presentation I:

Lee, F. L. F. (2018). The Spillover Effects of Political Scandals: The Moderating Role of Cynicism and Social Media Communications. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(3), 714–733. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699017723604>

Presentation II:

Praino, R., Stockemer, D., & Moscardelli, V. G. (2013). The Lingering Effect of Scandals in Congressional Elections: Incumbents, Challengers, and Voters. *Social Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 1045–1061. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12046>

Additional:

- Sikorski, C. von, & Herbst, C. (2020). Not practicing what they preached! Exploring negative spillover effects of news about ex-politicians' hypocrisy on party attitudes, voting intentions, and political trust. *Media Psychology*, 23(3), 436–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2019.1604237>
- Vonnahme, B. M. (2014). Surviving Scandal: An Exploration of the Immediate and Lasting Effects of Scandal on Candidate Evaluation. *Social Science Quarterly*, 95(5), 1308–1321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12073>

13. 11.07.2023 Outlook & discussion: Are we living in a post-scandal era?

Compulsory:

Pollack, E., Allern, S., Kantola, A., Ø, & rsten, M. (2018). The New Normal: Scandals as a Standard Feature of Political Life in Nordic Countries. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 3087–3108. <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/69138>

Presentation:

Sikorski, C. von, & Kubin, E. (2021). Are We Living in a Post-scandal Era? High-Choice Media Environments, Political Polarization, and Their Consequences for Political Scandals. In A. Haller, H. Michael, & L. Seeber (Eds.), *Scandology 3* (Vol. 22, pp. 45–57). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85013-5>

14. 18.07.2023 Workshop session

Compulsory:

von Sikorski, C. (2018). The aftermath of political scandals: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 3109–3133.

Additional:

Vries, C. E. de, & Solaz, H. (2017). The Electoral Consequences of Corruption. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20(1), 391–408. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052715-111917>

How to read a paper

This is a checklist that might help you reading a journal article. It's mostly taken Macartan Humphrey's advice verbatim (macartan.github.io).

When reading a scientific paper, I usually follow these steps:

Skim

- First skim over the reading to get a sense of the themes it covers. Focus on the abstract where the authors lay out the goals of their work. Before reading further, actually write down what questions you hope the article will be able to answer. Really do this. You will read very differently when you are on the lookout for answers.

Next, read

Introduction and conclusion

- This is normally enough to get a sense of the big picture. By now you should know what the main claims are going to be. Ask yourself: Are the claims in the text surprising? Do you believe them? Can you think of examples of cases that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? Is the reading answering the questions you hoped it would answer? If not, is it answering more or less interesting questions than you had thought of?

Then

Predict

- Next ask yourself: What types of evidence or arguments would you need to see in order to be convinced of the results? For an empirical paper try to think of the sort of data you might want to get.

Now Read the heart

- Only now read through the whole text, checking as you go through how the arguments used support the claims of the author. You hardly ever really read every single word.
- Instead go straight to the tables and figures, assessing the evidence. Cross check in the main text for interpretation and other issues. Do not rely on the authors interpretation of tables.

References

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