

An Experimental Approach to Voting

This CES lecture discusses selected papers that use an experimental economics approach to understanding key aspects of democracy, including information collection and processing, deliberation, civic engagement, and, especially, voting.

Lectures are held on

Tuesday, January 10, 2023 from 14:30 to 16:00

Wednesday January 11, 2023 from 14:30 to 16:00

Thursday January 12, 2023 from 14:30 to 16:00

Lecture 1 discusses the effectiveness of sanction regimes in the provision of public goods. A special emphasis will be on a potential “dividend of democracy” which results from increased voluntary compliance with obligations to contribute to a public good (e.g., tax payments) when sanctions for non-compliance have been approved in a majority vote rather than externally imposed. The lecture argues that imposing sanction regimes is no guarantee for the efficient provision of public goods, and that civic engagement is needed to keep the state accountable.

Lecture 2 discusses information aggregation through majority voting in common-interest settings. If it succeeds, democracy holds the promise of resulting in smart choices (a kind of “wisdom of the crowds” effect). The lecture argues that pre-vote communication may improve or deteriorate the quality of such democratic choices, that voters may need to collect information at a cost to make informed choices (but may choose to remain “rationally ignorant”), and that “fake news” may undermine the quality of democratic choice, especially when voters are not aware that they fail to sort fact from fiction.

Lecture 3 discusses the malleability of democratic choice by the way issues are presented to voters (framing). Voting behavior may also be shaped by the fact that an individual vote does not matter much for the collective outcome (i.e., an individual vote has “low pivotality”). If voters are not much concerned with the instrumental effect of their vote, alternative motivations such as expressive voting and self-signaling may determine voting. The lecture closes with time for Q&A and a discussion of ideas for further research.

Readings

Lecture 1: Voting and the provision of public goods

Kamei, K., Putterman, L. and Tyran, J.-R. (2019): Civic Engagement as a Second-Order Public Good. [Working paper](#) 19-10 University of Copenhagen.

Markussen, T., Putterman, L. and Tyran, J.-R. (2014): Self-Organization for Collective Action: An Experimental Study of Voting on Sanction Regimes. [Review of Economic Studies](#) 81(1): 301-24.

Markussen, T. and Tyran, J.-R (2022): A Dividend of Democracy in Cooperation Games. In preparation.

Tyran, J.-R. and Feld, L. (2006): Achieving Compliance when Legal Sanctions are Non-Deterrent. [Scandinavian Journal of Economics](#) 108(1): 135-56.

Lecture 2: Voting and the aggregation of information

Kartal, M. and Tyran, J.-R. (2022): Fake News, Overconfidence, and the Quality of Democratic Decision making. [*American Economic Review*](#) 112(10): 3367-97.

Mechtenberg, L. and Tyran, J.-R. (2019): Voter Motivation and the Quality of Democratic Choice. [*Games and Economic Behavior*](#) 116: 241-59.

Morton, R., Piovesan, M. and Tyran, J.-R. (2019): The Dark Side of the Vote: Biased Voters, Social Information, and Information Aggregation through Majority Voting. [*Games and Economic Behavior*](#) 113: 461-81.

Lecture 3: Voting, framing, and self-signaling

Mechtenberg, L., Perino, G, Treich, N., Tyran, J.-R. and Wang, S. (2021): Self-Signaling in Moral Voting [*CEPR DP*](#) 15645.

Sausgruber, R. and Tyran, J.-R. (2011): Are We Taxing Ourselves? How Deliberation and Experience Shape Voting on Taxes. [*Journal of Public Economics*](#) 95: 164-76.

Tyran, J.-R. (2004): Voting when Money and Morals Conflict. An Experimental Test of Expressive Voting. [*Journal of Public Economics*](#) 88(7): 1645-64.

Tyran, J.-R. and Wagner, A. (2018): Experimental Evidence on Expressive Voting. In: Congleton, R., Grofman, B. and Voigt, S. (eds.): [*Oxford Handbook of Public Choice*](#), Vol. 2, Ch. 45: 928-40.