

2013 Senior Thesis Abstracts

How Democratic are the Czars? Evaluating the Appointment of Executive Branch Officials through a Nondelegation Index

Kathryn Betts

Is the appointment and empowerment of U.S. presidential “czars” antidemocratic? Although many authors have argued about the constitutionality of the presidential power of appointment, the existing literature has overlooked problems that violations of the doctrine pose for the maintenance of democratic institutions, namely the nondelegation doctrine and the separation of powers. Existing indices for measuring countries’ achieved levels of democracy neglect to include measures of delegation, even though nondelegation is one of the most important limitations on the executive branch. My analysis of two of the most prevalent democracy indices, the Polity IV Project and Freedom House, reveals that both of these indices fail to account for the degree of executive branch delegation of legislative powers, leaving open a loophole through which countries with antidemocratic institutions may still receive scores of “fully democratic.” I have deployed a Nondelegation Index, which ought to be included among these measures and which scores countries across three separate sub-scores: 1) the legal limitations against delegation; 2) the actual extent to which delegation is practiced; and 3) the extent to which appointees exercise decision-making powers characteristic of the legislative branch of government. The violation of the nondelegation doctrine through the appointment of presidential czars is inherently antidemocratic and must therefore be seriously considered in measures of democracy.

Selfish Genes, Not Selfish Individuals: Explaining the Salience of Race in Determining Support for Welfare

Neel Desai

Why is race the most salient factor in determining support for income redistribution, and why do such considerations overwhelm rational pecuniary interests? More specifically, why does individual support for welfare spending increase as the reciprocity rate of members of same-race individuals increases and vice versa? As income inequality expands globally, the importance of these questions looms ever larger. This thesis proposes that racialized attitudes towards income redistribution are a relic of our evolutionary past. Proceeding from the acceptance of evolution by natural selection as the ultimate cause for human behavior and of kin selection as the primary altruistic mechanism at play in welfare, this thesis proposes that the cognitive mechanism for kin selection is a heuristic process in which race and kin are conflated erroneously.

Understanding Legal Claims Against the Federal Government: Causes and Consequences of Sovereign Immunity

Daniel Guenther

No abstract available.

Campaign Spending Matters: New Approaches to Capture the True Effect of Incumbent Spending

Alex Kaufman

There is clear evidence that when candidates who are challenging House and Senate incumbents spend money campaigning, they significantly increase their percentage of the overall vote, or vote share. However there is no conclusive evidence that campaign spending by incumbents has the same, or even any, significant effect on the incumbent's vote share. Some theories have been offered to explain why incumbent spending might really be ineffective, or as effective, as challenger spending. Many scholars believe that spending *does* matter but most research has been unable to observe the effects. Scholars agree that past models designed to test the effect of incumbent spending have suffered from specification error and endogeneity problems.

I design and test a new model to capture the effect of incumbent spending on vote share by using data from House and Senate elections between 1980 and 1998. I use a 2SLS model to avoid the endogeneity problem that results from a simultaneous relationship of spending and vote share. To estimate incumbent spending I test novel instruments related to constituency's income and participation data. My model is also the first to use district level instruments to estimate spending, the first to test candidate quality controls in a 2SLS regression, and the first to include independent and party coordinated expenditures in spending aggregates. I find evidence that the proposed instruments are methodologically sound and that incumbent spending does affect vote share, almost as much as challenger spending. The effect of including independent and party coordinated expenditures does not significantly affect vote share in the models tested.

Rhetorical Localism: Patterns of Constituent Focus in U.S. Senate Speech

Simon Kwong

What factors affect the amount of attention to local issues in U.S. Senators' floor speeches? I examine rhetorical localism, the level of Senators' focus on constituent concerns through rhetoric, and how it changes in response to factors believed to affect policy representation. I argue that quantitative measures of rhetorical localism will display significant shifts in response to electoral, temporal, and institutional pressures. This study provides a macro-level perspective on trends in representational behavior intensity and compares the use of Senate floor speeches versus press releases. Using floor speeches from 1994 to 2010, I find significant decreases in rhetorical localism for long-serving Senators, as well as fluctuating pattern that alternates between election and non-election years. I then replicate the analysis on Senate press releases from 2005 to 2007 to provide a comparison of the two mediums, discovering that constraints in time, opportunity, and prestige differentiate floor speeches from press releases.

Is Jerusalem the Barriers to Peace in the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Lindsey Reinholdt

Many believe that Jerusalem is the primary barrier to peace. In this thesis I seek to answer whether Jerusalem is the primary barrier to peace or if other barriers exist that prevent a final resolution. Previous negotiations are evaluated to determine whether a viable solution can be found. I argue that a viable solution exists and rather than Jerusalem, the primary barriers to peace are spoilers. The spoilers include Hamas and religious Zionists who view peace as a threat to their interests and goals. The

political structures of both sides and weak leadership have allowed spoilers the influence and power to undermine peace negotiations. Possible methods of spoiler management include appointing an international or external custodian of the peace process, using back-channel negotiations, and using a combination of coercive and conciliatory measures to reduce the capacity of spoilers to harm the peace process.

Blogging Bourgeoisie: Using the State to Improve the Online Public Sphere

Alex Tolkin

Jürgen Habermas developed a normative ideal of how citizens should interact with their states by analyzing the deliberative institutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois public sphere. The institutions that once facilitated deliberation had disintegrated by the time Habermas wrote. However, scholars have argued that the internet could help realize Habermas's ideal today. In this thesis, I argue that current online discourse fails to meet the Habermasian ideal. However, I argue, increased state involvement with online deliberation can enable it to approximate Habermas's ideal. I thus reject the conventional idea that the public sphere must be separate from the state, and claim that the internet enables closer state-public sphere interactions without compromising the independence of the public sphere.