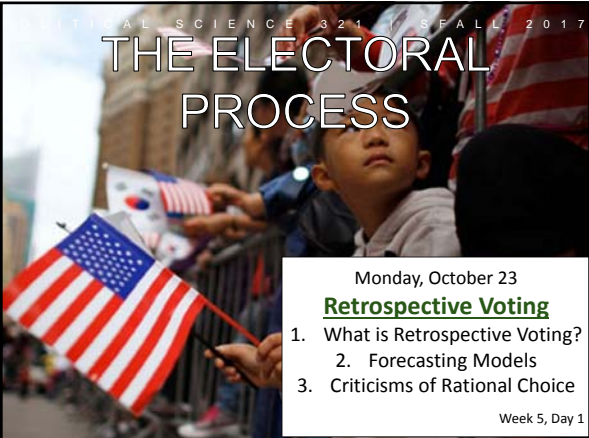


POLITICAL SCIENCE 321 FALL 2017

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS



Monday, October 23

Retrospective Voting

1. What is Retrospective Voting?
2. Forecasting Models
3. Criticisms of Rational Choice

Week 5, Day 1

What is Retrospective Voting? Forecasting Models Criticisms of Rational Choice

Review

Rational Choice Models

Friday, October 20

Outline

1. What is Rational Choice?
2. Spatial Modeling
3. Median Voter Theorem
4. Calculus of Voting

Questions

1. What is the definition of rationality?
2. What is the purpose of spatial modeling? How does it help us understand why people vote?
3. In a presidential election, why is it that two major party candidates converge toward the ideological center during the general?

Why is it irrational to vote?

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What is Retrospective Voting? Forecasting Models Criticisms of Rational Choice

Lecture Question



How do voters look to the past to make a decision about the future?

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What is Retrospective Voting? Forecasting Models Criticisms of Rational Choice

What have you done for me lately?

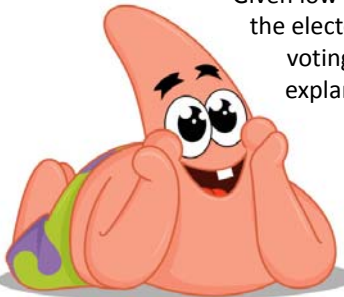
Retrospective voting is the proposition that citizens examine whether the state of the world has improved under a politician's watch, and vote accordingly.

$$E(U^A_{t-1}) - E(U^B_{t-1})$$

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Low-information voters




Given low-information amongst the electorate, retrospective voting is an attractive explanation to voting.

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It's the economy, stupid...



The 1992 presidential election is a great example of how retrospective voting works.

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How do we vote retrospectively?

Economic considerations are one of the biggest factors in retrospective voting.

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Economic feelings

economy. Would you say that as compared to one year ago, the nation's economy is now better, about the same, or worse?

Response	Frequency
Much worse	150
Somewhat worse	250
About the same	420
Somewhat better	300
Much better	100

economy. Would you say that as compared to one year ago, the nation's economy is now better, about the same, or worse?

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Strong predictors of the vote

vote2016. If the 2016 presidential election were between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, who would you vote for?

Response	Hillary Clinton	Donald Trump
Much worse	10	30
Somewhat worse	25	40
About the same	100	65
Somewhat better	70	30
Much better	25	5

economy. What about 12 months from now? Compared to now, do you think the nation's economy will be better, about the same, or worse in 12 months?

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Economic considerations

Sociotropic voting: Voters assess the nation's economic condition in determining how to vote

Pocketbook voting: Voters assess their personal economic situation in determining how to vote

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Forecasting Models

Retrospective voting is so powerful that it has a strong ability to predict election outcomes.

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Forecasting the election

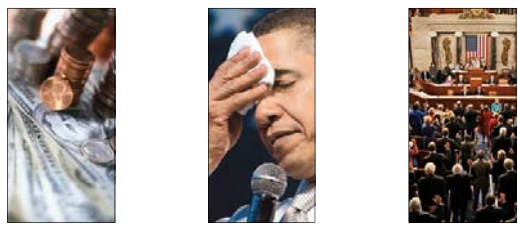
Models that look to the past to predict who wins.

Year	What happens	Political science predicts
2012	Obama wins with 51.1% of the vote	2012 Obama will win with 50.5% of the vote
2008	McCain loses with 46.6% of the vote	2008 McCain will lose with 45.3% of the vote
2004	Bush wins with 51.2% of the vote	2004 Bush will win with 52.6% of the vote

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How does this work?




We use historical indicators for these three retrospective considerations to predict future outcomes.

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Forecasting Models



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Past Elections

Year	Candidates	Incumbent	Winner	Incumbent Vote
1978	Carter/Ford	Republican	Carter	48.9%
1980	Reagan/Carter	Democrat	Reagan	44.7%
1984	Reagan/Mondale	Republican	Reagan	58.9%
1988	Bush/Dukakis	Republican	Bush	53.9%
1992	Bush/Clinton	Republican	Clinton	46.5%
1996	Clinton/Dole	Democrat	Clinton	54.7%
2000	Bush/Gore	Democrat	Bush	50.3%
2004	Bush/Kerry	Republican	Bush	51.2%
2008	Obama/McCain	Republican	Obama	46.3%
2012	Obama/Romney	Democrat	Obama	51.1%

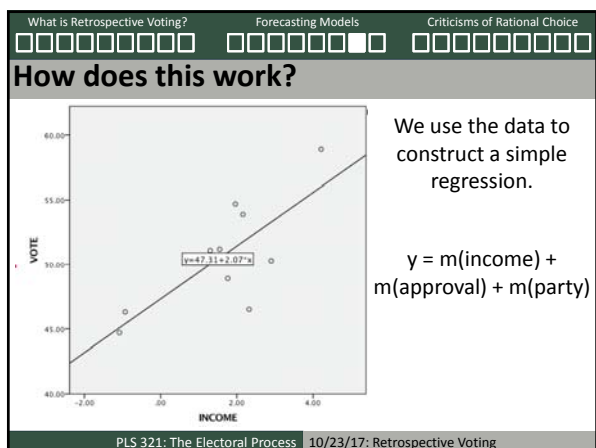
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The Data

Year	Candidates	Incumbent	Winner	Incumbent Vote %	Change in Income	Average Approval %	Congress	Predicted Vote %
1976	Carter/Ford	Republican	Carter	48.9%	1.76	39	181	49.2%
1980	Reagan/Carter	Democrat	Reagan	44.7%	-1.08	21	335	44.3%
1984	Reagan/Mondale	Republican	Reagan	58.9%	4.21	52	220	55.4%
1988	Bush/Dukakis	Republican	Bush	53.9%	2.16	51	222	51.8%
1992	Bush/Clinton	Republican	Clinton	46.5%	2.32	40	211	50.7%
1996	Clinton/Dole	Democrat	Clinton	54.7%	1.96	50	252	51.7%
2000	Bush/Gore	Democrat	Bush	50.3%	2.9	55	256	54.0%
2004	Bush/Kerry	Republican	Bush	51.2%	1.55	60	280	52.6%
2008	Obama/McCain	Republican	Obama	46.3%	-0.93	38	248	45.3%
2012	Obama/Romney	Democrat	Obama	51.1%	1.30	40	244	50.5%
2016	Trump/Clinton	Democrat	Trump	?	1.44	47	207	?


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Who will win?

-4.2 + 55 + 207 = 59.8%



DEMOCRATIC VOTE SHARE

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Forecasting Models


Should we use forecasting models?



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Criticisms of Rational Choice



Voters are sometimes irrational.

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The Assumptions of Rational Choice

1. Voters need to be aware of the issues.
2. Voters need to have a position on those issues.
3. Voters need to be aware of the candidate's position on issues.
4. Voters need to have the ability to identify which candidate agrees most with the voter on the issue.

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Are voters aware of the issues? (1)

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?

Economy/Jobs	49%
Health care	8%
Budget deficit/National debt	5%
Poverty/Homelessness	4%
War/Iraq/Afghanistan	4%
Big government/Bureaucracy	2%
Moral values/issues	2%
Other	21%
Unsure	5%

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Do voters have a position? (2)

Percentage of people who "feel strongly" about issue

Economy/Jobs	35%
Health care	10%
Budget deficit/National debt	20%
Energy/Cost of Gas	4%
War/Iraq/Afghanistan	12%
Immigration	7%

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Do voters recognize issue positions? (3,4)

	Percentage able to place self on scale for the issue	Percentage able to place both candidates on scale	Percentage that correctly placed Kerry as more liberal on issue
Government spending	86	76	53
Defense spending	86	79	65
Jobs & environment	83	66	27
Civil Rights issues	89	70	46
Women's rights	95	77	35
Military intervention	93	88	81

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Do voters have knowledge?

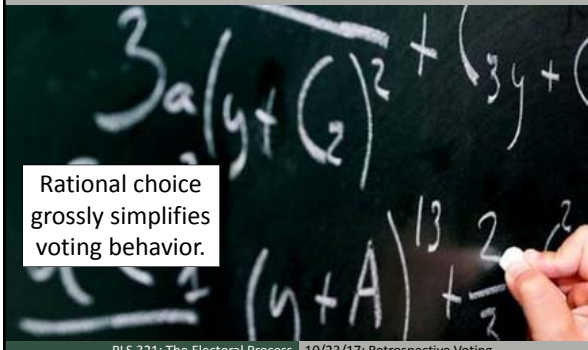


Voters are not necessarily sophisticated or knowledgeable enough to be considered rational.

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Does this process happen in our brain?




Rational choice grossly simplifies voting behavior.

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Where do we go from here?



If we keep coming to the conclusion that voters are unsophisticated, what does this mean for voting behavior?

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