**STV23XX. Public Opinion and Political Behaviour**

**Course leaders: Staffan Kumlin and Peter Egge Langsæther**

**Course content**

What determines the political attitudes and values of modern citizens? Why do they support some parties rather than others in elections? Why do they vote at all – and why don’t they? Have satisfaction with democracy and political trust declined in recent decades? These are core questions in the study of political behaviour. In this course, you will learn about the political behaviour of citizens in Western democracies.

The course is organised around three major themes: values, voting, and trust. The first theme concerns citizens’ belief systems, notably their political attitudes and values: how are these structured and how are they changing over time? The second concerns electoral behaviour: why do people vote (or not) at all, and if they do, how do they choose among the parties? We will consider both deep-seated explanations connected to social background (e.g. class, education, gender) and more short-term explanations (e.g. election campaigns and the performance of the incumbent government). Finally, the course covers both causes and consequences of generalized “political trust” in politicians and democratic institutions. In all three parts, the interplay between citizens and political parties will be emphasised.

**Learning Outcome**

*Knowledge*

Students will become acquainted with key questions, concepts and theories from the subfield of political behaviour. They will learn about the dimensionality of political attitudes and values in Western democracies, the long-term and short-term causes of voting and political participation, and the main approaches to the study of political trust. Students will learn how to apply these theories on relevant cases, improving their understanding of contemporary political phenomena.

*Skills*

Students will improve their analytical skills. They will be able to explain important contemporary events and developments, such as why *Brexit* occurred or why the working class has realigned from social democratic parties to the radical right, or to leave the political arena entirely.

Students will have the opportunity to apply theoretical perspectives to analyse specific cases, or to develop testable hypotheses from theory and to perform simple tests of these through rudimentary analyses, whether qualitative or quantitative. They will learn to critically assess theoretical arguments and empirical tests of these arguments.

**Prerequisites**

**Recommended previous knowledge**

STV1020 – Metode og statistikk or other introductory courses in methodology and statistics.  
STV1300 – Komparativ politikk or other introductory courses in comparative politics.

**Teaching**

Lectures and seminars.

*Compulsory activities*

Write and present term paper.   
Comment on other students’ papers.

**Examination**   
3 hour written exam  
Term paper.

Students must pass the compulsory activities in order to sit the exam.

The term paper must

- have a maximum word limit of 3500 words

- meet the formal requirements for submission of the course paper

One overall grade is given, and both parts of the exam most be completed the same semester.