**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, what explains them, how are they changing? The second theme concerns electoral behaviour: why do people vote (or not) at all, and if they do, how do they choose among the parties? Finally, the course covers generalized “political trust” in democratic institutions and processes. Is political trust on the decline, and if so where and why? What are the broader consequences of political trust for politics and society?

In all three parts, we emphasize the interplay between citizens and political parties: how do these affect and react to each other? In each part, moreover, the course considers a variety of explanatory factors, including deep-seated explanations connected to social background (e.g. class, education, gender) as well as more short-term explanations (e.g. election campaigns, fluctuating economic interests, and the performance of the incumbent government).

**Learning Outcomes**

*Knowledge*

You will:

* be familiar with key questions, concepts and theories in the field of political behaviour.
* be familiar with systematic research results with relevance for key concepts and theories.
* know specific cases and examples with relevance for concepts and theories.
* understand what results and examples reveal about the viability of concepts and theories.

*Skills*

You will:

* be able to apply theoretical perspectives in original analyses of specific cases, contemporary events, and developments.
* be able to develop testable hypotheses and implications from theory.
* critically assess theoretical arguments and empirical tests of these arguments.

*Competence*

You will:

* improve your systematic and critical thinking.
* gain experience in writing academic texts.
* synthesize, evaluate, and apply vast swathes of information.
* engage in academic dialogue and mutual feedback.

**Prerequisites**

**Recommended previous knowledge**

STV1020 – Metode og statistikk or other introductory courses in methodology and statistics.  
STV1300 – Introduction to 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.