

# Syllabus: Class, Voting, and Representation: Applied Quantitative Analysis of Social Change

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Office Hours: Thursday 15:30-16:30  
(please use the Phil App to sign up)

Seminar: [74739-01](#)  
Spring term, 2025  
Class Hours: **Tuesday 14:15-15:45**  
Class Room: Bernoullistrasse 14/16, **02.001**

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## Course Description

This seminar deals with the changing class structure and its implications for how social classes vote or choose not to vote. A special focus will be on the working class, which has changed markedly since the mid-20th century and is now made up of more service sector workers and fewer production workers. This change went along with an increasing share of women and ethnic minority workers, which is why intersecting inequalities of class, race and gender will be central for the course. Over the course of the seminar, we will first deal with fundamental theories of class voting. Second, we will discuss explanations for non-voting, as there has been a trend towards lower turnout among the working class in recent years. Third, a topical block will cover the descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation of the working class by political parties and assess whether these developments can help explain increases in abstention. All blocks will include theoretical and applied empirical analyses. This means that applications of quantitative analyses of survey data in R are integrated throughout the course. Knowledge of quantitative methods (multivariate regressions) and basic knowledge of R/RStudio are required. The geographical focus will be on Western Europe.

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## Information

- MA Seminar for 3 ECTS, Political Science
- Language: English
- Assessment: Active class participation + Response paper, 40% + R homework assignment, 20% + group research project, 40%
- Readings will be made available on ADAM

## Expectations and Grading

- **Active participation and readings:** For each session, students will be expected to complete the required readings, which will be discussed during the sessions. In order to have a fruitful discussion in class, it is therefore a precondition that all participants come prepared. While reading, it may help to think about and take notes on: the question the authors of the article/chapter are addressing, definitions of core concepts, the main argument, the empirical approach and the most important results.
- **Attendance:** Students may not miss more than two sessions. If you have to miss more than two sessions, please reach out via e-mail to explain your absence and discuss compensatory work.
- **Response paper:** Students will write one response paper about one text of their choice from the syllabus. The response paper contains two aspects: A summary and a critical discussion of the text. The response paper should be written as one text (no subsections, but meaningful paragraphs). It is 2-3 pages long, and submitted via Email (magdalena.breyer@unibas.ch) until Monday evening before the respective session. Students will choose the text in the second week of the semester, this also counts as the registration for the course. More guidance on the content can be found at the end of the syllabus.
- **R homework assignment:** Students will complete one homework assignment using R. They will complete some tasks in analyzing survey data. This survey data (from the European Social Survey) and ways to analyze it using R will be introduced in the seminar. Students will complete the homework assignment to deepen this practical application. Submission via ADAM, Deadline: 03 April, 20:00.
- **Group projects:** At the end of the seminar, students will work together in groups (of 2-3 people) and answer a research question of their choice with an empirical analysis. They can draw on readings and survey data from the course to come up with ideas. The projects will be presented in the last session of the seminar (27 May), with each group presenting the question, methods, and results (10 minutes). Students should prepare slides (powerpoint) and submit them via ADAM. Deadline: 26 May, 20:00.

**Breakdown of ECTS (3 ECTS = 90 h)**

| Activity                            | Units | Hours | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Seminar attendance                  | 12    | 1.5   | 18    |
| Preparation (Reading, taking notes) | 12    | 3     | 36    |
| Response paper                      | 1     | 18    | 18    |
| R homework                          | 1     | 6     | 6     |
| Group project                       | 1     | 12    | 12    |
| Total                               |       |       | 90    |

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and ghostwriting are strictly prohibited. In all written work, the authorship of ideas must be clearly marked and indicated using references. The use of generating artificial intelligence must be labeled, but it is permitted. However, I would encourage you to write your response papers without Chat GPT or other generative AI to practice writing skills and creative scientific thinking. Please check the facts generated by AI, as these are often incorrect.

**Inclusive language**

All lecturers and staff at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Basel are committed to promoting gender-sensitive and inclusive language. This applies to our written and oral communication. We therefore invite you to let us know in writing or verbally if you wish to be addressed in a certain way. Should we make mistakes despite our best efforts, we ask for your patience and welcome constructive criticism.

**Course Content****Learning Objectives**

The overall objective of the course is to enable students to evaluate the implications of the changing class structure for patterns of class (non)voting. To achieve this, we will learn to:

1. Contrast the social class structure today compared to the one in the mid-20th century
2. Examine mechanisms for class (non-)voting patterns
3. Analyse existing survey data using R/RStudio
4. Design and implement an empirical analysis of class (non)voting

**Introductory Readings**

- Ares, Macarena. 2020. "Changing Classes, Changing Preferences: How Social Class Mobility Affects Economic Preferences." *West European Politics* 43 (6): 1211–37.
- Evans, Geoffrey, and James Tilley. 2017. *The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

- Savage, Michael, Niall Cunningham, Fiona Devine, Sam Friedman, Daniel Laurison, Lisa Mckenzie, Andrew Miles, Helene Snee, and Paul Wakeling. 2015. *Social Class in the 21st Century: A Pelican Introduction*. Pelican Books. London: Penguin.

## Schedule

### Block I: The concept of social class and changes over time

**Session 01, 18. February 2025:** Introduction and organisation

- Why is class relevant for political behavior and how is this changing over time?
- What is the structure of the course and what are the expectations?

**Session 02, 25. February 2025:** What is social class?

Required readings

- Savage, Michael, et al. 2015. *Social Class in the 21st Century: A Pelican Introduction*. Pelican Books, *Chapter 1: Contesting Class Boundaries*.
- Harrits, Gitte Sommer, and Helene Helboe Pedersen. 2018. "Class Categories and the Subjective Dimension of Class: The Case of Denmark." *The British Journal of Sociology* 69 (1): 67–98.

Optional readings

- Evans, Geoffrey, and James Tilley. 2017. *The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, *Chapter 2: Inequality*.

*Additional*

- *Selection of response paper texts, sign up until Session 3*

**Session 03, 04. March 2025:** Today's class structure and the role of gender and migration

Required readings

- Oesch, Daniel. 2006. *Redrawing the Class Map: Stratification and Institutions in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, *Introduction and Chapters 2: Three Labour Market Trends and their Impact on the Employment Structure AND 3: Women, the Manual/Non-Manual Divide and the Working Class*.

Optional readings

- Savage, Mike, Fiona Devine, Niall Cunningham, Mark Taylor, Yaojun Li, Johs Hjellbrekke, Brigitte Le Roux, Sam Friedman, and Andrew Miles. 2013. "A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment." *Sociology* 47 (2): 219–50.

*Additional*

- *Application: Introduction to survey data analysis using R*

**Fasnacht, 11. March 2025:** *no seminar*

## **Block II: Class and (non)voting**

**Session 04, 18. March 2025:** Class voting over time

Required readings

- Przeworski, Adam, and John D. Sprague. 1986. *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, *Prologue*.
- Rennwald, Line. 2014. "Class (Non)Voting in Switzerland 1971-2011: Ruptures and Continuities in a Changing Political Landscape." *Swiss Political Science Review* 20 (4): 550–72.

Optional readings

- Hutchings, Vincent L., and Hakeem J. Jefferson. 2017. "The Sociological and Social-Psychological Approaches." In *The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*. Routledge.
- Oesch, Daniel; Rennwald, Line (2018): "Electoral Competition in Europe's New Tripolar Political Space. Class Voting for the Left, Centre-Right and Radical Right". *European Journal of Political Research* 57(4): 783–807.
- Ray, Ari A, and Jonas G Pontusson. 2025. "Trade Unions and the Partisan Preferences of Their Members: Sweden 1986–2021." *Socio-Economic Review* 23 (1): 51–73.

**Session 05, 25. March 2025:** Social mobility and mechanisms of class voting

Required readings

- Ares, Macarena. 2020. "Changing Classes, Changing Preferences: How Social Class Mobility Affects Economic Preferences." *West European Politics* 43 (6): 1211–37.

Optional readings

- Ares, Macarena, and Mathilde M. van Ditmars. 2024. "A Life Course Approach to Political Preference Formation across Social Classes." *West European Politics* 0 (0): 1–26.
- Friedman, Sam, Dave O'Brien, and Ian McDonald. 2021. "Deflecting Privilege: Class Identity and the Intergenerational Self." *Sociology* 55 (4): 716–33.
- Kurer, Thomas, and Briitta van Staalduinen. 2022. "Disappointed Expectations: Downward Mobility and Electoral Change." *American Political Science Review* 116 (4): 1340–56.

**No seminar, 01. April 2025:** [due to work trip](#)

**Deadline R homework:** 03 April, 20:00 via ADAM

**Session 06, 08. April 2025:** Working class voters: From the Social Democrats to the Radical Right?

Required readings

- Abou-Chadi, Tarik, Reto Mitteregger, and Cas Mudde. 2021. *Left behind by the Working Class? Social Democracy's Electoral Crisis and the Rise of the Radical Right*. Empirical Social Research. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Optional readings

- Ares, Macarena. 2022. "Issue Politicization and Social Class: How the Electoral Supply Activates Class Divides in Political Preferences." *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (2): 503–23.
- Gidron, Noam, and Peter A. Hall. 2017. "The Politics of Social Status: Economic and Cultural Roots of the Populist Right." *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 Suppl 1 (January): 57–84.
- Rennwald, Line, and Geoffrey Evans. 2014. "When Supply Creates Demand: Social Democratic Party Strategies and the Evolution of Class Voting." *West European Politics* 37 (5): 1108–35.

**Session 07, 15. April 2025:** Class non-voting

Required readings

- Evans, Geoffrey, and James Tilley. 2017. *The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, *Chapter 8: Long Live Class Politics*.
- Rosenstone, Steven J., and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Longman. *Chapter 2: The Political Logic of Political Participation*.

Optional readings

- Gallego, Aina. 2009. "Where Else Does Turnout Decline Come from? Education, Age, Generation and Period Effects in Three European Countries." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 32 (1): 23–44.
- Schäfer, Armin, and Hanna Schwander. 2019. "'Don't Play If You Can't Win': Does Economic Inequality Undermine Political Equality?" *European Political Science Review* 11 (3): 395–413.
- Valenzuela, Ali A., and Melissa R. Michelson. 2016. "Turnout, Status, and Identity: Mobilizing Latinos to Vote with Group Appeals." *American Political Science Review* 110 (4): 615–30.

### Block III: The representation of the working class

**Session 08, 22. April 2025:** Dimensions of representation and substantive representation of the working class

Required reading

- Elsässer, Lea, Svenja Hense, and Armin Schäfer. 2021. "Not Just Money: Unequal Responsiveness in Egalitarian Democracies." *Journal of European Public Policy* 28 (12): 1890–1908.

Optional readings

- Traber, Denise, Miriam Hänni, Nathalie Giger, and Christian Breunig. 2022. "Social Status, Political Priorities and Unequal Representation." *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (2): 351–73.
- Weisstanner, David, and Carsten Jensen. 2024. "Political Mobilisation and Socioeconomic Inequality in Policy Congruence." *European Journal of Political Research* 63 (4): 1540–56.

**Session 09, 29. April 2025:** Descriptive representation of the working class

Required readings

- Elsässer, Lea. 2024. "Careerism and Working-Class Decline: The Role of Party Selectorates in Explaining Trends in Descriptive (Mis-)Representation." *Electoral Studies* 89 (January).
- Carnes, Nicholas, and Noam Lupu. 2016. "Do Voters Dislike Working-Class Candidates?: Voter Biases and the Descriptive Underrepresentation of the Working Class." *American Political Science Review* 110 (4): 832–44.

Optional readings

- Barnes, Tiffany D., Victoria D. Beall, and Mirya R. Holman. 2021. "Pink-collar Representation and Budgetary Outcomes in US States." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 46 (1): 119–54.
- Carnes, Nicholas. 2015. "Does the Descriptive Representation of the Working Class 'Crowd out' Women and Minorities (and Vice Versa)? Evidence from the Local Elections in America Project." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3 (2): 350–65.
- Elsässer, Lea, and Armin Schäfer. 2022. "(N)One of Us?: The Case for Descriptive Representation of the Contemporary Working Class." *West European Politics* 45 (6): 1361–84.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 2015. "Should Workers Represent Workers?" *Swiss Political Science Review* 21 (2): 261–70.

**Session 10, 06. May 2025:** Symbolic representation and group appeals

Required readings

- Thau, Mads. 2021. "The Social Divisions of Politics: How Parties' Group-Based Appeals Influence Social Group Differences in Vote Choice." *The Journal of Politics* 83 (2): 675–88.

Optional readings

- Robison, Joshua, Rune Stubager, Mads Thau, and James Tilley. 2021. "Does Class-Based Campaigning Work?: How Working Class Appeals Attract and Polarize Voters." *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (5): 723–52.
- Stubager, Rune, and Mads Thau. 2025. "How Do Voters Interpret Social Class Appeals?: Lessons from Open-Ended Responses." *West European Politics* 48 (2): 323–51.

**Session 11, 13. May 2025:** Compulsory voting as a solution?

Required readings

- Bechtel, Michael M., Dominik Hangartner, and Lukas Schmid. 2016. "Does Compulsory Voting Increase Support for Leftist Policy?" *American Journal of Political Science* 60 (3): 752–67.

Optional readings

- Dassonneville, Ruth, Fernando Feitosa, Marc Hooghe, Richard R. Lau, and Dieter Stiers. 2019. "Compulsory Voting Rules, Reluctant Voters and Ideological Proximity Voting." *Political Behavior* 41 (1): 209–30.
- Guntermann, Eric, Ruth Dassonneville, and Peter Miller. 2020. "Are Inequalities in Representation Lower under Compulsory Voting?" *Policy Studies* 41 (2–3): 151–71.

*Additional*

- *Start of group projects*

**Block IV: Own projects and conclusion**

**Session 12, 20. May 2025:** [No meeting, time for group research projects](#)

**Session 13, 27. May 2025:** Presentation of projects and final discussion

Required readings

- Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Markus Wagner. 2019. "The Electoral Appeal of Party Strategies in Postindustrial Societies: When Can the Mainstream Left Succeed?" *The Journal of Politics* 81 (4): 1405–19.

Optional readings

- Savage, Michael, et al. 2015. *Social Class in the 21st Century: A Pelican Introduction*. Pelican Books, *Chapter 11: Class consciousness and the New Snobbery*.



## Response paper

The response paper is about one text on the syllabus and contains two aspects: A summary and a critical discussion of the text. The critical discussion should be the main focus, the summary can be short. The response paper should be written as one text (no subsections, but meaningful paragraphs). It is 2-3 pages long, and submitted via email (magdalena.breyer@unibas.ch) until Monday evening before the respective session. Students will choose the text in the second week of the semester, this also counts as the registration for the course.

Listed below are a number of guiding questions that might be useful when writing the paper. These are suggestions, not all aspects have to be included, and depending on the text, not all questions will be relevant. It is encouraged to cite and refer to other relevant texts (from the syllabus or beyond), where these comparisons are helpful (i.e. to compare theories, methods and to discuss which approach is more or less convincing).

### Summary

- What is the research questions? What is the author(s)' motivation to study this question?
- What is the theoretical argument, and which hypotheses do the authors want to test?
- Please briefly summarize the empirical strategy. What data are used? Which methods?
- What are the main findings? Are they in line with the authors' hypotheses? If the findings contradict existing research, how do the authors interpret this?
- What have we learned?

### Critical discussion

- Please start with some general comments about the article: Did you like reading it? Why (not)?
- Do you find the theoretical argument convincing? Was the discussion of the hypothesis detailed enough? If not, what is missing in your opinion?
- How do you evaluate the empirical approach? Was the research design appropriate to study the research question? If applicable: How do you evaluate the methodological approach?
- How plausible are the results? Do you agree with the authors' discussion of the results? Do you agree with their conclusions? Does the study answer the research question? What open questions remain? Would you say we could draw different conclusions than those discussed by the authors?
- General/Optional: What was unclear or too complicated? What should be explained again during our meeting?