Agenda-setting in Comparative Perspective

Title Course
Bachelor Thesis Project: Agenda-setting in Comparative Perspective

Course Catalogue Number
73230221LY : https://studiegids.uva.nl/xmlpages/page/2023-2024/zoek-vak/vak/108412

Credits
12

Entry requirements
Completed the first year and at least 42 ECTS from the second year of the bachelor's degree programme in Political Science, including the Research methods course.

Instruction language
English

Time Period(s)
2023-2024, Semester 2, block 5 and 6

Location
Wednesday 9u-11u, REC C3.06
Fridays 13u-15u, REC C3.05
Additional or fewer meetings may be planned independent of the ones scheduled on rooster.uva.nl. See Canvas page and below under programme.

Lecturer(s)
Joost Berkhout, office REC B10.10, on appointment: Zoom room for individual meetings: https://uva-live.zoom.us/my/**joostberkhout**

For contact information, see: http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/organisatie/medewerkers/content/b/e/d.j.berkhout/d.j.berkhout.html

See Canvas page for Office Hours

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students:

- have acquired empirical knowledge on contemporary changes in political agendas in several countries in the world and on a number of specific issues;
- are familiar with classic and recent theories of agenda-setting and politicization, and,
- have strengthened their research design and methodological knowledge.

 The course is designed to help students develop the following skills:

- Formulating and defining of a research question and independently setting up of a research design including a clear research strategy and time line.
- Clear, systematic and accountable reporting of the research and the research results, both during presentations and in written work
- Developing the learning skills that allow students to continue to study beyond the Bachelor's level in a manner that is largely self-directed and autonomous, and including through academic interaction with other members in the group

Course Content
One of the classic, perennial concerns in political science focusses on the circumstances under which issues make it onto the political agenda. Some examples may illustrate this. Between the mid-Nineties and recently, each year around half a million migrants found residence in Spain, multiplying the foreign-born population almost six-fold, outcompeting Spanish workers on the labour market and potentially increasing the likelihood of violent Muslim extremism. Nonetheless, migration has hardly become a political issue in Spain, while it has been deeply politicized in many other countries. President Trump has politicized issues ranging from trade, gender to infrastructure. However, on only a limited number of these issues have we seen actual consequential government decision-making. Students in this research project will be provided the opportunity to assess why some economic or social developments attract political attention, contestation and policy initiatives while others are hardly politicized, nor seriously addressed in public policy.

This research project encourages students to focus on a particular (set of) political issue(s) and examine it in a comparative manner (over time, between countries, or between sub-topics of an issue). The selection of issues must be theoretically justified in relation to a broader idea of contemporary changes political agendas in various countries in the world. These may be issues with an economic component such as banking regulation, unemployment or trade, but may also be issues that are sometimes labelled 'identity' issues such as migration, European integration or various forms of nationalism. Students will familiarize themselves with classic political science literature on agenda-formation and contemporary studies on the politicization or depoliticisation of particular issues in recent party politics.

Teaching methods/learning formats
Seminar meetings and (online) individual student meetings.

In the first part of the course, seminar meetings are designed to provide the necessary background for working on the thesis. Each seminar will contain both a substantive discussion of specific topics and issues, and an element that focuses on relevant social science research methods. While studying and discussing this background, students should move towards identifying the specific topic of their thesis in consultation with the instructor. At this stage, seminar meetings will be interactive but led by the instructor and incorporating lecture elements, and group discussion and exercises. Issues of research design and research management will be illustrated on the base of your work in progress.

The second part of the course will largely be devoted to exchanging the information and experiences gained from work on the theses as well as to guidance in the process of research and writing. Seminar meetings will then take the form of short presentations by the participants, feedback, and discussion. Participants will additionally meet one-on-one with the instructor to discuss the more specific aspects of their individual thesis work.

Course Evaluations & Adjustments of the Course
Over the past years, the course has been adjusted to account for changing circumstances (in 2020 from a MA theses project to a BA one and in 2021 from an online format to an on-site). Some changes to the readings have been made to better align with student preferences. Only minor changes were made in 2022 and 2023.

Manner & Form of Assessment and Assessment Requirements & Criteria
80 percent: BA thesis graded according to the criteria and procedure stipulated in the BA thesis manual (see assessment form on the last page of that Manual).

The final deadline for handing in your thesis is the last Monday of block 6 at 12h: 24 June 2024. In case of no pass (grade <5,5) of a 'gradable version': the reparation deadline is set individually but no later than four weeks after receiving the assessment form.

20 percent: The RP participation grade is based on (1) the proposal grade (50 percent) and (2) actual participation in the meetings (coming well-prepared, quality of assignments (no grades for individual assignments but feedback is provided), presentation of proposal, attendance) (50 percent). The use of the reparation procedure leads to a deduction in this part of the grade.

Class attendance and participation is a requirement for passing the course (see TER B5.2). Important part of the learning objectives are assessed during the plenary meetings (presentation of proposal/results, peer-feedback, and several other in-class practical exercises). A single meeting absence need not be justified. Let me know in case you expect to miss two meetings. In case you miss more than two meetings due to circumstances, please be in touch with the study advisor as soon as possible about the reasons of the absence.

Inspection of exams/assignments, feedback
Feedback:

- Peer-feedback during the plenary sessions

- Individual written comments on the assignments made as part of the participation in the plenary sessions.
- Individual written and verbal feedback on the BA-thesis-proposal
- Individual written and verbal feedback on the draft-version of the thesis at least a week prior to the final deadline

Assessment:

- On thesis: Joint assessment by the supervisor and second reader of the final version of the BA thesis by means of the assessment form, verbal specification by the supervisor during (online) office hours or on appointment.
- In case of reparation: in the assessment form there is a specification of what is needed in order to pass. Use of reparation procedure will negatively affect process part of the grade. There is (a single) individual verbal specification but no additional individual supervision.

Rules regarding Fraud and Plagiarism
Plagiarism rules of the University apply (See: http://student.uva.nl/en/content/az/plagiarism-and-fraud/plagiarism-and-fraud.html). Please note that certain assignments include revising of your own previous work: this is not considered self-plagiarism. Also note that referencing rules also apply to preparatory notes and assignments. The use of ChatGPT or other AI tools to generate (parts of) assignment texts or the thesis is considered to be fraud.

Please familiarise yourself with the Ethical Guidelines for Student Research:
https://gsss.uva.nl/binaries/content/assets/subsites/graduate-school-of-social-sciences/organisation/gsss-ethical-guidelines-for-students-version-2021-22.pdf

Specification workload
50 percent in block 2, full time in block 3 (but note deadline).

Literature/materials
See references below. Available via the library or via the links provided below or on Canvas.

Suggested literature on research methodology, research design and thesis writing:
- Blaikie, N. (2000). *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (9 ed.): Polity
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods.* Oxford university press.
- Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation.* Macmillan International Higher Education.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research.* Princeton university press.
- Lipson, Charles. 2018. *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from your First Ideas to your Finished Paper.* University of Chicago Press. (Also see similar suggestions online such as in Folia)
- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science.* Macmillan International Higher Education. Introduction , see http://www.dimiter.eu/Publications_files/RD.html for information and purchasing options. (useful textbook on research design, see below for relevant chapters)

Date Final Grade
Within around 10 working days after the final deadline students will receive the assessment form by email and have the opportunity to meet the supervisor for a specification of the remarks on the form.
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Programme

Week		Wednesday	Friday
Block 5	1 (14)	Introduction	Agenda-setting: theoretical roots
	2 (15)	In-class: discuss *preliminary research question* in sub-groups Executive-bureaucratic locus of political agendas and the theoretical differentiation of the field	The politicisation of issues in politics Political parties as agenda-setters
	3 (16)	Draft research proposal: research question and preliminary literature discussion Setting the political agenda via lobbying and advocacy / Concepts and operationalization	Protest and media agenda / Data / case selection
	4 (17)	Data / case selection (Public opinion)	Presentations of research proposals
		Week 18: May break Deadline full research proposal: Monday May 6	
	5 (19)	Presentations of research proposals	Day after Accession day (no class)
	6 (20)	Writing / Individual meetings scheduled via Canvas	
	7 (21)		
	8 (22)	Presentations of (or peer-feedback format) preliminary findings (provisional)	
Block 6	1 (23)	Writing / Individual meetings scheduled via Canvas	
	2 (24)	**Draft version due Monday at 12h:** In-class peer-feedback presentations of draft	In-class peer-feedback presentations
	3 (25)	Revise based on feedback / finalise thesis	
	4 (26)	**Final version deadline: MONDAY 12h**	

Class participation assignments:

Block 5 Week 3: <u>Draft research proposal</u>: Provide a clear statement of the question motivating your research (recommended: start your question with 'why'). Justify the question: Why should we be interested theoretically, normatively or substantively? Identify the literatures bearing on answering the question you have posed. *Preliminary* summarize and critique each in terms of method and major findings, and identify why there is a gap in the literature necessitating your research. Structure the literature review as plausible answers to your research question. Hand-in around 1500 words prior to Wednesday meeting.

Block 5 week 4 Friday and week 5 : <u>Full research proposal</u>: The concrete research proposal includes all components of the model table of contents (see last page of this document), except for the analysis and conclusion. You present this in the week before (or after) and use the remarks to revise what you already have. Deadline Monday 12h May 6.

Block 6, week 2: <u>Peer-feedback presentations:</u> Use slides and briefly discuss each component of the model table of contents (see last page of this document). Subsequently identify points of improvement in terms of the grading form (see last page of [BA Thesis Manual](#))

Week 1 meeting 1: Introduction

The readings of this project are selected in order to hand students the conceptual tools needed to formulate a research question. The readings therefore tend to be relatively abstract or have an overview character. Students will themselves need to select, in the first weeks of this course, additional readings on the topic of their interest.

<u>Prepare:</u>

- Read this syllabus
- Read the general [BA Thesis Manual;](#) especially make sure to read the grading form on the last page
- Have a look at one or more BA theses. Either the examples provided on the Canvas page or by browsing the online UvA Thesis Database (e.g. with the search term 'politicologie' and filtered on BA: https://scripties.uba.uva.nl/search?keyword=politicologie;f1-graad=bachelor;startDoc=11) and have a look at a couple of Political Science BA or MA theses (e.g. [this thesis](#) was written in a similar MA level project some time ago). Particularly focus on the Research Question; what do you think about the clarity and the relevance of the question?

Week 1 meeting 2: Theoretical roots: agenda-control as the 'second face' of power

Why do some issues receive attention by policy-makers whereas others never appear on relevant parts of the government agenda? In this introductory meeting we discuss the origin of the central question of our project. We assess the conceptual discussion among political scientists in the Sixties and Seventies about the meaning of power. Central in this discussion is the differentiation between, on the one hand, the 'behavioral' or 'decision-making' power of particular actors and, on the other hand, the power to identify which conflicts in society merit resolution by means of public policy. The latter is the central explanadum in our project and the course is structured by the weekly assessment of distinct actor-specific explanations.

We first assess Schattschneider's argument (1957, 935) that 'one of the most conclusive ways of checking the rise of conflict is simply to provide no arena for it or to create no public agency with power to do anything about it'. We subsequently relate this argument to the much-cited definition of agenda-setting or non-decision-making power proposed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 948): 'power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit

the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A'. Walker (1966) relates this broad view on power more explicitly to a broader view (and normative assessment) of politics and political science. For instance when he notes, on page 291, that 'one of the chief characteristics of our political system has been its success in suppressing and controlling internal conflict. But the avoidance of conflict, the suppression of strife, is not necessarily the creation of satisfaction or consensus. The citizens may remain quiescent, the political system might retain its stability, but significant differences of opinion remain, numerous conflicts are unresolved and many desires go unfulfilled. The frustrations resulting from such deprivations can create conflict in other, non-political realms.' Similar arguments are made by Cobb and Elder (1971). They also critically contribution eventually lies in their move of the research field towards a focus on actually existing (as opposed to latent or potential) public policy agendas, and therewith somewhat away from the more abstract discussions on power and the 'pluralist' views of several scholars. Cobb and Elder (1971, 915) suggest that researchers 'must focus on the institutional and systemic agendas that delineate the legitimate social concerns and prescribe the issues that are to command the active attention of political decision makers'. Such a focus is further developed in their later work, among others, Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976, 127) suggest to study processes of agenda-building, tracing issues over time, and they analytically 'identify three different models of agenda building depending on variation in the four major characteristics of issue careers: initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance.'

Prepare a tentative statement of your interests as input for class discussion (bring to meeting).

- Schattschneider, E. E. (1957). Intensity, visibility, direction and scope. The American Political Science Review, 51(4), pp. 933-942. AND/OR chapter 1-3, 6 from: Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The semisovereign people: A realist's view of democracy in America.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. PDF available here
- Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The semisovereign people: A realist's view of democracy in America.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Chapter 4 and 5. and other chapters as supplemental reading, (especially relevant for our meeting on interest groups), PDF available here), also supplemental (especially relevant for our meeting on political parties): Mair, P. (1997). E. E. Schattschneider's: The semisovereign people. *Political Studies, XLV*, 947-954.
- Cobb, R. W., & Elder, C. D. (1971). The politics of agenda-building: An alternative perspective for modern democratic theory. *Journal of Politics,* 33(4) AND/OR relevant sections from their classic volume: Cobb, R. W., & Elder, C. D. (1983). *Participation in American politics: The dynamics of agenda-building* (Sec. ed.). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science.* Macmillan International Higher Education. Introduction Available as e-book via the library, also see author website

Supplemental (noted in the preceding paragraphs):

- Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1966. A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 60: 285–95, [note discussion on pages: 391–92 and: Dahl, Robert A. 1966. Further Reflections on "The Elitist Theory of Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 60: 296–305]
- Cobb, R., Ross, J., & Ross, M. H. (1976). Agenda building as a comparative political process. *American Political Science Review*, 70(1), 126-138.

More on '50 discussion of concept of power:

- Bachrach, P., & Baratz, M. S. (1962). Two faces of power. *American Political Science Review,* 56(4), 947-952.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1957. The Concept of Power. *Behavioral Science* 2: 201–15.
- Lukes, S. (1974). *Power: A radical view.* London: Macmillan.
- Riker, William H. 1964. Some Ambiguities in the Notion of Power. *American Political Science Review* 58: 341–9.

More agenda-setting 'classics':

- Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (1993). *Agendas and instability in American politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies.* Boston: Little Brown. [the 'streams' model presented in this book is regularly used in BA theses]
- Downs, Anthony. 1972. Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue Attention Cycle. *Public Interest* 28: 38–50.
- Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1977. Setting the Agenda in the U.S. Senate: A Theory of Problem Selection. *British Journal of Political Science* 7: 423–45.

Week 2 meeting 1: Executive-bureaucratic locus of agendas and the theoretical differentiation of the field

We take a large leap forward in time from the constitutive, conceptual readings of last week to recent studies of political agendas in various contexts. We will identify several differences and continuities. In his review of the edited volume by Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014), Baumgartner (2016, 456) welcomes that the volume 'proposes a more complete political science, one that accepts the challenge of the critics of pluralism rather than flees from it as an insurmountable obstacle.' In this sense, the volume is a direct, empirically-grounded response to the arguments made in the articles of week 1 (a response within which Baumgartner himself is very central). The volume by Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014) must be seen as part of a research endeavor of a network of researchers (https://www.comparativeagendas.net/) (with a strong focus on data-collection and sharing, available for your BA Thesis). The introduction situates the empirically oriented chapter-contribution of the volume in the broader context of the study of politics and the disciplinary history of political science. The key concepts should be familiar.

The first chapters in Grossman (2014) introduces an important theoretical differentiation in the field (from which you may choose your favorite for your thesis). These chapters focus on actual policy change rather than change in 'attention' of government actors (as Cobb and Elder) or change With his strong focus on actor-constellations as explanation for policy change, he challenges the validity of four well-established theoretical approaches: 'agenda-setting', 'macro-politics', 'issue typologies' and 'actor success'. Grossman emphasizes the 'top-down' nature of agenda-formation and policy change that is relatively self-contained within the narrow policy circles in Washington, largely independent of changes in the broader political environment (public opinion, media, social movements, interest groups, or, even, 'real-world events or changes'). In the following weeks we assess the extent to these assumptions on the elite-driven and independent character agenda-processes are justified and look at 'bottom-up' and 'external' actors in more detail. We consider these 'from the inside to the outside' (ie start with relatively insider actors to those furthest away from the policy process (citizens)).

We will discuss preliminary research questions in sub-groups in class. Prepare for the class-meeting a preliminary research question: Provide a clear statement of the question motivating your research (recommended: start your question with 'why'). Justify the question: Why should we be interested theoretically, normatively or substantively? Use Toshkov (2016), at least in the identification of the descriptive, predictive or explanatory nature of your question. Draft at list of readings you intend to study in the coming weeks.

- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, and Stefaan Walgrave, eds. 2014. *Agenda Setting, Policies, and Political Systems: A Comparative Approach.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (introduction and conclusion, available as e-book, other chapters considered supplemental reading) (again see reviews, especially by Baumgartner, here)
- Grossman, Matt. 2014. *Artists of the Possible: Governing Networks and American Policy Change since 1945.* New York: Oxford University Press. (introduction and chapter 1, other chapters are supplemental reading, make sure not to miss table 1.1 on page 18) (consider reading the reviews, especially by the 'éminence grise' Paul Posner, here)
- Use for preliminary research question assignment: Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science.* Macmillan International Higher Education. Chapter 2 and 3. Available as e-book via the library, also see author website.

Supplemental:

More broad reflection on theoretical focus of the discipline:

- Hacker, J. S., & Pierson, P. (2014). After the "master theory": Downs, Schattschneider, and the rebirth of policy-focused analysis. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 643-662.

More on executive / coalition politics as explanation for agendas

- Toshkov, D., Mäder, L., & Rasmussen, A. (2020). Party government and policy responsiveness. Evidence from three parliamentary democracies. *Journal of Public Policy*, *40*(2), 329-347.
- Klüver, H., & Bäck, H. (2019). Coalition agreements, issue attention, and cabinet governance. *Comparative Political Studies*, *52*(13-14), 1995-2031.

More on information processing as explanation for policy change (from the CAP network):

- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (2015). The politics of information: Problem definition and the course of public policy in America. University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., Christian Breunig, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, Bryan D. Jones, Peter B. Mortensen, Michiel Neytemans, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2009. Punctuated Equilibrium in Comparative Perspective. *American Journal of Political Science* 53, 3 (July): 602–19.
- Jones, Bryan D., Frank R. Baumgartner, Christian Breunig, Christopher Wlezien, Stuart Soroka, Martial Foucault, Abel François, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, Peter John, Chris Koski, Peter B. Mortensen, Frédéric Varone, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2009. A General Empirical Law for Public Budgets: A Comparative Analysis. *American Journal of Political Science* 53, 4 (October): 855–73.

Week 2 meeting 2.
The Politicization of issues in politics
In this meeting we familiarize ourselves with the terminology associated with 'politicisation'. Political 'Agenda-setting' commonly focusses on attention or salience of issues on particular agendas of politics (or policymaking venues). Politicisation of issues additionally relates to the intensity of conflict (polarization) (van der Brug et al 2015), and, in several definitions also the types and numbers of actors involved (Grande and Hutter, 2016). We discuss these distinct definitions, so in your reading of the chapters, focus on the conceptualisation; also in relation to the research questions discussed last week.

- van der Brug, W., D' Amato, G., Berkhout, J., & Ruedin, D. (2015). A framework for studying the politicisation of immigration. In W. van der Brug, G. D' Amato, J. Berkhout, & D. Ruedin (Eds.), *The politicisation of migration* (pp. 1-18).. London; New York: Routledge. Available as ebook via the library
- Grande, E., and Hutter, S. (2016). Introduction: European integration and the challenge of politicization. In: Hutter, S., E. Grande and H. Kriesi (eds) *The Politicisation of Europe* 3-31 Available as ebook via the library Also supplementary see contributions to Special Issue introduced here: Hutter, Swen, and Hanspeter Kriesi. "Politicizing Europe in times of crisis." *Journal of European Public Policy* 26, no. 7 (2019): 996-1017.

Supplemental:

- De Wilde, P. (2011). No polity for old politics? A framework for analyzing the politicization of European integration. *Journal of European integration*, *33*(5), 559-575.
- Edgar Grande, Tobias Schwarzbözl & Matthias Fatke (2019) Politicizing immigration in Western Europe, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26:10, 1444-1463,

Political parties as agenda-setters
Representatives of political parties win elections and are therewith institutionally critically situated to define several distinct parts of the political agenda. The priorities and preferences of party-political actors should therefore be the most proximate cause of agenda status.

As identified in week 1, Schattschneider (1960, 69) notes that 'all forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out'. He considers two forms of organizations that are in the business of 'organizing issues into politics'; interest or pressure groups and political parties. Both are selective in terms of the issues put forward, but Schattschneider clearly find the party-political 'game' more important and normatively superior to the narrow nature of pressure politics (at least when compared to the more positive assessment of the pluralists before him). Party politics is however also 'biased'. The source of bias in party politics results from the nature of conflict that creates and 'freezes' alliances or alignments within and between parties in such a manner that leads to a rank-order of issues, commonly observed in the dimensionality of party systems. Mair (1997, 953) relates this observation to later studies of (most European) party politics and systems, when he remarks that party political conflict is ' a competition between contested terms of reference, and about the ground on which the game will actually be played'.

In terms of contemporary party politics, there are strong arguments that 'the ground' is indeed shifting. Hooghe and Marks (2018) argue, as several others have noted before them, that a 'transnational cleavage'

replaces, and cross cuts, earlier major divisions in party systems, such as the capital – labor cleavage. This implies a major change in the relative prioritization of various issues on the party political agenda in several established democracies; as is, for instance, observed in the United Kingdom, where attention to 'Brexit' pushes away attention to a range of other issues in British politics. Hobolt and De Vries (2015) present the behavioral strategic incentives of political parties that ultimately underlie these systemic changes (but also are shaped by them).

- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *25*(1), 109-135.
- Hobolt, S. B., & De Vries, C. E. (2015). Issue entrepreneurship and multiparty competition. *Comparative Political Studies*, *48*(9), 1159-1185.

Supplemental:

- Hobolt, S.B. & Klemmensen, R. (2008). Government responsiveness and political competition in comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies* **41**(3): 309–337.
- John, P , Bevan, S. and Jennings, W. 'Party Politics and the Policy Agenda: The Case of the United Kingdom' in Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, and Stefaan Walgrave, eds. 2014. *Agenda Setting, Policies, and Political Systems: A Comparative Approach*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. available as e-book
- de Vries CE and Marks G (2012) The struggle over dimensionality: A note on theory and empirics, *European Union Politics* 13(2): 185-193.
- Klüver, H. (2020). Setting the party agenda: interest groups, voters and issue attention. *British Journal of Political Science*, *50*(3), 979-1000.

Week 3 meeting 1: Setting the agenda via lobbying and advocacy

At this point in the course, you probably see an acceleration of the shift in your focus away from the collective course work towards your individual BA thesis project. This is reflected in the substantive attention during our meetings; we will take somewhat less time to talk about the required readings and attend somewhat longer to methodological and design issues. At the same time, should a relatively large number of students have research questions related to the substantive topics in the readings, we will take more time or may adapt the readings.

Another relatively proximate cause of the agenda-status of particular issues are interest groups. This week we assess relative insiders in the policy process; those active in lobbying and other 'advocacy' activities. There are several ways to look at this. In our reading for week 2, Grossman focusses on the part of the US interest group community that is the closest to the most important Washington policy makers. These actors at the core may be able to play a leading role in governing networks.

First, others identify an important role for interest groups on the background rather than in the core: Baumgartner (2010) notes their importance as part of narrowly identified policy circles, niches or systems of limited participation (also see Baumgartner and Leech, 2001, and a broader literature on this) or as actors active in the long-term framing of particular issues. Second, Berkhout et al (2018) similar point out that interest groups seem to be largely in tune with the bureaucratic, low-key part of the policy agenda, rather than the centre of public policy making surrounding the government cabinet. Third, Bevan and Rasmussen (2017) fully move away from a focus on policy active groups and more broadly conceive of voluntary

associations as part of the organizational fabric that forms a relationship between the state and society, and in that way mediates the relationship between public opinion and the policy process. Last, Gilens and Page (2014) also differentiate distinct parts of the public and focus on particular (business) interest groups only. Identifying major inequalities in agenda- and interest representation. Gilens and Page (2014) US study explicitly links influence to affluence, and received popular attention in the Daily Show.

- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science*. Macmillan International Higher Education. Select chapter that best matches your thesis ideas.

- Baumgartner, F. R. (2010). Interest groups and agendas. In L. S. Maisel, J. M. Berry & G. C. Edwards (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of American political parties and interest groups* Oxford University Press. See also other chapters on interest groups in this handbook, available as ebook in the library
- Bevan, S., & Rasmussen, A. (2017). When does government listen to the public? Voluntary associations and dynamic agenda representation in the United States. *Policy Studies Journal.*
- Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on politics*, *12*(3), 564-581.
- Statsch, P. D., & Berkhout, D. J. (2020). Lobbying and policy conflict: explaining interest groups' promiscuous relationships to political parties. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, *9*(1), 1-2 OR Berkhout, J., Hanegraaff, M., & Statsch, P. (2020). Interest Groups in Multi-Level Contexts: European Integration as Cross-Cutting Issue in Party-Interest Group Contacts. *Politics and Governance*, *8*(1), 61-71

Supplemental:

A lot of additional reading can be found in the syllabus of the MA elective on Collective Action and Interest Group Politics, 2021 version

- Baumgartner, F. R., Berry, J. M., Hojnacki, M., Leech, B. L., & Kimball, D. C. (2009). *Lobbying and policy change: Who wins, who loses, and why*. University of Chicago Press.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Beth L. Leech. "Interest niches and policy bandwagons: Patterns of interest group involvement in national politics." *The Journal of Politics* 63.4 (2001): 1191-1213.
- Kimball, D. C., Baumgartner, F. R., Berry, J. M., Hojnacki, M., & Leech, B. L. (2012). Who cares about the lobbying agenda?. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, *1*(1), 5-25.
- Mahoney, C., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2014). Partners in advocacy: Lobbyists and government officials in Washington. *The Journal of Politics*, *77*(1), 202-215.

Week 3 meeting 2. The relation of the social movement and media agenda to politics:
In this meeting we return to the comparative and agenda-oriented rather than actor-oriented approach exemplified by our reading of Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014) volume chapters. We focus on the relationship between the media and political agenda. Studies of the media agenda commonly originate from a critically different tradition, initiated by McCombs and Shaw in the early Seventies, than other agenda-setting work. This differentiation is discussed by Wolfe et al (2013) and Walgrave and van Aelst (2006). They also identify a number of implications of the isolated study of the media-public agenda relationship. Walgrave and van Aelst (2006) furthermore tentatively identify a number of issue-specific circumstances that make it more likely for an issue to move from the media to the political agenda, and generate a substantive political response. Vliegenthart et al (2016) relate the media and protest agenda jointly to the political agenda. See course manual for the 6 EC BA elective on protest politics for additional readings, available via (the Dutch version of) my staff page.
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- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science*. Macmillan International Higher Education. Select chapter that best matches your thesis ideas.

- Wolfe, Michelle, Bryan D. Jones, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2013. A Failure to Communicate: Agenda Setting in Media and Policy Studies. *Political Communication* 30, 2: 175–192.
- Walgrave, S., & Aelst, P. v. (2006). The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory. *Journal of Communication Theory, 56*, 1-22. [also see their later work on relationship media and politics, e.g.: Van Aelst, P., & Walgrave, S. (2016). Information and arena: The dual function of the news media for political elites. *Journal of Communication*, *66*(3), 496-518.]
- Walgrave, S., Soroka, S., & Nuytemans, M. (2008). The mass media's political agenda-setting power: A longitudinal analysis of media, parliament, and government in Belgium (1993 to 2000). *Comparative Political Studies*, *41*(6), 814-836.
- Vliegenthart, R., Walgrave, S., Wouters, R., Hutter, S., Jennings, W., Gava, R., Tresch, A., Varone, F., Grossman, E., Breunig, C. and Brouard, S., 2016. The Media as a Dual Mediator of the Political Agenda–Setting Effect of Protest. A Longitudinal Study in Six Western European Countries. *Social Forces*, *95*(2), pp.837-859.
- Bernardi, L., Bischof, D., & Wouters, R. (2020). The public, the protester, and the bill: do legislative agendas respond to public opinion signals*?. Journal of European Public Policy,* 1-22.

Supplemental reading:

- Boydstun, Amber E. 2013. *Making the News: Politics, the Media, and Agenda Setting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McCombs, Maxwell. 2014. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge (UK): Polity Press. [this focusses on the 'agenda-setting' function of the media: ie media -> public opinion, rather than political agenda setting)

Week 4 meeting 1: Public opinion and policy representation.
Norms of democratic representation stipulate some degree of congruency between the issue priorities and (directional) preferences of citizens and the attention and direction of public policy. This, however, is, in empirical terms, a relatively distant, causal predictor for issue attention on the political agenda. In other words, the relationship may only be observed in relatively aggregate terms. This is done in the work of Stimson et al (1995) and conceptually explained by Wlezien (2017). Burstein (2014) and Klüver and Pickup (2019), aim to identify issue-specific links an a less aggregate and more policy-specific manner – also accounting, similar to Grossman (2014), for relevant political actors.

Assignment: (1) Prepare peer-feedback on the research question and preliminary proposal of one of your co-students (post on Canvas) and (2) identify a gap in the literature (input for class discussion).

- Stimson, J. A., MacKuen, M. B., & Erikson, R. S. (1995). Dynamic representation. *American political science review*, *89*(3), 543-565.
- Wlezien, C. (2017). Public opinion and policy representation: on conceptualization, measurement, and interpretation. *Policy Studies Journal*, *45*(4), 561-582. [also see:

Wlezien, C Soroka, S (2016) Public Opinion and Public Policy. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, available as e-book]

- Burstein, P. (2014). *American public opinion, advocacy, and policy in congress: What the public wants and what it gets.* Cambridge University Press. Introduction and selected chapters (available as e-book)
- Klüver, Heike und Mark Pickup (2019): Are they listening? Public opinion, interest groups and government responsiveness, West European Politics 42(1): 91-112.
- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science.* Macmillan International Higher Education. Select chapter that best matches your thesis ideas.

Supplemental:

- Rasmussen, A., Reher, S., & Toshkov, D. (2018). The opinion-policy nexus in Europe and the role of political institutions. *European Journal of Political Research.*
- Stimson J. A. (Ed.), *Issue evolution: Race and the transformation of american politics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press.
- Klüver, Heike and Jae-Jae Spoon (2016): Who Responds? Voters, Parties, and Issue Attention, British Journal of Political Science, 46(3): 633-654

Week 4 meeting 2 and week 5: Research proposal presentations

Model table of contents of a typical empirical bachelor or master thesis or MA-level empirical paper:
Please note variations depending on the focus (joint or separate literature/theory section, joint or separate data/analysis section)

1. Introduction:

- Provide a clear statement of the 'Why' question motivating your research.
- Justify the question: Why should we be interested theoretically, normatively or substantively?
- Outline the thesis indicating what will follow in each section.

2. Literature review (may be merged with theory section):

- Identify the literatures bearing on answering the 'why' question you have posed.
- Summarize and critique each in terms of method and major findings.
- Identify why there is a gap in the literature necessitating your research.

3. Theory (may be merged with literature review):

- Identify and fully explain <u>your answer</u> to the 'why' question you have proposed, theoretically defining all of the major concepts (this is your hypothesis). Why should your answer be valid?
- Contrast your answer to competing or complementary answers to the 'why' question, again defining all of the concepts theoretically (these are competing/additional hypotheses).
- Discuss any additional factors that must be controlled for in the analyses that follow, again define all concepts theoretically
- Provide a summary of the conceptual model to be tested.

4. Design / method / data section:

- Justify the unit of analysis and research design employed in your empirical investigation.
- Operationalize all of the theoretical concepts identified in the previous section, fully discussing the reliability and validity of the measures.

5. Analysis:

- Provide univariate analyses of the key variables used in the analysis
- Present the multivariate analysis, fully discussing all of the results

6. Conclusion:

- Summarize your major research findings.
- Discuss why they are a contribution the study of your 'why' question. Also suggest broader implications of your results relating to motivations of your research discussed in the introduction.
- Identify and discuss the limitations of your analysis.
- Identify future research flowing from your findings.

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