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Fields of Concentration:

Game Theory
Political Economy

Desired Teaching:

Microeconomics
Political Economy
Public Finance

Comprehensive Examinations Completed:

May 2006 (Oral) Microeconomic Theory, Political Economy (*with distinction*)
May 2005 (Written) Macroeconomics (*with distinction*), Microeconomics (*with distinction*)

Dissertation Title:

Essays In Partisanship, Polarization, and Political Decision-Making

Committee:

Dirk Bergemann
Justin Fox
Johannes Hörner
Larry Samuelson

Expected Completion Date:

May 2010

Degrees:

Ph.D., Economics, Yale University, 2010 (expected).
M. Phil., Economics, Yale University, 2008.
M.A., Economics, Yale University, 2008.
B. Sc. (Honors), Mathematics, University of Alberta, 2004.

Honors and Awards:

Carl Arvid Anderson Prize Fellowship, Yale University, 2008-2009.
Dissertation Fellowship, Yale University, 2008.
Raymond Powell Teaching Prize, Yale University, 2007.
Cowles Foundation Fellowship, 2004-2008.
Yale University Summer Fellowship, 2006-2008.
Dean's Silver Medal in Science, University of Alberta, 2004.

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Fellow, Intermediate Microeconomics, Fall 2009.
Teaching Fellow, Graduate Microeconomics (Game Theory), Spring 2008.
Teaching Fellow, Intermediate Microeconomics, Spring 2007.
Teaching Fellow, Graduate Microeconomics (Consumer Theory and GE), Fall 2006.

Research Experience:

Research Assistant to Dirk Bergemann, Department of Economics, Yale University, 2006-2007.
Research Assistant to Justine Hastings, Department of Economics, Yale University, 2005-2006.
Research Assistant to Michael Kouritzin, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Alberta, 2002-2004.

Publications:

"Deliberation Rules and Voting" (2008), *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 3, 1: 83-88.

Working Papers:

"Candidates, Credibility, and Re-Election Incentives" (job market paper)
"Partisanship and the Effectiveness of Oversight" (joint with Justin Fox), *submitted*
"Preferences, Information and Parental Choice Behavior in Public School Choice", NBER Working Paper 12995 (joint with Justine Hastings and Jeffrey Weinstein)
"Costly Transparency" (joint with Justin Fox), *in progress*

Presentations:

Midwest Economic Meetings, Economic Theory. Oct. 30-Nov.1, 2009. Penn State University.
Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Sept. 3-6, 2009. Toronto.
MOOD La Pietra-Mondragone Doctoral Workshop, June 26-28, 2009. Turin, Italy.
Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Aug. 28-31, 2008. Boston.
Graduate Summer Workshop, Yale University. 2008-2009.
Yale Micro Theory Lunch, Yale University. 2006-2009.

Referee Service:

Journal of Economic Theory, Journal of Theoretical Politics

References:

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Dissertation Abstract:

Decision-making in political environments is complicated by conflicting interests between the players: elected candidates may use their position to promote policies more to their liking or to secure rents at the voters' expense; policy-makers may be more concerned with securing re-election than with their constituents' welfare; members of a committee may disagree on which alternative should be chosen. Such disagreements can interfere with efficient policy-making and prevent the sharing of important information. In my dissertation I use game theory to analyze how decisions are made in these environments. In particular, I consider the extent to which—by balancing disagreements against each other—these distortions can be mitigated.

Chapter I: Candidates, Credibility, and Re-election Incentives

I analyze a model of repeated elections in which a representative voter selects among candidates with known policy preferences in every period. In addition to having preferences over policy, the elected candidate has the opportunity to secure rents for themselves at the voter's expense. I then consider which platforms candidates would have an incentive to implement to secure re-election, and, therefore, which candidates would be elected by the voter. The candidates cannot make binding campaign promises, but chooses which platform to pursue with an eye towards securing re-election. Surprisingly the voter will not elect candidates who share their policy preferences.

The key insight is that, when utilities are concave, the voter will not want to elect candidates who share their preferences; the voter can do better by electing candidates who do not share their policy preferences and using them to discipline each other. The voter can elect a candidate with preferences to the right of their own and allow them to implement a policy slightly to the right of the voter's ideal point. If the candidate deviates then the voter selects a candidate with preferences to the left of their own, who then implements a policy slightly to the left of the voter's ideal policy. The left candidate is punished for deviating with the right candidate being elected again. When utilities are concave, small changes in policy around the voter's ideal point will have a substantial disciplining effect on candidates with preferences different from the voter but only a small effect on the voter's welfare. As such, the divergence in candidate platforms benefits the voter as it provides incentives for candidates to engage in less rent-seeking behavior when in office. I show that two, and only two, types of candidates are ever elected in the best equilibrium. Moreover, if the voter doesn't perfectly observe the platform the candidate implemented the incumbent will be re-elected with probability strictly between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1—and we get a reasonable model of incumbency advantage and turnover in elections. My model then generates many interesting, testable predictions which are consistent with what is observed in real-world elections.

Chapter II: Partisanship and the Effectiveness of Oversight (joint with Justin Fox)

We analyze how partisanship affects the willingness of an overseer to exercise her check on executive power. In doing so, we provide a new theory of divided government based on the need for effective oversight. The sequential nature of oversight means that by the time the overseer is called to act—either to accept or veto an executive initiative—it has already been revealed what the executive believes should be done. This information can cause a career-minded overseer to distort her behavior to protect her reputation. Of particular concern is the possibility of herd behavior (Scharfstein and Stein (1990), Ottaviani and Sorenson (2001)), wherein the overseer would be unwilling to reveal disagreement with the executive. In this situation the overseer will simply rubber-stamp all proposals, rendering oversight useless.

Our main result is that partisanship, while certainly potentially harmful, can mitigate such inefficiencies. This is because the distortions caused by a partisan overseer's desire to affect the executive's reputation can offset the distortions caused by her desire to enhance her own. If a

non-partisan overseer is too reticent in exercising her veto, a partisan overseer, who seeks to harm the executive, may exercise her authority more responsibly. In fact, for a range of parameters, vetoes will only be exercised by overseers who derive sufficient benefit from damaging the executive's reputation. As such, partisanship may be necessary to prevent the overseer from abdicating her responsibilities entirely. Similarly, there are parameters for which a non-partisan overseer exercises her check too aggressively. In this case an overseer who seeks to protect the executive's reputation will cast fewer unwarranted vetoes, increasing efficiency.

Chapter III: Deliberation Rules and Voting

Most models of pre-vote deliberation assume that voters send messages simultaneously. In practice, however, communication is almost always sequential. In this paper I show that sequential communication makes it even more difficult to induce voters to truthfully reveal information before the voting takes place. Specifically, I consider the model of pre-vote deliberation introduced in Austen-Smith and Feddersen (2006), except that the voters send messages sequentially. Austen-Smith and Feddersen (2006) show that it is never an equilibrium for the voters to truthfully reveal their private information with unanimity rule if there is some possibility voters would disagree on the preferred outcome. If unanimity is required for conviction, each juror knows that the jury could never convict the defendant if she favors acquittal, so there is no risk in reporting her signal as more favorable to convicting in order to convince more reticent voters to vote to convict. So it cannot be an equilibrium for the voters to report truthfully. When unanimity is not required, however, the voter does not have a veto and mis-reporting is not without risk. As such, there are examples where it is an equilibrium for all voters to truthfully reveal their private information.

I show that when the communication is sequential, however, this distinction no longer applies. If the voters are revealing truthfully, by the time the last voter speaks, she will have learned the other voters' signals and so know which outcome she prefers. As such, there is no risk in mis-reporting her private information as more favorable to her preferred alternative. Consequently, regardless of the voting rule, truthful communication can only be achieved if all voters will always agree on the preferred outcome for any signal profile. As such, full information revelation may be too much to hope for in pre-vote deliberation once the sequential nature of such deliberation is accounted for.