

Title: Analyzing the 2013 German Federal Election	Lecturer: Professor Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck
Type of Course: Research Seminar Comparative Politics	ECTS: 14 Semester: Autumn 2014

Course Description:

General elections are the core institution of representative democracy. Accordingly, in parliamentary systems like Germany the question how voters make up their minds about which party to choose is of crucial importance. The seminar offers the opportunity to search answers to this question for the most recent German Federal Election in 2013 by analyzing newly released survey data on voters' beliefs, attitudes and behavior. A wide range of research topics can be explored. Participants of the seminar can, for instance, look into the role of social structural, ideological or partisan predispositions for electoral behavior. Popular folklore has it that these factors are becoming increasingly irrelevant for electoral behavior, but are these claims valid? How important are, on the other hand, short-term factors for electoral choices? Allegedly, voters have become more rational, so we should expect strong effects of issue attitudes or economic circumstances. However, it is also claimed that voting behavior has become strongly personalized, turning elections into beauty contests – yet another question that can be explored. Another possibility is to analyze communication effects on voting – are voters' choices responsive to the information received from social networks, the mass media, or the parties' campaigns? If so, under which conditions? Besides vote choice, student projects can also look into turnout. In the seminar, participants will get the opportunity to define and explore their own research questions.