

MEVIT4319 Take home exam Autumn 2021

Elections and election campaigns

The five Nordic states display both similarities and differences in their election and party systems. A) Describe the election systems and party systems in three of the Nordic states, and point to differences and similarities between the states in this regard. B) Discuss the role of the news media in election campaigns and how social and online media add to election campaigns for parties and candidates. Use examples and discuss course literature throughout the paper, that is in both parts, to illustrate and support your arguments.

Structure your paper so that approximately 1/3 of the exam paper is spent on part A, and approximately 2/3 on part B.

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Teaching and course literature

The exam question has been discussed extensively in two lectures and by students in several of their presentations for the qualification assignments. On the [the course reading list](#), the chapters in Bruns et al., 2016; in Knutsen, 2017, chapters 2-4, and 8; in Skogerbø et al., 2021, chapters 2-6, 8, 10-12, 14 and 17, and Sandberg 2017, are directly relevant for the question.

Requirements

The exam paper must clearly reply to all parts of the question to pass. The parts will be of different length, approx.

In the first part, the **outline of systems**, the candidates are expected to be able to describe the main similarities and differences between at least three different Nordic countries. This part could amount to approx. 2/3 of the essay.

Main similarities, examples:

- all countries are welfare democracies/welfare states.
 - They are also all media welfare states with well-established public broadcasters.
- The electoral systems are all proportional systems (PR) in multicandidate constituencies
- The party systems share similarities: most have a right-left dimension, and four of the countries have populist right-wing parties

Main differences, examples:

- Iceland (ISL) and Finland (SF) are presidential systems, Denmark (DK), Norway (N) and Sweden (S) are constitutional monarchies.
 - Denmark and Sweden are among the oldest states in the world, the other have been colonial histories
- The electoral systems differ with respect to electoral periods, seats and (advanced) how the constituencies are defined.
 - In Sweden, all elections except for the Sámi Parliament are held on the same day, in the other countries, periods vary between types of elections.
 - In Denmark, there are not fixed periods between parliamentary periods, whereas most other countries have that
 - The threshold for representation in Parliament are different among countries.

- Party systems: ISL stands out as the party system was formed by the long struggle for independence, the other have party systems that have mainly been formed on the left-right axis. The former Nordic five-party model has in all countries disrupted over the past decades, leaving the Nordics with multiparty systems generally consisting of a some relatively new parties, e.g. the Green parties, the Pirate parties, extreme-right parties, coexisting with old Conservative, Liberal, Social-Democrat and former agrarian parties

In the second part, students are expected to discuss the ways in which election campaigns are reported, facilitated and take place in legacy media and online and social media, that is , in a hybrid media system. In the above listed course literature, there are many perspectives on campaigning, on the use of social media by politicians, on personalization, gender, political journalism. Some chapters/articles concentrate on specific Nordic countries, other treat specific issues, e.g. Indigenous political communication, some are basically theoretical.

The most successful exam papers (A/B) will structure the paper so that the first description takes approximately 1/3 of the paper. The second part, the critical discussion should take up approx. 2/3. In both parts, students are expected to refer several course readings sources and use examples. In the second part, the emphasis is on discussing how digitization, social media and hybridization are changing election campaigning and the relationship between parties, candidates, journalists and voter and able to critically discuss the course literature. They may mention differences between countries, parties and functions of news media and social media. They may also point to Sources outside the reading list are valued when they complement the course readings, but students should NOT be awarded for referring in general to external sources.

A good paper (C) will have a similar structure as the most successful but with fewer examples, less references and less advanced discussion.

Less successful papers (D/E) will not perform up to the standards of any of the above, but will show that they are familiar with the reading list, understand the question and are able to discuss a few points.