

STV2330. Fall 2024. Exam – grader’s guide.

Students have been instructed that creative responses are awarded but that they need to include core insights from the curriculum. So graders should feel some flexibility when grading, while still keeping an eye on how well students know the curriculum.

We care about arguments more than about who said what, but if they are able to make statements such as “As Dalton argues, ...” or “Heath shows that..” then that should count as positive as it shows that they are well-prepared.

Students choose three out of the four essay questions below. If anyone answers all four, grade three responses at random and ignore the fourth (do not pick the best three responses or give extra credit for answering four essay questions).

1. Discuss whether ethnic background (for instance immigrant vs “native”) can be considered a cleavage.

Students should be able to provide a reasonable definition of a cleavage, ideally accounting for the three criteria of a cleavage (this is discussed multiple places in the curriculum for the cleavage lectures as well as in the lectures themselves). These are 1) social-structural (long-lasting social divisions that create ‘objectively’ identifiable groups in a society with different interests); 2) psychological/normative (share political values and interests, potentially also identities), 3) organizational (mostly they have different propensities to vote for different parties). Relevant curriculum is e.g. Evans and Langsæther 2021, Ford and Jennings 2020, Tilley 2015 etc.

The main part of the essay should discuss whether in particular immigrant vs non-immigrant can be considered a cleavage, but some students may instead focus on ethnicity (e.g. African-American vs White in the US) and that’s also ok. Good responses will discuss this in relation to the three criteria of a cleavage. That is: Can immigrants and non-immigrants (or ethnic groups) be considered a long-lasting social division; do immigrants and non-immigrants (or ethnic groups) have different political values and identities; do they vote for different parties. Relevant literature for values, identities, and party choice here is notably Ford and Jennings 2020 and Bergh and Bjørklund 2010, but there is also a brief discussion in Dalton ch. 8.

Great essays combine information from different parts of the curriculum. For instance, when discussing whether the groups have different political values, they might refer to the first and second dimension to structure their discussion.

2. Has political trust declined, and should we worry about the consequences?

An encompassing answer will comprise several elements. There is an empirical question of whether trust has declined. A good answer is nuanced in addressing this. The answer depends on context/country and the conceptual element/indicator of trust. Overall, there probably has been some decline in more than half of the countries for which we have good data. But the picture is complicated, and possibly more

complicated than the slightly more clearcut decline seen in the countries and indicators discussed by Dalton.

Another key element is a discussion of theories and empirical findings concerning the consequences political trust has on various attitudes and behaviors. Different articles on the reading list discuss consequences for political participation, vote choice, compliance with and attitudes towards law-breaking behaviour, and attitudes towards spending/public policy efforts on welfare policy or immigration.

A good answer may try to systematize these findings in a broader discussion of the overall role played by trust in democracies. For instance, the notion of a “new style of citizens politics” discussed by Dalton offers a largely positive story about how less political trust co-exists with, and might even produce, a more engaged, sophisticated—but constructively critical—modern citizen. Just how compatible are empirical findings about political trust effects with this view?

3. Discuss possible reasons why working-class election turnout has dropped in recent decades.

This is a core topic in the class cleavage lecture. We focused on the dominant ‘political’ explanations in recent years of class research. That is: Parties changed in ways that made class-relevant distinctions between political parties smaller and reduced representation of the working class and thus their motivation to vote. Notably: Social democrats moved towards the centre on the first dimension (redistribution) so less polarization, while taking centre or liberal positions on second dimension issues such as immigration, so less substantive representation. They also reduced their number of politicians from the working class, so reduced descriptive representation. Finally, they reduced their symbolic/group appeals to the working class, so reduced symbolic representation.

Core curriculum here is: Dalton chapter 4, Heath 2018, Evans and Langsæther 2021, Robison et al. 2021. Great essays combine information from other parts of the curriculum. For instance by discussing policy representation in terms of the first and second dimension, or for instance by referring to the finding in Steiner and Hillen 2020 that left-authoritarians vote less because there are few left-authoritarian parties – students know from the class cleavage lecture and curriculum that the working class is more likely to be left-authoritarian.

4. Discuss Dalton’s four types of issue voting, giving specific examples. Discuss why issue voting can be regarded as a “short-term” factor.

Dalton and lectures have classified issue voting mainly in terms of the 2x2 table below.

FIGURE 10.1 Classification of Issues

Time frame	Type of issue	
	Position	Performance
Retrospective	Policy appraisal	Performance evaluation
Prospective	Policy mandate	Anticipatory judgment

The figure considers whether the issue opinion in question has a retrospective/prospective time frame, and if it concerns a “position” along a policy goal conflict dimension (i.e. more/less spending) or rather some widely accepted goal (employment, growth, health) where citizens and parties might nonetheless differ in terms of (for example) issue salience.

This leads to four ideal types of issue voting. Dalton discusses all of them, and so should students. That said, the lectures focused on the two types circled in red. Graders should therefore judge the discussion about the two others more benevolently.

A good answer explains the four types, especially the circled ones, including an example for each. The sentences below provide a guide for graders:

- “Policy mandate”=supporting the party that will likely deliver policies closer to the voter’s own position along a policy goal conflict dimension.
- “Performance evaluation”=punishing/rewarding a party, usually an incumbent government party, for past failure/success in delivering some widely accepted goal (such as a good macroeconomy).
- “Policy appraisal”= punishing/rewarding a party for failure/success in enacting public policies the voter supports.
- “Anticipatory judgment”=supporting the party that will likely perform the best in terms of a widely accepted goal (such as a good macroeconomy).

There are several reasons to think of issue voting as short-term. The main possibilities would be: (1) people’s own underlying opinions, or priorities change, in the short-term; (2) party positions/ performance records/images change; (3) short-term fluctuations on the “issue agenda” in a political system, which affect “issue salience” among voters, i.e. what issues voters prioritize and find important. The lectures have arguably emphasized this third possibility the most (see articles by Green-Pedersen and other examples). However, innovative students may touch on at least one of the other two possibilities.

Finally, note that a lecture mentioned that there may be both general (“ideological”) policy mandate voting, often based on the first and/or second dimensions, as well as policy mandates in more specific issues (i.e. abortion, spending on policy area X, etcetera).