

**Sensorveiledning POL1001  
V2019**

**Coordinator: Dr. Peter Maurer**

Studentene skal besvare totalt **fire** oppgaver, to i atferd og to i politisk teori. Hver besvarelse teller ¼ del av den samlede karakteren. I atferd består den oppgaven av å svare på de to essayoppgavene. I teori kan studentene velge to av fire essayoppgaver. Noen vil nok ønske å besvare teorioppgaven på engelsk og atferd på norsk eller engelsk pga språk brukt på forelesning og pensum. Det er helt greit.

Om en student bare svarer på to av de **fire** oppgaver fører ikke dette til automatisk stryk. Dette bør være en helhetsvurdering. Dersom de besvarte delene er særdeles gode – bør studenten få stå karakter – men selvsagt trekkes betraktelig for den manglende besvarelsen. Om de besvarte oppgavene er svake er det naturlig å vurdere kandidaten til stryk.

Kandidater som svarer på flere enn **fire** oppgaver skal ikke belønnes. I slike tilfeller blir det opp til sensor å vurdere hvilke besvarelser som skal legges til grunn. Ved stor variasjon bør man velge de fire beste besvarelsene.

## **A. Atferd**

**A. Compare theories of voting behaviour that you know. Address in your answer central variables of these theories and discuss the theories' strength and weaknesses. Many say that the cleavage theory has lost in relevance during the last years. How would you respond to this claim with respect to Norwegian elections?**

Comparison:

- Students should compare the three broad theories/models discussed in the course: Sociological/cleavage theory by Lipset/Rokkan, rational choice theory (Downs), and social-psychological theory (Michigan model) of voting behaviour (Campbell et al.). A good way to compare the theories is to explain which the most important explaining variables are according to each.
- *Aspects of cleavage theory:* Students should define what a cleavage is and how cleavages have emerged in history. A cleavage is a deep and enduring line of division in society (between two groups of citizens) that can be territorial, socio-economic or religious-cultural. These divisions make citizens feel to belong to a social group or class and influence for which parties they vote. To speak of a cleavage requires a *conflict* between two groups (empirical element), the *identification* of citizens with "their" group (ideological element), and the existence of parties that *represent* the divide on the level of the political system (organisational element). The central variable in the cleavage theory is identification with a group, provided that there is a deep conflict.

- Compared to that, the *social-psychological* (Michigan) model locates the central variable much closer to the voting decision: it assumes that the *long-lasting positive or negative feelings of voters toward parties*, which form in an early age during adolescence, influence most strongly the vote. The social situation of voters is relegated to the status of a background variable that may contribute to the *formation of party identification* but has not much explanatory power on its own. An advantage of the social-psychological model compared to the cleavage model is that it aligns several independent variables that might all play a role at different stages in a so-called funnel of causality. The cleavage- and the Michigan model have in common that they both define lasting affective orientations, such as bonds with parties or social groups, as the central variables.
- Compared to that, *the rational choice model* stresses the rational *cost/benefit calculation* of individual voters regarding the competing candidates. It assumes that the impressions about individual returns from voting are crucial for the decision. Only if voters are convinced that candidate A brings them more benefits than all other candidates, and *that voting is likely worth the effort* of voting, will a voter vote for a candidate or party. The decision to vote depends in the rational model also on how a citizen perceives *others will behave* (how many will vote? How close is the race?), because that affects whether his vote can make a difference. Moreover, if a citizen bears the cost of voting, depends on how much he *values living in a democracy* because voters know that the maintenance of democracy depends on that enough people do vote. Unlike the other theories, the rational model also says something about the behaviour of parties who are described as rational actors driven by the maximization of votes in order to enter the government.

#### Strengths and weaknesses:

- The strengths of the sociological and the social-psychological models are quite similar. *They both explain stability in voting better than change*. It is easy to explain with the Michigan model why some voters always vote for the same party: they have developed such a strong party identification that it overrides all other considerations. Similarly, if the identification with a social group is strong and voters are reminded of the cleavage by parties, this explains why, for example, working class people have overwhelmingly voted for the social-democrats for a long period. A weakness of these theories is, however, that they cannot explain why voters deviate from their party ID or why for example workers nowadays often do not vote for the parties to which they were traditionally aligned. And *why would information, for example the massive election campaigns, make a difference* if the behaviour was so predetermined like in the two theories? The fact that information and their circumstances can motivate other choices than the ones predicted by PID or class is ignored. *Also, there is a growing number of people without a strong or even a weak PID. What motivates the vote of these groups remains obscure in both theories*. An advantage of the Michigan model compared to the cleavage theory is that it can better incorporate the short-term effects of issue-related attitudes and candidate sympathy on the vote. These variables can explain why a voter with a strong PID

deviates from his habitual vote in a specific election. A strength of the rational choice theory is that it explains how *voters reason rather than just follow reflexes* or habits when voting; and also why some voters – and sometimes this group is large – choose to abstain. A weakness is that the RC theory places very *high demands on voters* and it is unlikely that many actually do the calculations predicted by the RC theory. Students may mention other strength and weaknesses.

Cleavage model: lost relevance?

- Students are free to make an argument as far as it is logical and backed by evidence. They should use the information given in the lecture about the Stortingsvalet in 2017 and earlier elections. One line of argument could be that class-based voting has declined making the cleavage model obsolete. On the other hand, the Senterpartiet campaigned very successfully on the territorial cleavage so you can also make the argument that cleavages are not obsolete, but that which ones are most relevant changes over the years. All in all, it is fair to say that, as the group loyalties in society decline, the cleavage theory comes under stress.

**B Define the term “media effect” and give an overview of how scientific views about the strength and nature of media effects on political behaviour have changed over time. Describe and delineate media effects that are particularly relevant for people’s perception of political reality. Is it correct to say that framing is only an effect?**

*Definition and overview:*

Definition: A media effect is a causal relationship between consumption of political media content and a subsequent change, reinforcement, weakening in the attitudes of the viewers/listeners/readers, or a change in their knowledge about, or perception of an object.

After an *initial phase characterized by the belief in very strong persuasive media effects* on beliefs and observable behaviour – the magic bullet concept – followed a phase from the 1960s until the end of the 1970s during which *the minimal effects paradigm* was widely accepted. It claimed that there were only weak effects of the media on individuals, mainly limited to *reinforcement of existing attitudes*. The reason was that research unsuccessfully tried to find direct, strong media effects on individuals’ political attitudes and behaviour. By the 1970, new research results were interpreted such that media content has strong effects on voters, even though the effect was not direct persuasion. Rather, *media tenor can create an opinion climate* that oppresses the willingness to voice own views; or in the long run media reality can *cultivate similar perceptions* of reality that run counter to the true facts. Next, from the 1980s onward, weaker media effects were found that are nevertheless consequential for political behavior: according to these effects, *media content shapes the reality perception of voters* in important ways. Instead of looking for attitude change (*media tell people what to think*), scholars started to consider other cognitive effects of the media that do not directly affect attitudes/behaviour, but indirectly by affecting their memories unconsciously (*media tell people what to think about*). The latest development is the view that – with the internet – there are again stronger media effects possible, based on political

media content that is tailored to the personal preferences of the recipients. Therefore, the messages can have a stronger effect because they are received with more attention and a favourable attitude toward the content.

*Describe and delineate specific effects:*

The formula “mass media might not be successful in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about” (AS in a nutshell) became the new paradigm of media effects research. This new paradigm includes cognitive effects that may under certain circumstances motivate behaviour (including voting) like *agenda-setting*, *priming*, and *framing*. These are effects of media content on the accessibility of topics and applicability of values stored in the memory of the recipient.

*Agenda Setting:* By focusing the attention on a relatively small number of topics, media suggest the recipients that these are the most important topics in politics. Media users have thus these topics top of the head when they think about political matters and form political opinions. As a consequence of the *agenda-setting effect* (def.: the media agenda influences the salience of topics in recipients’ minds),...

*Priming:* ...individuals use the topics that predominate on the media agenda when they evaluate political candidates or parties. This is called the *priming effect*. Priming refers to “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). Priming occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments. By making some issues more salient in people’s mind (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming). Miller and Krosnick (1996) argue that priming effects occur because individuals are busy and can devote only limited time to politics. So, they develop their opinions about leading politicians based on the topics about which the media talks a lot. In Miller/Krosnick words, many people make political judgments, for instance about presidents, in a satisficing way which means that instead of using all the relevant information about their performance, they consider primarily information that is conveniently available through the mass media to make the judgment. In Miller and Krosnick’s words: “the issues the media choose to cover most end up being primed, meaning they become the predominant basis for the public’s evaluations about the president.” Priming is based on memory-based models of information processing. These models assume that people form attitudes based on the considerations that are most salient (i.e., most accessible) when they make decisions.

*Framing:* Another cognitive effect is the *framing effect*. But framing is not only an effect, it is also the political activity of presenting a political content in a way that is favorable to own aims and views. A frame is “A ‘spotlight’ that attracts our attention to certain aspects of an issue, and directs it away from other aspects”.

*Is framing only a media effect or more?*

Framing occurs and operates at different levels. First, it describes the active behaviour of communicators (journalists, politicians, political activists) when designing their political

messages. This is frame building. In that sense, framing describes how communicators construct a political message. This includes which aspects of the underlying reality are emphasized, which labels are used, what is defined as the problem, who is assigned responsibility for it, which values are central in the narrative, and what treatment is recommended. On a more general level, the term “framing” refers to generic modes of presentation of political reality. Furthermore, framing refers to a media effect (the framing effect) on recipients of frames that they encounter in a mediated message. The effect describes the fact that the media or political actors construct political reality and that this construction can resonate with existing schemas in the recipients’ minds and, consequently, alter their understandings of an issue (for example, how they think about a political issue that is *framed* in a certain way in the news). The framing effect is based on the assumption that how political reality is presented in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences. As a microconstruct, framing describes how individuals use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions. The primary difference on the psychological level between agenda setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, is the difference between *whether* we think about an issue and *how* individuals think about it. The latter is the framing effect.

## Final exam for Political Theory (Spring 2019)

Answer two of the following questions.

1. What were Socrates and Thrasymachus arguing about in Book I of Plato’s *Republic*, and what were the main points made by each of them? To what extent were they arguing past each other, and what does the Allegory of the Cave (presented in Book VII) have to do with the argument in Book I?

Answer: *Thrasymachus joined a conversation about justice which was already in progress. In this conversation, Polemarchus had already offered that Simonides’ definition of justice as “giving to each man his due” (331c) was useful. But Socrates dismissed that suggestion by arguing that sometimes what was “due” could, in fact, be harmful so that justice, in that case, would be to deny a person*

what was his due. After further exchanges, Thrasymachus entered into the conversation, criticizing Socrates for offering misleading analogies. He offered a rival definition of justice, declaring (338c) that "justice is simply the interest of the stronger." Challenged by Socrates to explain what he meant, Thrasymachus argued that "governments use their power to make tyrannical, democratic, or aristocratic laws, as suits their interests. These laws, then, designed to serve the interests of the ruling class, are the only justice their subjects are likely to experience" (338e-339a). Thrasymachus, thus, was concerned only to describe the real functions of laws, in the real world, rather than to enter into speculation about what "should" be the case. Socrates, however, had little interest in discussing how laws actually functioned in the real world and built his case against Thrasymachus on a normative level, arguing that what should be the case did not accord with Thrasymachus' definition. Socrates also mocked Thrasymachus by suggesting that, if rulers made laws which in fact did not serve their real interests, then it was in the interests of the ruling class for their subjects to ignore those laws and hence, in Socrates' reduction, "it follows from your argument that it is just to serve the interest of the stronger but equally just not to" (339d) – which, of course, was not what Thrasymachus was arguing at all. For Socrates, politics or governance is an art analogous to medicine or horse-training and, just as a physician attends to the needs of the ill and the horse-trainer attends to the interests of the horse-owner, so too should politicians and rulers attend to the interests of their subjects. Thrasymachus refused to engage Socrates on the normative level and, giving his empirical claim a new twist, offered that "The actual ruler or governor thinks of his subjects as sheep, all right, but his chief occupation, day or night, is how he can best fleece them to his own benefit" (343c). But, at this point, Thrasymachus seemed to lose the thread of his own argument, bringing Socrates' normative concept of justice into his own empirical argument; the result is a mess. Specifically, T. now argued that "The just man is always a loser" (343d) and that "Justice is whatever serves the interest of the stronger; injustice, on the other hand, is whatever serves the personal advantage of any man" (344c). Did T. mean, by this, that an ordinary individual can only advance his interests by breaking the law, or did he have some other idea in mind? This is not clear from the text. But Socrates, sticking to his normative concept, declared, toward the end of Book I, that unjust people cannot cooperate

*toward any common end, which, of course, entails the implicit proposition that any government which does not respect principles of justice cannot be stable.*

*This points toward Socrates' (and Plato's) notion that there are principles of justice which are universal, principles by which we can judge whether a law is good (just) or bad (unjust). This is more fully developed in Book VII, where the Allegory of the Cave is presented. The point being made here is that most people perceive only shadows, and do not understand the important things in life at all. Those few who understand the important things, including justice, should be the rulers. As he declares (at 519b), "men lacking education and experience in truth cannot adequately preside over a city." Book VII closes by looking toward a time "[w]hen true philosophers – whether one or many – come to power in the city" (540d).*

2. You are spending some time sitting in Café Sito, drinking your cappuccino and thinking about John Locke. Suddenly, three students who are in the middle of an argument about Locke come over to your table and sit down. As they continue to argue, it becomes plain that student #1 (you may call him Sven) believes that Locke wrote his *Two Treatises* to reply to Thomas Hobbes, while student #2 (you may call her Marit) argues that the *Two Treatises* were written as a response to Sir Robert Filmer. Student #3 (you may call him Agamemnon) wants you and the others to believe that, in fact, Locke wrote his *Two Treatises* as a response to Plato. Summarize what you "remember" (or suspect) that each of these students was arguing, and offer your own judgment and argument, citing textual evidence where possible.

Explanation of this question and how a student should approach it:  
*This question allows the most room for creativity and, whereas, for the other three questions, the correct answers involve merely understanding the given authors, in this question there is room for some creative comparison and even play. This does not mean that any answer is as good as any other, however. Specifically, Edward Feser (p. 105) tells us explicitly that Sir Robert Filmer's argument in *Patriarchia* was Locke's target in the *First Treatise*. To get full credit, a student must understand this. However, Hobbes is not irrelevant*

*to the question since, as Feser writes (p. 26), "Locke shares with Hobbes the idea that government is not natural to us and rests instead on a kind of contract, but he vehemently rejects the absolutist form of government Hobbes derived from this premise." Locke also rejected Hobbes' idea that the sovereign should offer a definitive and binding interpretation of Natural Law, arguing that each person could understand Natural Law for him- or herself, and Locke also rejected Hobbes' notion that God was somehow a material being (see p. 105. Again, "[u]nlike Hobbes, Locke takes our basic moral obligations to one another to exist even before any social contract has been agreed to and thus before we enter into civil society" (Feser, p. 109). This is a logical consequence of Locke's idea that Natural Law exists independently of the interpretations of a sovereign.*

*The question, however, asks for more than the student's assessment of things, but calls for the student to imagine how each of these arguments might have been advanced in this imaginary conversation at Café Sito. Perhaps student #3 (Agamemnon) thought that Plato's emphasis on notions of justice and on the normative imperative was reflected in Locke's ideas on these matters, or that Locke's defense of private property (discussed extensively in Feser's book) might be a reply to Plato's idea that the elite should not own property, or even that Locke's opposition to absolutist government could be contrasted somehow with Plato's call for philosophers to rule. Nonetheless, what should be clear is that Locke was engaged in politics and that his writings were driven by concrete political concerns; for that reason, Locke was not concerned about Plato and was not thinking about Plato when he wrote his Two Treatises of Government. Hobbes is a somewhat trickier case, since the lifespans of Hobbes and Locke overlapped: Hobbes died in 1679, while Locke was born in 1632. Nonetheless, Hobbes was addressing the issues raised by the English Civil War and by ecclesiastical claims in the political sphere, while Locke was addressing very different issues. What Feser wrote about Hobbes and Locke may be found in the preceding paragraph. But it was clearly Filmer who was Locke's target because Filmer's Patriarcha made the classic claim on behalf of absolutist monarchy – a claim founded on intrinsic right. (And note here that Hobbes did not found his argument for absolutism on any notion of intrinsic right but rather on the need for someone to keep the peace – an entirely different argument completely foreign to writers such as Filmer.)*

*Filmer's posthumously published book was useful precisely to the royalists against whom Locke and the Earl of Shaftesbury were struggling and this is why Locke felt that he had to reply to Filmer.*

3. It is 3 a.m. at Café Sito and the ghost of Karl Marx shows up, hoping to relax, and finds the ghost of Plato reading portions of his *Republic (Staten)* to a group of ghostly admirers. Plato then reads the following passage from Book III of his *Republic*, where he describes the kind of society he likes: "And it is this kind of city in which a cobbler will stick to his cobbling and not try to be a pilot as well. The farmer will be a farmer and not also a judge, and the soldier will stick to soldiering and not try to be a businessman on the side. And so it will be with the rest of the occupations..."

Plato then reads a short passage from Book VIII, where he describes the kind of society he considers abhorrent: "[The] kaleidoscopic man" "lives his life day by day, indulging each appetite as it makes itself felt. One day he is drinking heavily and listening to the flute; on the next day he is dieting and drinks only water. Then he tries some exercise, only to lapse into idleness and lethargy. Sometimes he seems to want to be a philosopher. More frequently, he goes in for politics, rising to say or do whatever comes into his head. If he develops an enthusiasm for military men, he rushes to join them; if for businessmen, then he is off in that direction. His life lacks all discipline and order, yet he calls it a life of pleasure, freedom, and happiness..."

The ghost of Marx listens to all of this, getting angrier and angrier and finally can take it no longer. He bursts out into a tirade. Please indicate what Marx replied to these passages from Plato, what Marx thought about Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and what he made of Plato's idealist view of Justice. After that, please indicate how Plato's ghost replied.

Answer: *The basic text which the student should remember comes from "The German Ideology" by Marx and Engels. Here they wrote that, in capitalist society, "...each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he*

cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood." By contrast, they conjured up hopes that "...in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming [a] hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic." Thus, on this point Marx & Engels offer a diametrically opposed viewpoint to that of Marx. More specifically, Plato felt that each person should do what he or she does best, so that excellent singers should sing for a living, and excellent cobblers should make shoes for a living, and not the other way around. Plato carried that idea over into politics, arguing thus that only persons who really understood politics (philosophers) should be involved in governance – a position which Marx and Engels were arguably ambivalent. On the one hand, they preached the eventual withering away of the state, meaning that specialists in governance would not be needed in the long run; on the other hand, when it came to making revolution, they insisted that someone should be in charge, comparing a leaderless revolutionary party to a ship without a captain. It follows too that Plato's use of the Allegory of the Cave, to argue that some people understand reality, while others cannot, was necessarily completely anathema to Marx. Marx's ghost would certainly have no interest in Plato's idealistic view of justice since, while Plato believed that one could establish what would be just regardless of circumstances, Marx believed that justice is always the justice of those who control the society, which is to say the ruling class; in this regard, Marx sounded a little like Thrasymachus, whom Socrates defeated in the debate staged in Book I of Plato's "Republic".

4. Thomas Hobbes devotes Parts Three and Four of his *Leviathan* to discussing political challenges which he believes religion can pose and to offering his analysis and solutions. What are the risks, problems, and challenges which may arise in the religious sphere, according to Hobbes, and how does he go about addressing those risks, problems, and challenges?

*Answer: In "Leviathan" Hobbes emphasized the importance of uniformity of worship. To the extent that public worship was important in keeping the community together, a diversity of rituals and prayers would undermine the unity of the community. Accordingly, Hobbes denied that people enjoyed any right to religious freedom and thought, rather, that they had a duty to see that their religious behavior conformed to what the ruler (the sovereign) ordered. He was worried that, since people often feel passionate about their faith, differences of faith could lead people – indeed, had led people – to want to impose their religion on others, even to the point of killing those who would not accept the "correct" faith.*

*He was also opposed to the notion that the head of a Church could claim independent spiritual authority. On the contrary, the head of a Church derived his spiritual authority from the civil sovereign. If the Church were subordinated to the civil sovereign, all would be well; if not, he argued, the most likely outcome would be civil war. Since the separation of Church and state laid a foundation for religious diversity, he was opposed to it, and insisted that, within any state, there should be only one religion, controlled by the sovereign. To spell this out explicitly, people should not think for themselves in religious matters but should believe whatever the sovereign tells them to believe. In Hobbes' words, the sovereign must serve as "judge of what doctrines are fit to be taught."*

*In summary: both religious diversity and the claim of religious leaders to enjoy a spiritual authority directly from God, which is to say independent of the civil sovereign, represent threats to civil peace. The solution, for Hobbes, was to assure that the civil sovereign reign supreme in both temporal and spiritual matters, with the civil sovereign even appointing the pastors of the Church.*