Abstract

To what extent do pivotal nonpartisan voters believe and act upon potentially deceptive messages from partisan voters who privately observe candidates’ ex-ante fitness-for-office attributes? How do nonpartisan voters’ responses to messages vary with changing odds of candidates’ ex-ante suitability for office? This paper derives contrasting predictions regarding pivotal nonpartisan voters’ reactions to possibly untruthful messages across two-candidate voting competitions and tests them in the laboratory. We find that the partisan voters lie substantially more when candidates possess unequal than equal ex-ante odds of performing better in office. The inferior (superior) candidate’s base transmits more unfavorable (favorable) lies about their opponent (own) candidate. Facing candidates with different fitness-for-office odds, the nonpartisan voters largely ignore the message and vote for the ex-ante superior candidate. Yet, voting efficiency is lower in the competition with differentiated than undifferentiated candidates. We develop a behavioral framework including lying aversion to explain key features of our data.

Date: 30th March 2023 (Thursday)
Time: 3 P.M.
Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus
All are welcome to attend

Dr. Sattwik Santra
(Co-Convener, Seminar Sub-Committee)