

Mike Cowburn

Graduate School of North American Studies

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Education

Freie Universität Berlin Ph.D. Political Science 2019–2022 (exp.)

Dissertation: Partisan Polarization in Congressional Nominations: How Ideological & Factional Primaries Influence Candidate Positions

Committee: Christian Lammert (chair), Sean M. Theriault, Rachel M. Blum, Curd B. Knüpfer, Thorsten Faas, David Bosold

The thesis first documents the changing dynamics of U.S. congressional primary competition between 2006 and 2020, namely, the proliferation of ideological and factional contests. I then analyze the impact of ideological and factional primaries on candidate positions in terms of the selective (voter) effect, between-election adaptative effect, and within-election adaptative effect. I demonstrate that voters do not systematically reward non-centrist positioning even in primaries about ideological and factional differences, but that candidates often behave as if they do, adapting their positions both between and within election cycles.

Defense scheduled December 2022.

Freie Universität Berlin MA North American Studies (1,0) 2017–2019

The MA study focused primarily within the discipline of political science, with additional courses in cultural studies and interdisciplinary subjects. The thesis focused on the topic of polarization in the U.S. Congress and received the highest grade of 1,0.

University of Exeter BA Hons Politics (2:1) 2005–2008

The BA program gave a broad introduction to the discipline of political science, the dissertation focused on media representations of the U.S. presidency and received a 1st.

Research Interests

Topics: Political Parties, Congress, Primary Elections, Intra-Party Factions, Ideology, Candidate Selection, Polarization, Radicalization, Elite Communication.

Methods: Causal Inference, Quantitative Methods, Mixed Methods, Observational Data.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Cowburn, Mike and Rebecca Kerr. 2022. “Inclusivity and Decentralisation of Candidate Selectorates: Factional Consequences for Centre-Left Parties in England, Germany, and the United States.” *Political Research Quarterly*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221081213>

Cowburn, Mike and Michael T. Oswald. 2020. “Legislator Adoption of the Fake News Label: Ideological Differences in Republican Representative Use on Twitter.” *The Forum* 18(3): 389–413. <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2020-2015>

Book Chapters

Cowburn, Mike. 2022. “Experience Narratives and Populist Rhetoric in U.S. House Primaries” in Michael T. Oswald (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80803-7_26

Cowburn, Mike. 2020. “The Transformation of the Congressional Primary” in Michael T. Oswald (ed.) *Mobilization, Representation and Responsiveness in The American Democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24792-8_5

In Progress

Cowburn, Mike and Marius Sältzer. “Partisan Communication in Two-Stage Elections: The Effect of Primaries on Intra-Campaign Positional Shifts in Congressional Elections” [Revise & Resubmit]

Blum, Rachel M. and **Mike Cowburn**. “How Local Factions Pressure Parties: Activist Groups & Primary Contests in the Tea Party Era” [Revise & Resubmit]

Mike Cowburn and Curd B. Knüpfer. “The Emerging Fault Line of Alternative News: Intra-Party Division in Republican Representatives’ Media Engagement” [Under Review]

Commentary & Analysis

Cowburn, Mike. 2020. “[Not Just the Presidency: Congressional Primaries 2020.](#)”
Atlantische Akademie

Cowburn, Mike. 2020. “[Fostering Engagement in Primaries and Caucuses.](#)”
APSA PoliticalScienceNow

Selected Conference Presentations

APSA: 2020, 2021, 2022

MPSA: 2020, 2021, 2022

EPSA: 2020, 2021, 2022

ECPR: 2020

PSA: 2021

DGfA: 2020, 2021

Invited Talks & Media

11/2021 “Right-Wing Alternative Media and Republican Party Social Media Engagement” *Social Media and Politics Podcast*. Michael Bossetta. Episode 136. <https://socialmediaandpolitics.org/right-wing-alternative-media-social-media-engagement-congress-republican-party-twitter/>

11/2021 “Republican Party Factionalism as a Response to Racial & Economic Inequality” Freie Universität Ringvorlesung (Lecture Series), ‘What Stands Between Us and What Stands Before Us: Past, Present and Future of (In)equality in the U.S.’, Berlin

- 04/2021 “Polarization, Congressional Primaries, and Fake News” U.S. Studies Online, USSOcast Podcast, <https://usso.uk/usso-cast/>
- 03/2021 “The State of the Parties and Their Future Under the Biden Presidency” Atlantische Akademie Teachers’ Seminar, The United States in 2021 and Beyond
- 11/2020 “US-Wahl 2020” (“US Election 2020”) CouchFM Election Night TV & Radio Coverage, Berlin
- 11/2020 “Kongresswahl 2020”, Amerikawählt! Wahlabend 2020 (“Congressional Election 2020”, Atlantische Akademie Virtual Election Evening)
- 11/2020 “US Election System & Postal Voting”, interview with Fluter Magazine, <https://fluter.de/us-wahlssystem-briefwahl-interview> [in German]
- 09/2020 “Ein Ausblick auf die Kongress-, Gouverneurs- und einzelstaatlichen Wahlen: Gelingt den Demokraten die Rückeroberung des Senats und weiterer Einzelstaaten?” (“A look ahead to the congressional, gubernatorial, and state elections: will the Democrats succeed in retaking the Senate and other states?”) America Decides: 2020 Election Series, Bonn University
- 06/2019 “Demokratie unter Beschuss? Donald Trump und der Populismus”, (“Democracy under Attack? Donald Trump and Populism”) Tolerantes Brandenburg Series, Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Gymnasium
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Other Training

- 07/2022 Data Science Summer School, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin
Courses: Introduction to Python
- 08/2021 Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis, Virtual
Courses: Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis
- 08/2021 Summer School of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Parties, Aarhus University
- 07/2021 Data Science Summer School, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin
Courses: Intro to R Programming, Data Visualization with R, Research Design & Causal Analysis with R
- 03/2021 ECPR Virtual Winter School in Methods and Techniques, Virtual
Courses: The Statistics of Causal Inference
- 03/2021 Applied Statistics Workshop Series, NTNU Business School, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim
- 07/2020 Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis, Virtual
Courses: Applied Regression, Advanced Stata Programming
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Awards & Grants

- 2022 APSA Travel Grant
- 10–12/2021 STIBET Doctorate Promotion of the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD) three-month stipend (October to December 2021)
- 2021 APSA Political Communication Section’s Executive Committee Travel Reimbursement
- 2021 APSA Travel Grant

2021	Virginia Gray Graduate Research Grant from the APSA Political Organizations and Parties (POP) Section
2021	John Sullivan Award for Best Graduate Student Paper in the APSA Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior (EPOVB) Section
2019–2023	Freie Universität Berlin Graduate School of North American Studies (GSNAS) forty-month Doctoral Research Stipend (October 2019 to January 2023), including Annual Travel Grant

Teaching Experience

Freie Universität Berlin

Instructor

32513	U.S. Political Parties in a Partisan Era (MA)	Fall 2021
32503	Polarization in U.S. Politics (BA)	Spring 2019

Tutorial Leader

32000T	Understanding North America B: Political Science (BA)	Spring 2019
32000T	Understanding North America B: Political Science (BA)	Spring 2018

Thesis Supervisor

BA Thesis Supervisor	2019–present
MA Thesis Supervisor	2020–present

University of Exeter

EDU3014	Learning for Teaching (with in-school placement)	2007–2008
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Professional Association Memberships

American Political Science Association (APSA)
 Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)
 European Political Science Association (EPSA)
 European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR)
 Political Studies Association (PSA)
 German Association for American Studies (DGfA/GAAS)

Miscellaneous

Software Stata, Zotero, LaTeX (all advanced), R (Basic)
Languages English (native), German (B2)

Selected Non-Academic Employment

Account Director	Ideal (www.ideal.co.uk)	2010–2017
Administrative Assistant	Liberty (www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk)	2008–2009

References

Christian Lammert	Sean M. Theriault
Professor of North American Politics & Policy	Professor of Political Science
John-F-Kennedy Institute for North American Studies	Department of Government
Freie Universität Berlin	The University of Texas at Austin
christian.lammert@fu-berlin.de	seant@austin.utexas.edu

Rachel M. Blum

Assistant Professor

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