

POLI 718 Agenda Setting, Baumgartner, Spring 2017

Questions for week 8, Pol of Information and 2 articles on cascade models

Consider the following questions for discussion and for potential paper topics.

1. Review the two articles on cascades and discuss the range of their applicability. What is an area of everyday life where the ideas apply? What is a political science application? Where is the line where these things matter and do not matter? In other words, what are the boundaries of applicability of such approaches? What has to be there for this to matter?
2. How does a cascade model differ from most equilibrium models with which you are already familiar? Try to formalize this. What are the key differences in inputs? Outputs? Behavior of the system?
3. What causes a fad?
4. Does the absence of a viable solution stop the government from attempting to address a problem? Give an example where it does and one where it does not. What's the general rule?
5. Consider the period from 1946 through the oil crisis of the Nixon / Ford years. What was going on in government? Why? To what effect?
6. We say that it is inevitable that complexity will struggle with leadership, messiness with order, concern with problems with complaints of wastefulness. How different is this from partisanship? Are Democrats interested in solving problems and Republicans concerned with hierarchy, order, spending, and control? Speculate a little. Now look at the data in the book.
7. Is more information better? What about "fake news"? In the book, we are very favorable about the implications of diversity of sources of information, lack of rules of standing, and messiness in general. Have we reached the point that this was an overstatement? What would be the general rule about the limits of our theory on that score? How would we revise to consider the value or the worth of the information provided?
8. Who is an expert on which issue is more important than another? Practically speaking, how is that question resolved in politics?
9. If you could devise an optimal political system, what would be the role of subject-matter experts? How would you design an optimal method to deal with information overload?
10. What testable research hypothesis can you develop drawing from the book? Develop one.