Leicester Inter-disciplinary Workshop on Elections, Public Opinion, Participation and Parties
Agenda

4th workshop, 23rd January 2014
ATT 208 Attenborough Seminar Block, Second floor.

(Lunch & refreshments available from 13.00)

13:30 – Welcome and new members’ presentations

13:50 - First Paper Presentation (Laura Mackenzie- Department of Politics and IR)

“Political participation in the European Parliament: an analysis of populist radical right rapporteurs”
Populist radical right members of the European Parliament constitute 5% of all members in the current parliamentary term, and have been in representation to a greater or lesser extent in the Parliament since its inception in 1979. However, their presence in the Parliament has increased significantly since 1984, as has their fragmentation: the number of national parties in the populist radical right party family has increased as well as the number of parliamentary representatives. As a group of niche MEPs on the fringes of the Parliament's political spectrum, populist radical right members have received opposition from the Parliament as a whole and measures have been taken to limit their engagement. For example, two Committees of Inquiry into Racism and Xenophobia, and changes to the composition of political groupings has made it more difficult for populist radical right MEPs to cooperate with one another. This paper considers the extent to which these MEPs participate in the political process of the European Parliament, specifically in the process of rapporteurships (i.e. the means by which MEPs present reports to Parliament). Primarily using Legislative Observatory data from the fourth to the current parliamentary term, this paper analyses the level of engagement of populist radical right MEPs in the process of rapporteurship, and the extent to which any lack of engagement can be explained.

14:05 – Discussant: Pierre Montforte (Department of Sociology)

14:10 - General discussion of the paper

14:25 - Second Paper Presentation (James Rockey- Department of Economics)

‘Political Competition increases turnout”
Much analysis has focused on why individuals vote at all. This paper focuses on why turnout varies across elections and across districts. A simple micro-founded measure of policy based party competition is developed and calculated for every district at every election in 15 European countries over the period 1947-1998. Our results suggest that a large proportion of the within-district inter-election variance in turnout levels can be attributed to differences in the intensity of district-level of political competition.

14:40 – Discussant: Daniel Bischof (Department of Politics and IR)

14:45 - General discussion of the paper

15.00 – 15.20 Coffee break

15:20 - Third Paper Presentation (Luis Ramiro- Department of Politics and IR)
“The support for radical left parties in Western Europe: social background, ideology and political orientations”

Radical left parties (RLP) have been a significant actor in many party systems of Western Europe since the expansion of mass democracy. In some cases they have been very relevant forces in terms of popular support. Despite this fact they have not received a great deal of attention over the past decades from a comparative perspective. One of the phenomena that have been neglected by this lack of scholarly attention is the uneven level of electoral support that RLP have enjoyed across Western Europe. This paper proposes for the first time a cross-national empirical account of the variation of RLP vote across Western Europe based on individual-level data through the examination of the role of an important set of factors. It evaluates the effect of some socio-demographic and attitudinal individual-level variables on the RLP vote. The paper assesses which individual variables have the most influence in fostering the vote for RLP across Western Europe.

15:35 – Discussant: Rick Whitaker (Department of Politics and IR)

15:40- General discussion of the Paper