

IGPA RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES FIRST SEMESTER 2015

The IGPA Research Seminar Series showcases recent research by Canberra-based academics, visiting scholars and international and interstate guests in an informal setting, conducive to lively debate. The Seminar Series takes place between 11am and 12pm. It is normally preceded by morning tea at Retro Café, Building 23, from 10:30am, which you are most welcome to join. If you would like to be informed of future seminars then please contact IGPA's Communication and Events Officer, Ellen Grady, who will add your name to our email list. The Series is convened by Dr Paul Fawcett and Dr Xiaodong Gong. Further information about this Seminar Series and other events at IGPA can be found on our website.

5 MARCH 2015

Ann Harding Conference Centre (Building 24) Seminar Room One

11:00-12:00

PROFESSOR CHARLES R SHIPAN

University of Michigan

Top-Down Federalism: State Policy Responses to National Government Discussions

Can national political institutions influence state-level adoptions by drawing attention to an issue and by providing information about it? In this paper we examine whether policy ideas, captured by hearings and the introduction of bills in the US Congress, diffuse from the national government to the states and influence state-level adoptions. Our findings reveal that national policy activities do stimulate state policy adoptions, but only for states with professional legislatures and strong policy advocates.

12 MARCH 2015

Ann Harding Conference Centre (Building 24) Seminar Room One

11:00-12:00

DR LIGANG SONG

Australian National University

Political Connection, Local Protection and Domestic Market Entry Barriers in China: A Firm-level Analysis

Trade theories assume that trade within domestic market involves less transaction costs since goods flow more freely as compared with those trading between countries. However, in a country such as China where domestic market is highly segmented by its provincial borders, such market segmentation raises transaction costs for firms engaged in business across different provinces as local protection creates various kinds of barriers to domestic market entry. These market entry barriers hampered domestic firms' abilities to trade outside their own provinces prompting these firms to seek close political connection with local governments to overcome these barriers. Based on the Chinese firms' survey data of the World Bank (2005), this study examines whether political connection helps firms facilitate market entry into other cities or provinces. The study finds that firms with closer political connection are more likely to enter other provincial markets, but this does not work for accessing export markets. This result suggests that local protection hinders firms' domestic market entry as they are in need of help when doing business in other provinces. Moreover, political connection fails to play the role for gaining market share in other provinces once the presence of local protection becomes more serious. This suggests that political connection tends to be effective only within a certain range of protection, highlighting the need for China to eliminate regional market entry barriers by developing a unified and integrated domestic market by deepening its institutional reforms.

16 APRIL 2015

Ann Harding Conference Centre (Building 24) Seminar Room One

11:00-12:00

DR DAN WOODMAN

University of Melbourne

Insecure and Non-standard Work Patterns Across the 3rd Decade of Life: The Implications for Relationships, Social Inclusion, and Political Engagement

Insecure contracts and non-standard employment patterns are common for young people in Australia. These conditions are often assumed to be transitional, with most employees shifting to standard hours of employment and more secure employment conditions as they gain work experience and graduate from higher education. Using questionnaire data from the Life Patterns longitudinal study of Australian young people, tracking a cohort of 626 from the age of 18-26, this paper shows that while contract conditions of tenure do improve in general for participants over time as they build employment experience and upon graduation, other employment conditions, such as non-standard work patterns, do not. In particular, the participants are not transitioning into a 9-5 Monday-to-Friday pattern of engagement. Even among credentialed employees in full-time employment and who see themselves as working in a 'career', the majority were working non-standard hours, including evening work and weekend work. The participants have to build adult lives in the context of these work patterns. Drawing on interview data with a subsample of 50 participants, the presentation highlights the implications of this for the quality of participants' significant relationships, for their social practices and for the types of political engagement they can undertake.

23 APRIL 2015

Ann Harding Conference Centre (Building 24) Seminar Room Two

11:00-12:00

PROFESSOR VIVIEN LOWNDES

University of Nottingham and University of New South Wales

Reconsidering the 'Three New Institutionalisms': Towards Convergence and Consolidation

It is thirty years since March and Olsen published their seminal article on the 'new institutionalism'. Ten years later, Hall and Taylor identified three schools of new institutionalism (rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalisms), a framework which has achieved a canonical status in political science. Although Hall and Taylor actually argued for greater 'interchange' between the positions, there has since developed a proliferation of different schools of institutionalism. But, behind this academic sectarianism, it is in fact possible to detect a series of consolidatory moves. It is more productive to think about three phases of institutionalism than to remain stuck in the language of three schools of institutionalism. Since the 1980s institutionalism has developed through phases of rediscovery, divergence and convergence. The 'three schools of institutionalism' are symptomatic of the second phase (divergence) and not as emblematic of institutionalism in general. The paper identifies a set of core concepts that characterise institutionalism in its current phase of convergence, and a series of key dilemmas that are challenging institutionalists of all hues. While provocative to mainstream thinking, focusing upon the consolidatory impulse within institutionalism is actually to return to Hall and Taylor's original intent.

7 MAY 2015

Building 24 The Fishbowl

11:00-12:00

DR ALAN MARTINA

Australian National University

Assessing 'Worms at Work': Longer-Term Randomized Controlled Trials, Applied within Non-Linear General-Equilibrium Economic Systems, Risk Not Being the Gold Standard

This paper draws on a book manuscript in progress, which attempts to determine the deeper necessary processes or mechanisms that are likely to influence the pace of sustainable economic growth in a developing country. The central matter discussed is the practical difficulties associated with (a) applying, satisfactorily, longer-term randomized controlled trials (RCTs), in a representative developing country, to assess aspects of economic policy and (b) implementing policies based on the experimental information generated by some pertinent RCT. I discuss these difficulties and use formal analysis to illustrate that a longer-term RCT is unbalanced and, therefore, will tend to generate inaccurate experimental results. It follows that a RCT applied in this set of circumstances probably will not provide the 'gold standard' against which all other research methodologies should be judged. I show how these ideas can be practically applied with particular focus on a de-worming program, implemented in the western Kenya in the late 1990s. The theoretical ideas and practical examples employed in this paper also have implications for how 'experimental' evidence is interpreted in an attempt to understand what deeper factors are likely to have influenced, and are likely to influence the pace of economic development in a representative developing country. My overall argument is that 'experimental' evidence has tended to be misinterpreted because it has failed to take into account (i) all relevant information and (ii) that the economy system for this country most likely is non-linear.

14 MAY 2015

Ann Harding Conference Centre (Building 24) Seminar Room One

11:00-12:00

PROFESSOR ROB STONES

University of Western Sydney

Why Audiences for News and Current Affairs Need Social Theory

In his recently published book, *Why Current Affairs Needs Social Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2015), Rob Stones argues that social theory can strengthen the capacities of audiences for news and current affairs. Drawing from major traditions in social thought, and on academic media analysis, he provides the conceptual tools for audiences to bring greater sophistication to their interpretations, developing their capacity to think across items and genres. Through promoting a direct engagement with public issues, this use of social theory aims to contribute to the ethical enrichment and value purpose of social science. This paper will be based around the arguments of the book, and will outline Stones' conception of a social theoretical frame designed to provide audiences with a systematic means of addressing the status and adequacy of individual texts. The argument is that social theoretical frames can reveal both the strengths and the shortcomings of the media framing of the 'contextual fields' within which news and current affairs events take place. By reflecting upon single reports of events from the perspective of contextual fields, and then relating different accounts to each other, it becomes possible to build up composite understandings of cases and to develop a superior grasp of the quality of one's current understanding.

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