

## **YOSH HALBERSTAM**

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### **RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIELDS**

Research: Political Economy, Industrial Organization, Law and Economics

Teaching: Applied Econometrics, Microeconomics, Political Economy

### **DOCTORAL STUDIES**

Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois

Dissertation: Essays on Political and Legal Institutional Design

Committee Chairperson: Professor Timothy Feddersen

Date of Completion: July 2010 (expected)

### **PREDOCTORAL STUDIES**

M.A., Economics, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 2007

B.A., *summa cum laude*, Economics, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, 2005 (completed coursework within 18 months, half the standard time for the Program in Economics)

Minor in East Asian Studies with a concentration in Chinese institutions and language

### **FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

Susan Bies Prize for policy research, Department of Economics, Northwestern University, 2009  
(the only prize awarded by the economics department for doctoral student research)

Dissertation Year Fellowship, Northwestern University, 2009

Conference Travel Grant, Northwestern University, 2008 and 2009

Dean's List, Faculty of Humanities, Hebrew University, 2004

Honors Student Annual Prizes, Department of Economics, Hebrew University, 2003 and 2004

### **TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University, Winter 2009

Introduction to Macroeconomics with Professor Wiederholt

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University, Fall 2006 and Fall 2008

Economics of Nonprofit Organizations with Professor Burton Weisbrod

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University, Winter 2007, Spring 2007 and Fall 2007

Introduction to Applied Econometrics with Professors Horowitz and Habermalz

Research Assistant, Kellogg School of Management, Winter 2008 and Spring 2008

Professor David Austen-Smith

Research Assistant, Graduate School of Business, Hebrew University, Fall 2003 and Spring 2004

Professor Yishay Yafeh

### **PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED CONFERENCES**

Wallis Conference on Political Economy, University of Rochester, New York, October 2009

PIER Conference on Political Economy, University of Pennsylvania, Penn., September 2009

American Political Science Association, Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada, September 2009  
Econometric Society, North American Summer Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, June 2009  
Midwest Political Science Association, Annual Conference, Chicago, Illinois, April 2009

### **MILITARY EXPERIENCE**

Israel Defense Forces, Operational Combat Unit, Company Leader, Lieutenant, 1994-1998

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Citizenship: U.S. and Israel

### **JOB MARKET PAPER\***

“Information Contagion in Coelection Environments: Theory and Evidence from Entry and Exit of Senators” with fellow graduate student, Pablo Montagnes

It is well-known that the electorate in midterm elections is more ideologically extreme than the electorate in presidential elections; yet, surprisingly, we find that United States senators that are elected in midterm elections are consistently more ideologically moderate than those first elected in presidential elections. Furthermore, senators who are ousted or retire from office around presidential elections are significantly more ideologically moderate than those who exit around midterm elections. We propose a theory in which the presence of party labels enables voters to rationally update their beliefs about candidates across contemporaneous races for office. Wide support for a candidate in one race aids marginal candidates from the same party in other races. Our model generates predictions that are consistent with our new findings as well as a broad set of phenomena from the literature and suggests that unbiased public signals, such as party labels, may have unexpected effects on the aggregation of private information and preferences. Our empirical findings illustrate that simple elements of institutional design may not be outcome-neutral and may profoundly impact the extent to which duly-elected representatives reflect their constituents' preferences.

\* This paper reflects work that is described in more detail in two separate papers, “Consistent Biases in Electoral Environments: Evidence from Entry and Exit of Senators” and “Party Labels and Information: The Implications of Contagion in Coelection Environments”.

### **OTHER PAPERS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS**

“Unanimity, Voting Blocks and Bias on Judicial Panels: The Effects of Institutional Design”

The majority of votes on state supreme court panels are unanimous. However, existing studies that seek to shed light on the implications of different judicial selection systems (merit-based selection, nonpartisan election, appointment, etc.) drop unanimous panel votes from their empirical analyses. Because the proportion of unanimous votes is substantial, dropping these observations compromises the external validity of the studies' results. In this work, I take the opposite approach and find that unanimity rates differ significantly and persistently across selection systems. I offer a model that links selection systems to the generation of systematic bias among judges that, given the opportunity to deliberate as a panel, causes variation in the persistence and size of voting blocs on state supreme court panels. Depending on the source of bias, the model generates distinct testable predictions.

“Divergent Predictions of Information Acquisition: An Empirical Test of Voter Turnout Models”

I evaluate several classes of voter turnout models within an information acquisition framework. Different types of people, differentiated by their ideologies or other attributes, respond differently to changes in the cost or availability of political information. Strong links have been established in the literature between turnout and information; however, different models generate distinct predictions about the types of citizens who are likely to benefit most from the introduction or withdrawal of information. In one model, partisan and swing voters benefit least from acquiring political information. In another, the benefit of acquiring more precise information about candidates is monotone in a citizen’s degree of ideological extremism. To test these predictions on data, I employ observed information acquisition of citizens using Google Insights and subsequent election returns. These findings can aid policy makers in assessing the effects that political information dissemination might have on participation and electoral outcomes.

“Biases in Judicial Selection Design: The Effects of Public Signals and Incomplete Information”

I examine the effects on judicial outcomes of variation across states in institutional design of judicial selection systems (merit-based, nonpartisan election, appointment, etc.). I propose a model in which institutional details in an environment of incomplete information affect the process by which voter preferences are aggregated and represented. Recent empirical work suggests the presence of analogous effects in congressional electoral environments. Utilizing the exogenous feature of oscillating midterm and presidential election cycles, I employ a methodology that identifies the implications for voter behavior of public signals and simultaneous races for office, each of which is embedded in most judicial selection systems. This methodology allows me to test whether, in the aggregate, these institutional details manifest themselves in consistent biases in the types of judges selected for the bench.

**REFERENCES**

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