



POLITICAL STUDIES SEMINARS

Seminar

The death of valence politics?
How the economy no longer matters
for democratic accountability in the U.S.

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and on ZOOM

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How do partisan governments serve the interests of all of the people -- including the interests of citizens who did not vote for the winning party? One mechanism has been through competently managing so-called "valence issues" -- that is, issues where nearly everyone agrees on the desired outcome, such as lower crime or strong economic performance. In the contemporary U.S., it appears that the historically important valence issue of the economy is waning as a method of democratic accountability. This is happening in two ways: First, among both in-partisans and out-partisans, the over-time fluctuations in government approval are decreasingly caused by shifts in attitudes about the economy. Second, both among in-partisans and out-partisans, economic attitudes themselves are decreasingly a function of objective economic reality. Together, these suggest that economic performance is less and less a means to hold governments accountable -- because neither in-partisans nor out-partisans reward or punish partisan governments for economic performance.

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