

Department of Political Science Department Seminar

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Dr Michael Plouffe

"Do Electoral Campaigns Change Public Support for Trade? Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Election"



Moderator: A/P Sooyeon Kim
Tuesday, 7th Nov 2017
2.00pm to 3.30pm
PS Staff Meeting Room, AS1, #04-01
National University of Singapore

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ABSTRACT

The open-economy politics of trade presumes that elections, as a political institution, aggregate preferences of individual voters to resolve a salient trade cleavage in a democratic society. This presumption, despite being widely applied to analytical narratives of trade politics in the existing literature, has not been empirically tested. The 2016 US presidential election is unique in this regard; trade policy became a politically salient issue, and was treated as such during the electoral campaign. We exploit two waves of a nationally-representative panel survey conducted before and after the 2016 US presidential election to identify the effect of electoral campaigns on the change in public support for trade in general and trade agreements in particular. In contrast with the conventional wisdom, we find that the election and presidential campaigns not only aggregate preexisting individual preferences for trade, but also affect public support for trade. Our main result helps explain why political candidates continue to include trade as an electoral plank when campaigning. It also suggests that trade preferences of individual voters are more endogenous to domestic political institutions and contemporary political dynamics -- in this case, the presidential election and campaigns -- than previously assumed in the literature.

BIO

Michael Plouffe is Assistant Professor of International Political Economy at the School of Public Policy, University College London. His research primarily examines the politics and policies surrounding global production, with a particular focus on international trade. He also studies monetary policy, financial systems, and technology policies.

