NONREPRESENTATIVE REPRESENTATIVES: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE DECISION MAKING OF ELECTED POLITICIANS

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About the Talk:
A considerable body of work in political science is built upon the assumption that politicians are more purposive, strategic decision makers than the citizens who elect them. At the same time, other work suggests that the personality profiles of office seekers and the environment they operate in systemically amplifies certain choice anomalies. These contrasting perspectives persist absent direct evidence on the reasoning characteristics of representatives. We address this gap by administering experimental decision tasks to incumbents in Belgium, Canada, and Israel. We demonstrate that politicians are as or more subject to common choice anomalies when compared to nonpoliticians; they exhibit a stronger tendency to escalate commitment when facing sunk costs, they adhere more to policy choices that are presented as the status-quo, their risk calculus is strongly subject to framing effects, and they exhibit distinct future time discounting preferences. This has obvious implications for our understanding of decision making by elected politicians.

Bio:
Peter Loewen is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto and Director of the University of Toronto’s School of Public Policy and Governance.

Date: Thursday, February 8, 2018
Time: 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
Place: Social Science Rm 729
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