How do new party systems evolve over time? This presentation will argue that 1) party system evolution requires solving coordination problems that parties and voters face in early elections and that 2) resolution occurs through a learning mechanism. Elections disseminate information to parties and voters alike, and they in turn alter their behavior and their beliefs about party viability and the electorate’s preferences. Institutional settings, however, strongly condition the pace of learning. Restrictive electoral systems accelerate learning through the harsh penalties they impose on discoordination, while permissive ones prolong the process. Through testing the argument on a unique district-level dataset, it has been found that both parties and voters adjust their behaviors over time and that this happens faster in restrictive electoral systems. The findings point to a tradeoff between consolidation and representation: while party system evolution is facilitated by restrictive electoral systems, the inclusion of distinct social groups in the political arena is better served by permissive ones.

**Nasos Roussias** is a Lecturer at the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield in the UK. His work focuses on institutions, elections, parties and voters. Among other topics, his research touches on the development of new party systems, electoral fraud, the impact of electoral observation, and the importance of parliamentary representation. His work has been published in *Comparative Political Studies* and *Political Science Research and Methods*.

**Friday, April 3, 2015**  
3:00 pm – 4:30 pm  
Voesar Conference Room  
1957 E St. NW, Suite 412  
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