

The Indiana Democracy Consortium



ELECTORAL COMPETITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

REGINA SMYTH-POLITICAL
SCIENCE

THURSDAY NOV. 1 3-5PM

LAW SCHOOL CONFERENCE ROOM

The theory of democratic transitions argues that electoral competition is essential for democratic consolidation. Elections not only provide the basis for popular representation in government but also provide a mechanism in which political actors--voters, leaders and activists--can learn how to work within the new democratic regime structure to pursue common goals. This discussion demonstrates that under some conditions, elections do not lead to accurate learning because they reveal false information about what voters' want from their new government. Parties and candidates who predicate their future organizational and campaign strategies based on this false information are unsuccessful in the next round of elections, leading to volatility and instability in the political system.