



POLS 4073: Social Choice and Institutions

Spring 2018

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Office Hours: The best time to ask me questions is during class. If you have a question, rest assured others have the same question. The second best time to ask me questions is right after class. All other hours are by appointment.

Course Purpose and Design:

Individual and collective choice are fundamental features of a social existence. Political choices typically occur within a governing *institutional framework*. Therefore, a formally structured understanding of all aspects of political choice within institutions enhances one's understanding of politics in general. By design, this course has a large amount of theory-oriented work. However, for examples, we will focus on legislatures, bureaucracies, executives, and courts.

This course introduces students to modern tools and techniques of formal analysis. We will strive to avoid armchair speculation, as the formal analysis in this class is deductively structured and logically based.

The course has two broad goals. Our first goal is to learn about theories of individual and collective choice. Our second goal is to apply those theories of choice and the tools and techniques discussed in class to political institutions.

Grading:

Three equally weighted exams (2 in class and the final) – 25% each
Short Assignments / Short Papers – 15%
Attendance, Participation, and Pop Quizzes – 10%

The final is scheduled by the University, but we can choose our in-class exam dates.

The assignments and short papers are designed to encourage students to engage the material more deeply, develop analytical skills, and apply what they have learned.

Students are expected to be familiar with the assigned readings and should be prepared to discuss them in an intelligent manner. Participation points depend on active.

A's will be given to anyone receiving 93 or more points, A- 90-93, B+ 87-90, B 83-87, B- 80-83, C+ 77-80, C 73-77, C- 70-73, D 60-70, F 60 and below.

Reading Material:

Shepsle's **Analyzing Politics** is the main text for the course. It is available at the UGA bookstore in the Tate Center. There are numerous articles assigned as well. They are available at <http://www.jstor.org> and other on-line sources. I will provide assignments as pdfs if they are not available through jstor. You are responsible for downloading, printing and reading these articles. Some of the articles tend to be more difficult than the main text, so keep that in mind as you allocate your time for the assignments. At times, the reading is quite challenging, so I recommend that you take notes as you read. In the past, study teams have been very helpful for students.

Even when there appears to be very little required reading, we cover a deceptively large amount of material. Strive to keep up.

Final Issues:

This course presumes that you have mastered basic introductory material related to political science and American politics. For a refresher, I recommend Kernell and Jacobson's *The Logic of American Politics*.

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. All academic work for this course must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

A course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class might be necessary.

Make-up tests are seldom given. Given that I've taught well over 5000 students, stop to consider whether your "excuse" is extraordinary.

Late assignments are docked one letter grade for each day they are late. Weekends are two days long

All phones should be turned off and stowed under your seats or in overhead bins. Your instructor will let you know when it's safe to move use your phones. Laptops are mixed blessings in the classroom. Checking emails, playing games, or surfing the web are inappropriate. Taking notes is appropriate.

PART I. BUILDING BLOCKS AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

WEEKS 1-2 WHY GOVERNMENT

How are Laver's answers for the need of government different from what you've heard in the past? Consider Individual Morality and Public Morality. How does Axelrod address them both?

Laver. 1983. Chapters 1 and 2 from *Invitation to Politics*.

Axelrod. 1984. Chapters 1 and 4 from *The Evolution of Cooperation*.

Shepsle, chapter 10

SOME FUN ITEMS

Can game theory or social choice theory help us to understand political events better? Is this math?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/25/upshot/john-kasich-republican-nomination.html>

<http://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2016/2/23/11099096/mcconnell-preemptively-obstruct>

<https://qz.com/139453/theres-one-key-difference-between-kids-who-excel-at-math-and-those-who-dont/>

WEEKS 2-3 UTILITY THEORY: A FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL CHOICE

How do our answers regarding the need for government affect how we study individuals and governmental institutions? What do we need to make a rational choice? How do we choose?

CANONICAL MODELS OF CHOICE

Shepsle, chapters 1 and 2

NON-CANONICAL ISSUES

Rabin. 1998. "Psychology and Economics." *Journal of Economic Literature* 36:11-46.

Druckman. 2001. "Using Credible Advice to Overcome Framing Effects." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 17:62-82.

WEEKS 4-5 GROUP CHOICE OR AGGREGATING INDIVIDUALS' CHOICES

ARROW AND BLACK: How does Black find an equilibrium when Arrow cannot?

Shepsle, chapters 3 and 4

WEEKS 6-7 MAJORITY RULE AND AN ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM

Is there anything special about MR? Are non-MR procedures reasonable for democratically governed societies?

- Shepsle, chapter 5 to page 110
Weingast. 1979. "A Rational Choice Perspective on Congressional Norms." *American Journal of Political Science* 23:245-262.
Ainsworth. 1997. "Representation and Institutionalization." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 9:147-65.
Herzberg. 1992. "An Analytic Choice Approach to Concurrent Majorities: The Relevance of John C. Calhoun's Theory for Institutional Design." *Journal of Politics* 54:54-81.

PART II. APPLICATIONS OF THE MAIN RESULTS

WEEK 8-9 CONTRACTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUREAUCRACIES

In what sense are contracts like institutions? In what sense are firms like bureaucracies?

- Cheung. 1969. "Transaction Costs, Risk Aversion, and the Choice of Contractual Arrangements." *Journal of Law and Economics* 12:23-42.
Umbeck. 1977. "A Theory of Contract Choice and the California Gold Rush." *Journal of Law and Economics* 20:421-37.
Shepsle, chapter 13. Skip the "Niskanen" sections from 410-17 and 438-440.
Hammond and Miller. 1985. "A Social Choice Perspective on Expertise and Authority in Bureaucracy." *American Journal of Political Science* 29:1-28.

WEEK 9-10 LEGISLATURES AND COMMITTEES

Which institution is addressed in the first article of the U.S. Constitution? Which article of the Constitution is the longest?

- Shepsle, chapter 5 (123-the end)
Krehbiel. Chapters 1 and 2 from *Pivotal Politics*.

WEEK 10-11 LEGISLATURES AND STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR

Hmm, would members of Congress ever behave strategically?

- Shepsle, chapters 6, 11, and 12
Denzau, Riker, and Shepsle. 1985. "Farquharson and Fenno: Sophisticated Voting and Home Style." *American Political Science Review* 79:117-134.
Groseclose and Milyo. 2010. "Sincere versus Sophisticated Voting in Congress." *Journal of Politics* 72:60-73.

WEEK 12 CONGRESS, DELEGATION AND DISCRETION

How does Congress manage myriad policies?

- Epstein and O'Halloran. 1996. "Divided Government and the Design of Administrative Procedures." *Journal of Politics* 58:373-397.
- Ainsworth and Harward. 2009. "Delegation and Discretion in Anticipation of Coalitional Drift." *American Politics Research* 37:983-1002

WEEK 13 PRESIDENTS AND LEGISLATURES

How can presidents move policy unilaterally? What are the implications of unilateral executive actions?

- Howell, William G. 2005. "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35:417-39.
- Moe and Howell. 1999. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29:850-73.
- Kelley and Marshall. 2009. "Threats as Coordinated Strategies Assessing Presidential Power: Signing Statements and Veto." *American Politics Research* 37: 508-33.
- Moe and Howell. 1999. "The Presidential Power of Unilateral Action." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 51:132-79.
- Howell and Moe. 2016. Selections from *Relic*.

WEEKS 14 COURTS

How do courts affect policy?

- Shepsle, chapter 15
- Moraski, Byron J. and Charles R. Shipan. 1999. "The Politics of Supreme Court Nominations: A Theory of Institutional Constraints and Choices." *American Journal of Political Science* 43:1069-95.
- Bonneau, Hammond, Maltzman, and Wahlbeck. 2007. "Agenda Control, the Median Justice, and the Majority Opinion on the U.S. Supreme Court." *American Journal of Political Science* 51:890-905. Ignore the empirical section.
- Priest and Klein. 1984. "The Selection of Disputes for Litigation." *Journal of Legal Studies* 13:1-55.
- Clark and Kesteléc. 2013. "The Supreme Court and Percolation in the Lower Courts: An Optimal Stopping Model." *Journal of Politics* 75:150–168.

PART IV. CONCLUSION

WEEK 15 LET'S JUST SEE WHAT HAPPENS HERE!