

POLS 4030  
M,W,F: 1:25-2:15 p.m.  
Baldwin 305  
Spring, 2012

Dr. Keith Dougherty  
Office: Baldwin 408, (706) 542-2989  
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### **Contemporary Political Thought**

This course introduces students to several advanced theories in contemporary political thought. The first part of the course introduces collective action theory and its implications for group formation. The second part analyses decision making in groups that have formed and the problems highlighted by Arrow's Impossibility Theorem and Sen's Liberal Paradox.

We will ask questions about how groups interact, political behavior, and democracy. For example, under what conditions do we need government? Will a group of rational individuals always behave in the interest of their group? Can our theories about group interaction help us understand political upheaval, international cooperation, and the rise of the nation state? Once a group or society is formed, how should it make decisions? Do the rules of a democratic process affect political outcomes, and if so, how? Can we establish fair democratic procedures and if so, which procedures are the fairest? These classic questions will be analyzed using formal analytical techniques. Although we will go deeply, no prior understanding of formal theory or economic reasoning is required to master this course.

We will read both theoretical and substantive works in this course. The theoretical arguments will be applied to practical examples in order to illustrate their usefulness.

#### **Grading**

Your grade will consist of a homework assignment, a mid-term exam, a term paper, and a final exam. I expect students to attend all classes and assume that you are mature enough to understand what happens when you miss a class. Ask another student for notes if you miss a class. I will not give out notes nor put them on the web. However, all assignments will be on-line. Please look at my web page for assignments.

Although I generally think of 90-100 as an A, 80-90 as a B, etc., your overall grade for the course will be based upon the following scale:

	A	92 or above	A-	90-91.99
B+	B	82-87.99	B-	80-81.99
C+	C	72-77.99	C-	70-71.99
D+	D	62-67.99	D-	60-61.99
F		59.99 or below		

#### **Home Work Assignment**

You will be assigned two home work assignments, each worth 10% of your grade. These assignments will help you practice the analytic skills taught in the course and help prepare you for the midterm and final, respectively. All assignments will be put on-line (on my web page) and not handed out in class.

#### **Term Paper Assignment**

20% of your grade is reserved for a one 4-5 page research paper that asks you to address one of the theoretical issues we learned in class. A short paper assignment such as this may be more difficult than a long paper assignment because it requires you to distill your thoughts into a concise argument. Although the paper topics are designed to make you think about the significance of the course, they may require a fair amount of analysis time and research in the

library. I suggest that you start on your paper as soon as the assignment is posted on the web. You will not be able to produce a quality *term* paper overnight.

### Exams

The final part of your grade comes from a mid-term exam and a final exam. Both exams may contain multiple choice, fill in the blank, problem solving, and essay type questions worth 30% of your grade each. The idea is to give you multiple types of questions to evaluate your understanding of the material, not to test your aptitude for a particular type of question. Some of the material from the *required* readings, that are not discussed in class, are very likely to be on the exams.

### Extra Credit

I may offer an in-class experiment, or two, that will give you an opportunity to gain (or lose) points on an exam or homework. Participation in these experiments is voluntary. Other than these experiments, there will be no other extra credit assignments in this course. Please plan ahead.

	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
HOME WORK 1	Feb 15	10%
MIDTERM EXAM	March 5	30%
TERM PAPER	April 2	20%
HOMEWORK 2	April 23	10%
FINAL EXAM	May 2	30%

### Academic Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about these standards before performing academic work. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. Also note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course and that deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

### Make-ups

Term papers and homework assignments require research and a fair amount of analysis time. Please plan ahead to avoid turning them in late. **Late assignments will be lowered one letter grade for every *working day* they are late and will not be accepted beyond the date stated on the assignment.** If an assignment is late, it would be a good idea to stick it under my office door (Baldwin 408) as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary late penalties. Grades are lowered for every *working day* they are late, not every class day they are late and no assignment will be accepted after the final exam!

If you miss the midterm exam and have an approved written excuse, you will be allowed to complete a make-up midterm on Wednesday, March 7 at 4:30 p.m., meeting in Baldwin 408. Please allow additional time in case we have to start late. **THERE WILL BE NO OTHER TIME TO MAKE UP THE MID-TERM EXAM AND NO MAKE-UP FOR THE FINAL.** It also should be noted that the make-up exam will be considerably more difficult than the regular mid-term exam and should be avoided. Please plan ahead.

## Required Texts

Reading assignments vary in length. Long assignments are generally followed by short assignments so that you can catch up in the event you fall behind. However, short assignments are more difficult and may require a second reading in order to be completely understood. I will assume that all students will have read the material **prior to class**. Remember, if you work hard and complete all the readings, this should be a very rewarding course. Expect two hours of reading for every hour of class time, except during the exam.

The following two books can be purchased from the university and off campus bookstores. Additional, **required** readings are assigned from the course packet, which is available at Bel Jeans.

- 1) Hobbes, Thomas. (1962) *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin (note: any version of this book will do).
- 2) Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010) *Analyzing Politics: rationality, behavior, and institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- 3) Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. (1977) *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- 4) Course Packet, Bel-Jean Copy Center, 163 East Broad Street, (706)548-3648 (between Lumpkin and College on Broad street, near the arches). **Required**. These readings are marked with a “**CP**” below.

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

### A. INTRODUCTION

Jan 9            1. Course Introduction

### B. INDIVIDUAL INCENTIVES GROUP ACTION

#### 1. Theories of Group Action

- Jan 11            a) The Leviathan: a classic theory of groups.  
                      \*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Macpherson's introduction (particularly pp. 25-51).
- Jan 13            No Class! SPSA meetings.
- Jan 16            No Class! MLK day.
- Jan 18            \*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13 (pp. 183-188), ch. 14 (pp. 189-201), ch. 17  
                      (pp. 223-228), ch. 18 (pp. 228-239).
- Jan 20-23        b) Collective Action Theory: a contemporary theory of groups  
                      \*Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 5 - 65), **CP**.  
                      \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 2.

- Jan 25-30 c) Games with Simultaneous Moves  
 \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 8.  
 \*Dixit and Skeath, *Games of Strategy*, ch. 4 (pp. 79-83, 97-99, 107-114), **CP**.
- Feb 1-6 d) N-player Games  
 \*Dixit and Skeath, *Games of Strategy*, chapter 11 (pp. 356-377), **CP**.
- Feb 8 e) Step-Good Games  
 \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 9.  
 \*Dougherty and Cain, "Suppressing Shays' Rebellion." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, **CP**.
2. Applications of the Theory
- Feb 10-15 a) Political Protest  
 \*Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-37).  
 \*Chong, "Coordinating Demands for Social Change," **CP**.  
 \*Kitman, *George Washington's Expense Account*, (pp. 13-34 and 105-111), **CP**.
- Feb 17 \*Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, Chapter 3 (pp. 96-180).
- Feb 20-22 \*Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, Chapter 4 (pp. 181-258).
- Feb 24-27 b) International Regimes  
 \*Olson and Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances." *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, **CP**.
- Feb 29 c) The Rise of the Modern State  
 \*Olson, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development." *American Political Science Review*, **CP**.

March 2 Catch-Up & Review

**March 5 MIDTERM EXAM**

C. DEMOCRACY AND GROUP DECISION MAKING

- March 7 1. Electoral Systems throughout the World  
 \*David Farrell, (2001) *Electoral Systems*, pp. 1-12., **CP**.
- March 9-16 No Class! Spring Break and Public Choice Meetings.
- March 19-26 2. Problems with Preference Aggregation.  
 \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 3.  
 \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 7.  
 \*Recommended: Donald Saari, *Decisions and Elections*, chapter 1 – on course reserve.

### 3. Arrow's Impossibility Theorem

- March 28-30      a) The Theorem  
                         \*Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, chapter 4.  
                         \*Recommended: Donald Saari, *Decisions and Elections*, chapter 2 (part, pp. 21-56) – on course reserve.
- April 2-4            b) Ways Out of the Theorem  
                         \*Amartya Sen, "Collective Rationality," *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, Chapter 3, pp. 33-40, **CP**.  
                         \*William Vickrey, "Utility, Strategy, and Social Decision Rules, in Brian Barry and Russell Hardin Eds. *Rational Man and Irrational Society*, pp. 343-353, **CP**.  
                         \*Recommended: Russell Hardin, "Public Choice Versus Democracy" in Copp, Hampton, and Roemer eds., *The Idea of Democracy*, pp. 157-172 – on electronic reserve.
4. Sen's Liberal Paradox
- April 6-11          a) Liberty  
                         \*Sen, "Markets and Freedoms," *Oxford Economic Papers*, focus on sections 3-5 (pp. 522-532), skim rest, **CP**.
- April 13            No class! Midwest Political Science Conference
- April 16-23        b) The Theorem  
                         \*Sen, "The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal" *The Journal of Political Economy*, **CP**.
- April 25-27        c) Full Circle  
                         \*Recommended: Donald Saari, *Decisions and Elections*, chapter 2 (pp. 56-67) – on course reserve.  
                         \*Recommended: Amartya Sen, "Liberty, Unanimity, and Rights," *Economica*, 43(171): 217-245 – introduces several criticisms of Sen's paradox as well as Sen's response to them (available through electronic reserve).
- April 30            Catch-Up & Review
- May 2                **FINAL EXAM (same room) 12:00-2:00 p.m.**