

POLS 4071e
Asynchronous Online Version.
Office: Baldwin 408
Maymester, 2022

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Social Choice and Elections

The field of Social Choice examines the structure of a fair voting system based on the preferences of individuals. Think of it as examining how a constitution could be engineered to satisfy certain democratic principles. These principles have to be mathematically consistent with one another or they won't work. The problem is pertinent to the creation of new governments, such as those after the Arab spring. Studying social choice should help students think about democracy analytically, objectively, and deeply.

We will ask how new democracies should structure their elections. Is proportional representation or voting in a single member districts more appropriate? What are the paradoxes of apportionment? Why do candidates always tend to be centrists in two party elections? Do the rules of a democratic process affect political outcomes, and if so, how? What kinds of systems, be they for electing national leaders or student council presidents, go furthest toward truly representing the wishes of the voters? What concepts of liberty are consistent with democracy and how might they conflict? These classic questions will be analyzed using formal analytical techniques – that is, using some simple logic and mathematics. Although we will go deeply, no prior understanding of formal theory or economic reasoning is required to master this course.

Virtual Office Hours

Email me at any time Monday – Friday. I will respond no later than 24 hours after the first contact and probably much sooner. It may take longer for a response if you email me through eLC. If you email after 8 pm, I probably won't respond until morning. We can also meet via Zoom appointments.

Technical Requirements for Course

This course is online and asynchronous (meaning you watch lectures on e-commons (i.e., [eLC](#)) at a time that is convenient for you. Assignments have specific due dates. Having regular access to the Internet is necessary for completing course assignments. Reliable Internet service is also important because exams will be time sensitive. I would not take tests on your phone. It is not reliable, particularly for the short answers questions. You will also need access to a computer where you can engage with course content like videos.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will

help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking [mental health services](#) or [crisis support](#). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit [BeWellUGA](#) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Grading

Your grade consists of discussing readings in perusall, two homework assignments, a mid-term exam, and a final exam. You are more than welcome to watch a recording of a class at any time, but you should try to keep up with the daily schedule listed below because all assignments are due on a fixed day and time. Maymester comes extremely fast making it is easy to fall behind. I assume you are mature enough to understand the consequences if you do. All assignments are posted on eLC.

I generally think of 90-100 as an A, 80-90 as a B, etc., but since the university uses a plus minus system I use the following scale for overall grades:

	A	92 or above	A-	90-91.99	
B+	88-89.99	B	82-87.99	B-	80-81.99
C+	78-79.99	C	72-77.99	C-	70-71.99
D+	68-69.99	D	62-67.99	D-	60-61.99
F	59.99 or below				

Perusall and Readings

All required reading assignments will be posted on [perusall](#) – a social e-reader which you can use for free. Perusall records the time you devote to each reading and the quality of your comments and shared notes. Each reading is considered an assignment that you read, question, and comment on. 10% of your grade will be based on your contributions to Perusall. Pay attention to its nudges. They are designed to help you improve your grade for each assignment (a.k.a., for each reading) as well as your overall performance in the course. Note, each assignment (a.k.a., each reading) should be completed by the dates listed below, with a two-day grace period added to accommodate the difficulties of summer. See the course overview in eLC for details on how to sign up for Perusall.

Home Work Assignments

You will be assigned two homework assignments, each worth 15% of your grade. These assignment will help you practice the analytic skills taught in the course and help you prepare for the exams. Assignments will be posted on-line at least one week before they are due. Feel free to remind me if they don't get posted quickly enough.

Exams

The preponderance of your grade will come from a mid-term exam and a final exam. Both may contain multiple choice, fill in the blank, problem solving, and essay type questions worth 30% of your grade each. A review sheet for each will be posted on eLC. The final is *not* cumulative. It only covers the material from the first day after the midterm to the end. Note: some questions may come from the readings not covered in lecture, so please read assignments. You might also want to work on the starred problems in the Hodge and Kilma chapters – the most important questions are listed under practice problems on eLC.

Make-ups

Homework assignments require 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 later than two *working* days after the due date**, so folks can get their homeworks back in a timely fashion. If an assignment is late, it would be a good idea to e-mail it to me <dougherk@uga.edu> as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary late penalties.

There are no makeup opportunities for the midterm or final. Since they can be taken over a window of time, they should accommodate almost any schedule.

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Percent of Grade</u>
PERUSALL (reading and discussions)	daily	10%
HOMEWORK 1 (apportionment)	May 24	15%
MIDTERM EXAM	May 26	30%
HOMEWORK 2 (voting rules)	June 6	15%
FINAL EXAM	June 9	30%

Student 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.

Texts

All readings will be made available through Perusall. The best way to learn this type of material is to solve problems on your own. The Hodge and Kilma text is full of questions you can work through. Starred questions are answered at the end of each chapter. I recommend you work out each of these on your own. It will help. Shorter readings are usually analytical and may require

more than one read to be fully comprehended. Remember, if you work hard and complete all the readings, this should be a very rewarding course. If you want a hard copy of the Hodge and Kilma book, it is available at the bookstore.

Hodge, Jonathan K. and Richard E. Klima. 2018. *The Mathematics of Voting and Elections: a hands-on approach*, 2nd edition. American Mathematical Society.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. INTRODUCTION

May 18 **Introduction: Electoral Systems Around the World**
*David Farrell, (2001) *Electoral Systems*, pp. 1-12.

II. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Paradox of Apportionment
May 19 - 20 *Hodge and Kilma, Ch 11, “Proportional (Mis)representation.”

 *Recommended: Balinski and Young, 2001, *Fair Representation*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press – book on course reserve.

III. PLURALITY RULE AND POPULAR ELECTIONS

The Median Voter Theorem
May 23 *Hinich and Munger, Ch 2, “The Spatial Model of Downs and Black,” *Analytical Politics*.

May’s Theorem

*Hodge and Kilma, Ch 1, “What’s So Good about Majority Rule?”
*Mueller, “May’s theorem on Majority Rule,” *Public Choice III*.

The Downsian Voter
May 24 *Downs, Anthony 1957. “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” *Journal of Political Economy*, 65(2): 135-150.
*Hinich and Munger, *Analytical Politics*, Ch 6, “Uncertainty and Policy Preference.”

Application: U.S. Presidential Elections

*2000 election ([click here](#))
*2016 election ([click here](#))
*2020 election ([click here](#))

May 25 Review Session, 6 pm - 7 pm, eastern time.

May 26 **MIDTERM EXAM** – online exam that you can start anytime 8 am - 8 pm.

IV. PROBLEMS WITH VOTING RULES

Plurality Rule, Pairwise Majority Rule

May 27 *Hodge and Kilma, Ch 2, “Le Pen, Nader, and Other Inconveniences”
*Hodge and Kilma, Ch 3, “Back into the Ring”

May 30 Memorial Day: No Class!

Other Voting Rules

May 31 *Marron, Brian. 2004. “One Person, One Vote, Several Elections: Instant Runoff
Voting and the Constitution” *Vermont Law Review*, 28: 343-372.

Recommended: Donald Saari, *Decisions and Elections*, Ch 1 – on eLC.

Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem

June 1 *Hodge and Kilma, Ch 4, “Trouble in Democracy” – focus on the strong form.
*Hodge and Kilma, Ch 5, “Explaining the Impossible.”
*Sen, Amartya “Collective Rationality,” *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*,
Ch 3, pp. 33-40.

Ways out of Arrow’s Theorem

June 2 *Vickrey, William, “Utility, Strategy, and Social Decision Rules,” in Brian Barry
and Russell Hardin Eds. *Rational Man and Irrational Society*, pp. 343-
353.
**Recommended:* Russell Hardin, “Public Choice Versus Democracy” in Copp,
Hampton, and Roemer eds., *The Idea of Democracy*, pp. 157-172 – on
eLC.

The Probability of Violating Voting Criteria

June 3 *Dougherty and Heckelman, “The Probability of Violating Arrow’s Conditions,”
European Journal of Political Economy.

June 6 *Dougherty and Edward, Ch 6, “Electoral Decision Making,” *The Calculus of
Consent and Constitutional Design*.

