POLS 4073: Social Choice and Institutions   Fall 2022

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Office Hours: The best time to ask me questions is during class. If you have a question, rest
   assured that 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. We will begin with an exploration of individual choice.
   We will then consider the emergence of norms, conventions and institutions. In the last part
   of the course, we will focus on legislatures, bureaucracies, executives, and courts. By
   design, this course has a large amount of theory-oriented work, but your knowledge of
   social and political institutions in the U.S. can give you a great foothold.

   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:

   This class will include in-class simulations as well as in-class exams. For the simulations to
   work, I will need everyone's cooperation to insure we can complete everything within our
   50-minute period. Grades will be comprised of participation, attendance, pop quizzes, and
   simulations (PAQS), 3 in-class exams, and the final. The in-class exams are weighted 15%,
   20%, and 25%. The PAQS weight is 10%. The final is weighted 30%.

   PAQS points depend on active engagement.

   A's will be given to anyone receiving 93 or more points, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-
   82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D 60-69, F 59 and below.

Reading Material:

Shepsle's **Analyzing Politics** is a main text for the course. We will also use various sections of Gaus and Thrasher's **Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: An Introduction**. You can probably find used copies of those books. There are numerous articles assigned as well. They are available at http://www.jstor.org and other on-line sources. I will try to provide pdfs for these materials, but I encourage you to familiarize yourself with various online and library search engines. Whether you find these materials or I distribute pdfs, you are responsible for downloading, printing, and reading the assigned material. Some of the reading tends to be challenging, so keep that in mind as you allocate your time for the assignments. You will not be overwhelmed by the number of pages to read. The trick is to comprehend and then master the assigned work. Given that the reading can be quite challenging, I recommend that you take notes as you read. In the past, study teams have been 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 that you might find in a Pols 1101 course at the University of Georgia. 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. If deviations become necessary, they will be announced to the class.

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.

No phones. No recording without express permission.

Days 1, 2, and 3

UTILITY THEORY: A FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL CHOICE

What do individuals need to make a rational choice? How do we choose? Are choices the same as goals? For valued items, more is generally better than less. Are there any limits to that notion?

CANONICAL MODELS OF CHOICE

    Shepsle, Chapters 1 and 2

    Gaus and Thrasher, *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (hereafter PPE), pp. 21-35

A FUN ITEM

Is this math?

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

Days 4, 5, and 6

CONVENTIONS, NORMS, AND INSTITUTIONS

Who's Norm? Are norms and conventions helpful, optimal, or fair? What are the two types of institutions?

Gaus and Thrasher, Chapter 7

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

Days 7, 8, and 9

HOW & WHY CONTRACTS EMERGE

How are risks and contracts related? How are laws and contracts related? What are transaction costs? What are hold up potentials? What is a moral hazard?

Stiglitz. *The Price of Inequality*, Chapter 7
Gaus and Thrasher, pp. 100-103

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.

Days 10 and 11

CAN GOVERNMENTS, CONTRACTS, OR NORMS EMERGE ENDOGENOUSLY

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*
Gaus and Thrasher, pp. 103-111

Day 12 FIRST IN-CLASS EXAM

Day 13 A SPECIAL DAY

Day 14 PARTICIPATION WILL LIKELY BE GRADED THIS DAY.

Days 15, 16, and 17

DETAILED APPLICATIONS AND A SIMULATION

Which "real-life" examples are most convincing? Are technical innovations necessarily supportive of democratic systems? Consider the two types of institutions introduced earlier. Do they emerge in the same fashion?

Samuels and Thomson. 2021. "Lord, Peasant, … and Tractor? Agricultural Mechanization, Moore's Thesis, and the Emergence of Democracy. *Perspectives on Politics* 19:739-753.

Levi and Weingast. 2019. "Douglas North's Theory of Politics." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 52: 231-217.

Butler and Kousser. 2015. "How Do Public Goods Providers Play Public Goods Games?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 40:211-240.

Days 18, 19, and 20

GROUP PREFERENCES BY AGGREGATING INDIVIDUALS' PREFERENCES

In what sense is a social choice function a function? Why is the Arrow result called an impossibility theorem? What are some of the implications of Arrow's theorem?

Shepsle, Chapter 3

Days 21, 22, and 23

ARROW V. BLACK

How does Black find an equilibrium when Arrow cannot? Do Black's restrictions seem empirically valid?

Shepsle, Chapter 4

Day 24 SECOND IN-CLASS EXAM

Day 25 PARTICIPATION WILL LIKELY BE GRADED THIS DAY.

Days 26, 27, and 28

MAJORITY RULE

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

Shepsle, Chapter 5 to page 110

Days 29, 30, and 31

APPLICATIONS TO 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, finish Chapter 5

Days 32, 33, 34 and 35

LEGISLATURES AND STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR

Hmm, would members of Congress ever behave strategically? What does Gibbard mean by manipulation? Can we come up with a mechanism that is invulnerable to manipulation?

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.

Day 36 THIRD IN-CLASS EXAM

Day 37 PARTICIPATION WILL LIKELY BE GRADED THIS DAY.

Days 38 and 39

CONTRACTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUREAUCRACIES

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

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.

Days 40 and 41

PRESIDENTS AND LEGISLATURES

What are unilateral actions? 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.

Days 42 and 43

COURTS & JUDGES

How do courts affect policy?

Shepsle, Chapter 15

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.

Days 44 and 45

LET'S JUST SEE WHAT HAPPENS HERE!