Political Science 342: Strategy and Politics

Prof. Georg Vanberg
Department of Political Science
Duke University

Office: 219 Gross Hall
Email: georg.vanberg@duke.edu
Website: http://www.duke.edu/~gsv5
Phone: (919) 660-4311

Class Room: Social Sciences 311
Class Time: Tue/Thu 10:05-11:20am
Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4pm
Wednesday 11am-noon

COURSE OVERVIEW

This class offers an introduction to positive political theory. Loosely speaking, positive political theory consists of the application of rational choice analysis (or "economic" models) to the study of political phenomena. We begin by considering a problem that is fundamental to politics: How can the preferences of individuals who must make a collective decision be "aggregated" into a group choice? What are the properties of various decision-making procedures, how do these properties relate to one another, and what are the implications of our findings for broader conceptions of democracy? We then consider specific institutions within which political decisions are made, including legislative committee systems, veto bargaining, and electoral competition.

To study these topics, we will employ simple models that can sharpen our intuition, and sometimes lead to surprising and unexpected insights. While no advanced mathematical background is required, you will need to be comfortable with algebra and geometric reasoning. It also helps if you enjoy logic puzzles! By the end of the semester, you will not only have gained new insights into a range of important political phenomena. You will also have acquired a new analytic perspective and skills that will allow you to think about politics from a more nuanced and critical vantage point.

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Jason Todd will serve as teaching assistant for this course. In addition to me, you can contact him with questions, to get help or pointers for your papers, etc.. Jason will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 8-10am in the SSRI lounge in Gross Hall. *Please make every effort to limit your requests for help to office hours.* You can reach him via email at jason.todd@duke.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

There is one required textbook, available at the campus bookstore and through a variety of online retailers:

Kenneth Shepsle. 2010. Analyzing Politics. New York: Norton. Second Edition.

Additional required readings are available through the **Sakai page** for this course, as well as through the electronic resources available through Duke Library. See the semester schedule below for details.

GRADES AND EVALUATION

There are three components to your grade:

Two Midterm Exams (60 percent of your course grade): Each midterm exam will count for 30 percent of your course grade. The first exam will be on October zz in class; the second exam will be on the last day of class, December 7. If you miss one of the midterm exams, and have not made alternative arrangements prior to the exam with me, you will be given a make-up exam during the regularly scheduled final exam period for this class on Sunday, December 17, 7-10pm. Please plan accordingly.

Abstract and Paper (30 percent of your course grade): Your assignment is to write an essay (approximately 5 pages, 12 pt. font, regular margins, double-spaced) that examines how one or more of the concepts that we have encountered in this course can help us to understand a contemporary or historical event, a phenomenon, or an issue of your choosing. Your paper should incorporate the following: 1) Description of the contemporary or historical event/phenomenon/issue, 2) Description of the relevant theoretical concept(s) from class, 3) An explanation of how 2) helps to explain 1). To ensure that you've chosen an appropriate topic, you are required to submit an "abstract" that summarizes your paper topic. This abstract should (1) briefly describe the event/phenomenon that you want to examine, and (2) identify the theoretical concept(s) from class that you plan to use. You must submit your abstract by November 9. Papers are due in class on the last day of class (December 7). Unless you have made prior arrangements with me, late papers will incur a 5 point penalty for each (part of a) 24-hour period they are late.

Class Participation (10 percent of your course grade): While I will lecture for some time during each class period, there will be lots of opportunity for open discussion/debate and questions. In addition, there will be designated discussion/exercise days throughout the semester. You should come to class prepared to participate. *Note: If you attend class regularly, but do not actively participate in discussion or the exercises on a regular basis, you will receive an 85 for participation. Your participation grade will go up as you are more actively engaged in class. It will go down as you are conspicuously absent.*

Course grades will be determined according to the following grading scale: **A:** 93-100 **A-:** 90-92 **B+:** 88-89 **B:** 83-87 **B-:** 80-82 **C+:** 78-79 **C:** 73-77 **C-:** 70-72 **D+:** 68-69 **D:** 63-67 **D-:** 60-62 **F:** 0-59

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students and faculty at Duke are governed by the **Duke Community Standard**, and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If I suspect that a student has attempted to represent someone else's work as their own, or to cheat in any other manner on an exam or a written assignment, I will refer the case to the Office of Student Conduct in accordance with university policy. If a violation of the academic integrity policy is found to have occurred, the minimum penalty will be

a zero (0) on the assignment/exam in question. If you have any questions about plagiarism and proper citation methods, please consult the **Duke Tutorial on Plagiarism**.

STUDENTS WITH CHALLENGES

Students with challenges who require individualized testing or other accommodations should identify themselves and express their needs during the first week of the semester. Where the challenge is not immediately apparent, verification will be required.

APPROXIMATE SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Week 1 (8/29-8/31): Preferences, Strategy, and Models

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapters 1 and 2

Logistics:

- Assignment: Find an election procedure used by a campus club or other organization you find interesting; write up a short description of the procedure (i.e., the precise rules by which votes are cast and counted) and bring it to class on 9/5.

Week 2 (9/5-9/7): Condorcet's Paradox and Properties of Social Welfare Functions

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 3 (all) and Chapter 4 (pp.53-67)

- Thomas Hammond. 2007. "Rank injustice? How the scoring method for cross-country running competitions violates major social choice principles." *Public Choice* 133: 359-375.

Week 3 (9/12-9/14): Arrow's Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 4 (pp.67-86)

- John Mark Hansen and Allen Sanderson, "The Olympics of Voting." *Forbes*, 6/4/2009.

- Georg Vanberg. "Think a brokered convention is undemocratic? Think again." *Washington Post*, The Monkey Cage, 3/16/2016.

Logistics:

- Thursday: Discussion/Exercise Day

Week 4 (9/19-9/21): Strategic Voting and the Gibbard-Satterthwaite Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 6

- William Riker. 1986. The Art of Political Manipulation. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 7: "Pliny the Younger on Parliamentary Law."

- **Optional:** Philip Reny. 2001. "Arrow's Theorem and the Gibbard-Satterthewaite Theorem: A Unified Approach." *Economics Letters* 70:99-105.

Logistics:

- Thursday: Discussion/Exercise Day

Week 5 (9/26-9/28): Social Choice and Democratic Theory

Reading:

- William Riker. 1982. Liberalism Against Populism. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press. Chapter 10: "Liberalism, Populism, and the Theory of Social Choice."

- David Miller. 1992. "Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice." *Political Studies* 40: 54-67.

- Gary Mackie. 2003. Democracy Defended Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pages 44-48 and 68-71.

- James Buchanan. 1954. "Social Choice, Democracy, and Free Markets." *Journal of Political Economy* 62: 114-23. Pages 118-120.

Logistics:

- Both days this week will focus on discussion; read Riker prior to Tuesday's class and Buchanan, Mackie, and Miller prior to Thursday's class.

Week 6 (10/3-10/5): The Spatial Model and the Chaos Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 5 (pp.90-110)

- Keith Krehbiel. 1992. "Spatial Models of Legislative Choice." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 13: 259-319. Pages 259-269 only!

Week 7 (10/10-10/12 - No class on 10/10): The Spatial Model and Structure-Induced Equilibrium

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 5 (pp.123-148)

- John Ferejohn and Charles Shipan. 1990. "Congressional Influence on Bureaucracy." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 6:1-20.

Week 8 (10/17-10/19): Midterm Exam

Logistics:

- Tuesday: Wrap up previous topic and review.

- Midterm exam in class on Thursday, 10/19.

Week 9 (10/24-10/26): Political Parties

Reading:

- John Aldrich. 2011. Why Parties? Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2, through page 43.

Week 10 (10/31-11/2): Veto Bargaining

Reading:

- Charles Cameron. 2000. Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.

- Kathy Bawn. 1999. "Money and Majorities in the Federal Republic of Germany: Evidence for a Veto Players Model of Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 43: 707-736.

Logistics:

- Thursday: Discussion/Exercise Day.

Week 11 (11/7-11/9 - No class on 11/7): The Spatial Model and Electoral Competition

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 5 (pp.110-123)

Logistics:

- Paper Abstracts Due on Thursday, 11/9

Week 12 (11/14-11/16): Strategic Judicial Behavior (taught by Jason Todd)

Reading:

- Walter F. Murphy. 1964. Elements of Judicial Strategy. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Page 1, pages 18-29.

- Lee Epstein and Jack Knight. 1998. The Choices Justices Make. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Pages 1-21.

- Joel Cohen. 2014. Blindfolds Off: Judges on How They Decide. Chicago: American Bar Association. pp. 191-194 (Judging from the "Bully Pulpit") and pp. 202-209 (selection from The Dialogue with Judge Alex Kozinski)

Logistics:

- Thursday: Discussion.

Week 13 (11/21-11/23 - No Class on 11/23): Rational Ignorance and Voter Behavior

Reading:

- Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky. 1993. Democracy and Decision. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 3 (pp.19-53).

- Gordon Tullock. 1967. "Political Ignorance." In Gordon Tullock. The Economics of Politics. Indianapolis. Liberty Fund Press.

- Gordon Tullock. 1994. "Democracy As It Really Is." In Gordon Tullock. The Economics of Politics. Indianapolis. Liberty Fund Press.

Logistics:

- Tuesday: Discussion.

Week 14 (11/28-11/30): The Problem of Credible Commitment

Reading:

- Douglass North and Barry Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *Journal of Economic History* 49: 803-832.

- Barbara Walter. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51: 335-364.

Week 15 (12/5-12/7): Review and Second Midterm

Logistics:

- Tuesday: Review.

- The second midterm will take place in class on Thursday, 12/7. Papers are also due in class on that day.