

Political Science 342: Strategy and Politics

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Class Room: Social Sciences 311
Class Time: Mon/Wed 10:05-11:20am
Office Hours: Monday 12:30-1:15pm
Wednesday 3-4pm

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 a sample of specific institutions within which political decisions are made, and the impact these institutions have on political outcomes. Finally, we explore fundamental social dilemmas that emerge in situations of strategic interdependence among individuals.

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

Harunobu Saijo 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.. Harunobu will hold office hours on Wednesday from 2-3pm 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 harunobu.saijo@duke.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

There is one required textbook, available 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:

Three Midterm Exams (75 percent of your course grade): Each midterm exam will count for 25 percent of your course grade. The first exam will be on Monday, September 23, in class; the second exam will be on Wednesday, October 30, in class; the third exam will be on Wednesday, December 7, in class. 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.

Short video group project (15 percent of your course grade): You will complete this assignment in a group of three students. The assignment is to produce a short video (approximately 3-5 minutes) that uses a contemporary or historical event/issue/phenomenon as an example to explain a concept or argument related to this class. Your video must incorporate the following: 1) Description of the event/phenomenon/issue, 2) Description of the concept(s) or argument you are illustrating, 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 video topic and identifies the three members of your group. This abstract should (1) briefly describe the event/phenomenon that you want to examine, and (2) identify the theoretical concept(s)/argument you plan to illustrate. You must submit your abstract by November 11. Videos are due on Monday 12/2, and will be screened in class. Videos must be turned in electronically on the Sakai Dropbox site for this class. You will meet with Shaun King, Multimedia Specialist in our department, on Thursday, 9/25, for an introduction on video production. Unless your group has made prior arrangements with me, late videos 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 (8/26-8/28): 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 9/2.

Week 2 (9/2-9/4): Condorcet's Paradox and Properties of Social Welfare Functions

Reading:

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

Week 3 (9/9-9/11): Arrow's Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 4 (pp.67-86)
- Thomas Hammond. 2007. "Rank injustice? How the scoring method for cross-country running competitions violates major social choice principles." *Public Choice* 133: 359-375.
- 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.

Week 4 (9/16-9/18): The Gibbard-Satterthwaite Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 6
- **Optional:** Philip Reny. 2001. "Arrow's Theorem and the Gibbard-Satterthwaite Theorem: A Unified Approach." *Economics Letters* 70:99-105.

Logistics:

- Wednesday: Discussion/Exercise Day

Week 5 (9/23-9/25): Video tutorial and Midterm Exam 1

- Monday 9/23 Exam 1
- Wednesday 9/25 Video editing tutorial with Shaun King

Week 6 (9/30-10/2): 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.
- **Optional:** John Patty and Maggie Penn. "Aggregation, Evaluation, and Social Choice Theory." *The Good Society* 24: 149-72.

Logistics:

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

Week 7 (10/7-10/9 - No class on 10/7 Fall Break): The Spatial Model

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 5 (pp.90-107)

Week 8 (10/14-10/16): The Spatial Model and the Chaos Theorem

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 5 (pp.107-148)
- Keith Krehbiel. 1992. "Spatial Models of Legislative Choice." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 13: 259-319. **Pages 259-269 only!**
- **Optional:** John Ferejohn and Charles Shipan. 1990. "Congressional Influence on Bureaucracy." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 6:1-20.

Week 9 (10/21-10/23): Structure-induced equilibrium

Reading:

- Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast. 2010. "Why so much stability? Majority voting, legislative institutions, and Gordon Tullock." *Public Choice* 152: 83-95.
- Daniel Drezner. "The end of the median voter theorem in presidential politics?" *Washington Post, PostEverything*, 5/29/2015.
- Shepsle - Chapter 12
- **Optional:** Thomas Romer and Howard Rosenthal. 1984. "Dynamic Analysis of School Spending Referenda. Final Report." U.S. Department of Education.

Week 10 (10/28-10/30): Midterm Exam 2

- Monday: Catch-up and review
- Wednesday: Midterm Exam

Week 11 (11/4-11/6): Social Dilemmas

Reading:

- Shepsle - Chapter 8

- Robert Axelrod. 1984. "The live-and-let-live system in trench warfare in World War I." in The Evolution of Cooperation. Basic Books.
- John Aldrich. 2011. Why Parties? Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2, through page 43.
- **Optional:** Michael Taylor. 1987. The Evolution of Cooperation. Chapter 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 12 (11/11-11/13): Social Dilemmas

Reading:

- Elinor Ostrom, Joanna Burger, Christopher Field, Richard Norgaard, and David Policansky. 1999. "Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges." *Science* 284: 278-282.
- Elinor Ostrom. 1990. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 3.
- Rasma Karklins and Roger Petersen. 1993. "Decision Calculus of Protesters and Regimes: Eastern Europe 1989." *The Journal of Politics* 55: 588-614.
- **Optional:** Timur Kuran. 1991. "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44: 7-48.
- **Optional:** Shepsle - Chapters 9 and 10

Week 13 (11/18-11/20): 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 14 (11/25- no class on 11/27): 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.

Week 15 (12/2-12/4): Final videos and third midterm

Logistics:

- Monday: Student videos
- Wednesday: Third midterm exam