

Course Syllabus

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SS 202A: Political Theory (<https://caltech.instructure.com/courses/6074/pages/home-page-4>)

Fall 2023

Course Instructor

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 **Office hours:** [Sign up here](https://calendly.com/jnkatz/student-meeting)  (<https://calendly.com/jnkatz/student-meeting>)

Course Details

Fridays

September 27 -December 1

1:00pm - 4:00pm PST

Baxter B119

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to familiarize the students with the various literatures on political institutions from a political economy perspective as well as to understand the relationship between theory and empirical work. Of course, we will cover only a small fraction of the large literature of the topic. The course will also help you to learn how to critically analyze and synthesis academic literature.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Understand the basic research questions in the political economy of intuitions
- Critically read an academic article or book
- Write a critical response paper

Course Software

The central home for this course is in [Canvas \(https://caltech.instructure.com/courses/6074/pages/home-page-4\)](https://caltech.instructure.com/courses/6074/pages/home-page-4).

Academic Integrity

This course is governed by Caltech's Honor Code: *"No member of the Caltech community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community."*

Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, and it violates the honor code in a fundamental way. You can find more information at: <http://writing.caltech.edu/resources/plagiarism>  (<http://writing.caltech.edu/resources/plagiarism>).

Collaboration Policy

As this is a required graduate seminar, you are expected to do your own work in the course. You are free to talk to each other about the course material, but your written assignments and exam are to be done on your own.

Grading

Your final grade in the course will be composed of three components with the following weights:

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Participation in class | 20% |
| Response Papers | 40% |
| Discussion Leadership | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |

Participation: As this is a seminar style course you are expected to participate in class discussion.

Response Papers: You must write four (4) short response paper of approximately three to five pages each on a give week's readings for a week that you are not the discussion leader (see below). These response papers are to critically analyze the weeks readings; it is not just to be a summary or book report. These papers must be turned in by **Thursday at 11:59pm PST** of the week the readings come from.

Discussion Leadership: Each student is required to be a discussion leader for three of the weekly class meetings (I will take the last week). As discussion leader, the student will produce an agenda for discussing the course materials.

Final Exam: There will be a written final exam due the end of Final's week on **Friday, December 8 at 5:00pm PST**. You will answer two essay questions from a set that are drawn from the course material. You are allowed three hours to complete the exam.

Schedule

Week 1 (October 2): Course Overview

Week 2 (October 9): Reasoning and Rationality

Readings:

- Ferejohn, John and Debra Satz. 1995. "Rational Choice and Social Theory". *Journal of Philosophy* 91(2):71–87.
- Lucas, Gale M., Mathew D. McCubbins, and Mark Turner. 2015. "Against Game Theory." in *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* edited by Robert Scott and Stephan Kosslyn. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Cox, Gary. 1999. "The Empirical Content of Rational Choice Theory: A Reply to Green and Shapiro." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 11:147–169.
- Fiorina, Morris. 1975. "Formal Models in Political Science" *American Journal of Political Science*. 19: 133-159.
- Amadae, S.M. and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 1999. "The Rochester School: the Origins of Positive Political Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* . 2:269- 295

Week 3 (October 16, needs to be rescheduled): Institutions

Readings:

- Coase, Ronald. 1937, "The Nature of the Firm." *Economica* 4:386-405.
- Diermeier, Daniel, and Keith Krehbiel. 2003. "Institutionalism as a Methodology." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15(2): 123-144.
- Fama, Eugene. 1980. "Agency Problems and the Theory of the Firm" *Journal of Political Economy* 88:288-307.
- Miller, Gary J. 2005. "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8:203–225.
- Greif, Avner, Paul Milgrom, and Barry Weingast. 1994. "Coordination, Commitment, and Enforcement; The Case of the Merchant Guild." *Journal of Political Economy* 102:745–776.

Week 4 (October 23): Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models

Readings:

- Ashworth, Scottt, Christopher R. Berry, and Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. 2021. *Theory and Credibility: Integrating Theoretical and Empirical Social Science*. Princeton University Press.
- Katz, Jonathan N, Gary King, and Elizabeth Rosenblatt. 2020. "Theoretical Foundations

and Empirical Evaluations of Partisan Fairness in District-Based Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 114(1): 164-178.

Week 5 (October 30): Elections

Readings:

- Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, Robert S. and Thomas R. Palfrey. 2000. "Equilibria in Campaign Spending Games: Theory and Data" *American Political Science Review* 94(3):595–609.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M. de Figueredo, and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2003. "Why is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(1):105–130.

Week 6 (November 6): Organization of Legislatures

Readings:

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. 1979. "Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models." *American Journal of Political Science*. 23(1):27–59.
- Riker, William H. 1980. "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions." *American Political Science Review*. 74:432–446.
- Baron, David P. 1994. "A Sequential Choice Theory Perspective on Legislative Organization." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 19(2):267–296.
- Diermeier, Daniel, Carlo Prato, and Razvan Vlaicu. 2015. "Procedural Choice in Majoritarian Organizations." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 866– 879.
- Hitt, Matthew P., Craig Volden, and Adam E. Wiseman. 2017. "Spatial Models of Legislative Effectiveness." *American Journal of Political Science*. 61(2):575–590.

Week 7 (November 13): Legislative Parties

Readings:

- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1994. "Bonding, Structure, and the Stability of Political Parties." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 19(2):215–231.
- Snyder, James M. Jr. and Michael M. Ting. 2002. "An Informational Rationale for Political Parties." *American Journal of Political Science*. 46(1):90–110.
- Gilligan, Thomas and Kieth Krehbiel. 1990. "Organization of Informative Committees by a Rational Legislature." *American Journal of Political Science* 34:531-64.
- Poole, Keith and Howard Rosenthal. 1985. "A Spatial Model for Legislative Roll Call Analysis." *American Journal of Political Science* 29:357–384.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23(2): 235–66.

Week 8 (November 20): Bureaucracy and Courts

Readings:

- McCubbins, Mathew D., Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast. 1990. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3(2):243–277.
- Eskridge, William N. and John Ferejohn. 1992. "Making the Deal Stick: Enforcing the Original Constitutional Structure of Lawmaking in the Modern Regulatory State" *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 8(1): 165–189.
- Huber, Gregory A. and Sanford Gordon. 2007. "Directing Retribution: On the Political Control of Lower Court Judges." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 23(2):386–420.
- Dragu, Tiberiu, Xiaochen Fan and James Kuklinski. 2014. "Designing Checks and Balances", *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. 9(1):45–86.

Week 9 (November 27): Parliaments/Multi-Party Systems I

Readings:

- Laver, Micheal and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1996. "Coalitions and Cabinet Government." *American Political Science Review*. 84:873-890.
- Schofield, Norman J. 1995. "Coalition Politics: A Formal Model and Empirical Analysis," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 7:245–281.
- Deirmeier, Daniel, Hulya Eraslan, and Antonio Merlo. 2003. "A Structural Model of Government Formation." *Econometrica*. 71(1):27–70.
- Austen-Smith, David and Jefferey Banks. 1988. "Elections, Coalitions, and Legislative Outcomes." *American Political Science Review*. 8(2):405–422.

Week 10 (Needs to be scheduled): Parliaments/Multi-Party Systems II

Readings:

- Galasso, Vincenzo and Salvatore Nunnarii. 2019. "The Economic Effects of Electoral Rules: Evidence from Unemployment Benefits." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. 14:259-291.
- Huber, John. 1996. "The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies" *American Political Science Review*. 90(2)269–282.
- Smith, Alastair. 2003. "Election Timing in Majoritarian Parliaments." *British Journal of Political Science* 33:397–418.
- Lupia, Arthur and Stom, Kaare. 1995. "Coalition Termination and the Strategic Timing of Parliamentary Elections." *American Political Science Review*. 89(3):648- 665.