

Designing American Democracy

University of Rochester, PSC 227

Spring 2020

Tue/Thur, 9:40 am - 10:55 am, Lattimore 210

Instructor: Dan Alexander (he/him/his)
Contact: dan.alexander@rochester.edu
Office hours: Mon/Tue, 12:30 pm - 2 pm, Harkness 311

Course Information

Description

Assignments and Expectations All students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and should be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussions that draw upon the readings. Participation and attendance will not be graded, but I reserve the right to revise this policy if it becomes necessary. Students will complete three problem sets (each worth 10% of the grade), two in-class exams (the each worth 20% of the grade), and a final paper (worth 30% of the grade). Details about each of these elements of course may be found below.

Problem Sets The problem sets are intended to encourage timely learning of the technical concepts in the course, as well as to identify areas of difficulty such that these issues may be addressed as early as possible. Students may work in groups, though all students must hand in a completed assignment that they wrote up (not simply multiple copies of one completed assignment). Students are particularly encouraged to spend time understanding why/when points are deducted, as material from the problem sets is likely to appear on the exams.

Exams A mid-term (leading up to spring break: March 5, 2020) and a final exam (in the final class: April 28, 2020) will cover methodological tools but also the substantive content of the course, which students are expected to synthesize within and across units. The exams will entail short-answer,

some problems (i.e., models to solve), and one or two short essays. The best preparation will be thoughtfully attempting and reviewing the problem sets, as well as engaged class attendance and participation (including keeping up with the reading!). If you have a conflict with either of these dates, please let me know immediately.

Term Paper Students will complete a (10-page, double-spaced) term paper, inspired by a storied “contradiction” found in the U.S. Constitution (see Guerra-Pujol article in Week 1). In practice, students will be asked to identify a strategic tension in the U.S. Constitution and to model it via a write-up that is heavily-structured around a set of questions/components. Due May 3, 2020.

Materials The course has only one “textbook” to obtain – listed below. It is available at the bookstore (or from other book sellers), and a copy will be on reserve at the library (though this is a scarce resource).

Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2nd edition.

In addition to readings from *Analyzing Politics* (henceforth “AP”), each week will include a number of other readings pertinent to the theme. These include an excerpts from the U.S. Constitution or other founding document, the syllabi from U.S. Supreme Court Cases,¹ and academic papers presenting theoretical models. These supplemental materials will be posted on blackboard. I expect students to attempt reading and processing the academic papers, though I will spend significant time in class presenting their results and explaining their methodology. In-class I will draw on historical writings as well as empirical work. Slides related to this material will be posted after the class.

For the first several weeks of the course, we will draw upon a chapter (an appendix, actually) on game theory from the book below (henceforth “PEPP”). This reading, too, may be found on blackboard. The material it covers will help us to develop the necessary tools to understand and even create formal-theoretic models of politics.

Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2016. *Political Economy for Public Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹The syllabus of a case is a short summary of the facts, rulings, and opinions. Links to these may be found underneath each case listed below.

Assistance and Resources to Promote Student Success Please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the course with any concerns or information that you would like me to know to support your success this semester, as well as with any questions about the course.

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has a number of resources to improve study habits, including one-on-one study skills consultations, study skills course (CAS 142), quiet study space with peer support (Study Zone), and, for specific courses, one-on-one tutoring, drop-in group tutoring, and weekly study groups.

Student success at the University of Rochester includes more than just academic performance. Please feel comfortable speaking with me about challenges you are experiencing within and outside of the classroom so that I may submit a CARE Referral on your behalf. A CARE Referral is submitted when the level of concern for a student necessitates inclusive, multi-layered support from the campus community. The CARE network administrator shares information only with staff who need to know it in order to help you. I *care* about your success and am committed to my role in helping you get connected to appropriate campus resources.

Course Schedule

First Class Session Introductory Remarks

Week 1 The methodological study of institutions; introduction to rational choice

- AP: chapters 1, 2, and 11
- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Const. preamble
- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2019. "The Perils of Quantification." *Boston Review*, Summer: 1–10.
- Guerra-Pujol, F. E. 2013. "Gödel's Loophole." *Capital University Law Review*, 41: 637–673.

Week 2+ The state; introduction to game theory

- AP: chapters 8 - 10
- PEPP: Appendix A²
- U.S. Const. art. V - VI; amend. 16
- Articles of confederation
- National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/567/519/>

Weeks 3 - 5 A democracy, representative government, and elections (with two major parties); introduction to game theory (ctd.)

- AP: chapters 3 - 7, 16
- PEPP: Appendix B
- U.S. Const. art. 1, §4-5; amend. 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22-24, 26
- Shelby County v. Holder

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/570/529/>

- Rucho v. Common Cause

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/588/18-422/>

- Riker, William H. 1988. *Liberalism against populism : a confrontation between the theory of democracy and the theory of social choice*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Chapter 1.
- Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15(1): 183–201.
- Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. 2011. "Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits." *The Journal of Politics*, 73(01): 171–186.

Problem Set #1

Week 6 Federalism

- AP: NA
- U.S. Const. art. I, §10; art. IV; art. VII

²For reference on mathematics and notation, see:
Osborne, Martin J. 2004. Appendix: Mathematics. In *An Introduction to Game Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 17, pp. 493-506.

- Gibbons v. Ogden
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/22/1/>
- Besley, Timothy and Stephen Coate. 2003. “Centralized versus decentralized provision of local public goods: A political economy approach.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 87(12): 2611–2637.

Week 7 A legislature, the Congress

- AP: 12
- U.S. Const., art. I, §1-3, 6-7
- McCulloch v. Maryland
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/17/316/>
- Baron, David P. and John A. Ferejohn. 1989. “Bargaining in Legislatures.” *The American Political Science Review*, 83(4): 1181–1206.

Problem set #2

Week 8-9 The executive and the bureaucracy

- AP: chapters 13-14
- U.S. Const. art. II
- Nixon v. Fitzgerald <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/418/683/>
- Gehlbach, Scott, 2013. “Veto Players.” In *Formal Models of Domestic Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 4, pp. 74–97.

Week 10 Separation of powers, checks and balances

- AP: na
- U.S. Const. art. I, §8-9
- Clinton v. City of New York
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/524/417/>
- McCarty, Nolan M. 2000. “Presidential Pork: Executive Veto Power and Distributive Politics.” *American Political Science Review*, 94(1): 117–129.

Problem Set #3

Week 11 A justice system

- AP: chapters 15 and 17
- U.S. Const. art. III
- Marbury v. Madison
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/5/137/>
- Clinton, Robert L. 1994. "Game Theory, Legal History, and the Origins of Judicial Review: A Revisionist Analysis of Marbury v . Madison." *American Journal of Political Science*, 38(2): 285–302.

Week 12-13 Interest groups: campaign finance and lobbyists

- Ainsworth, Scott H., 2002. "Lobbying (6); Elections, Groups, and Money (9)." In *Analyzing Interest Groups: Group Influence on People and Policies*, New York and London: W. W. Norton, chapter 6, 9, pp. 119–143, 185–202.
- U.S. Const. amend. 1
- Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/558/310/>
- U.S. v. Harriss
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/347/612/>
- Hall, Richard L. and Alan V. Deardorff. 2006. "Lobbying as legislative subsidy." *American Political Science Review*, 100(1): 69–84.
- AP: chapter 17