Professor: John Duggan  
Office: Harkness 111A, x34999

Course Description: We will take up several foundational topics in theoretical political economy. We begin with the analysis of several fundamental concepts that we use throughout the course: binary relations, preferences, and choice. We then study social choice theory, where we view collective decisions as arising from a social preference relation determined in some arbitrary way by the preferences of individuals. We’ll prove Arrow’s impossibility theorem and others, which inform us of inherent limitations on the rationality of collective decisions. We then consider the possibility that collective decisions are specifically the outcomes of a game played by individual decision-makers. We will explore the main findings in the theory of implementation, where we impose little or no structure on the kind of game that might be played, and we’ll consider games of a more “political” nature, such as sequential voting and agenda manipulation.

Textbook: Lectures will be based on distributed notes, but there is extensive overlap with the only assigned textbook,


The Austen-Smith and Banks book is well-written and will be a very useful reference. Outside readings will be assigned as needed.

Course Requirements: In addition to class attendance, homeworks will be assigned and a final will be given. A midterm is possible.