PSC 503: Formal Models of Comparative Politics

Spring 2013 – W 9:00-12:00

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Description

What are the consequences of different political institutions on various outcomes? What are the causes and motivations for mass political movements, and what is the mechanism by which they are organized? What are the political causes of underdevelopment? How are identities created, and what role do they play in politics? Why are redistribution and the size of government greater in some countries than others? This course will provide formal training that may (or may not) be useful in answering these and other questions in comparative politics. The course will not answer these questions.

The first few weeks will mostly be a review of topics covered in other classes, with new topics emerging as we go along. I will assign problem sets almost every week. Each student will do two in-class presentations. Dates will be set for these presentations after Spring Break. For one of the presentations, you must present an assigned paper (i.e. one on the syllabus for the next half of the course). For the other presentation, you have the option to pick a paper from outside the syllabus, but please consult me for approval or suggestions. I expect high quality presentations. There will be a final exam on May 1. The problem sets will count for 40% of your grade, the presentations for 30% and the final exam for the remaining 30%. You can work with each other on the problem sets, but you must write your own solutions to receive credit.

Books

There are no required textbooks because I will teach from handouts. But the following books are useful references.

Persson and Tabellini. Political Economics.
Mailath and Samuelson. Repeated Games and Reputations.
Fudenberg and Tirole. Game Theory.
Acemoglu. Modern Economic Growth.
Topics

We will try to cover the following papers and topics in detail before Spring Break. We will go roughly in the order of the papers listed, covering about three per week. We may not get to all of them, skipping some if we fall behind schedule. You do not have to read these papers before class since I will be teaching them from handouts. (In fact, it may not be a great use of your time to read them at all.) If a model interests you after I teach it, I encourage you to only then go and read the paper. On (or before) March 20, I will provide a list of papers that we will cover after Spring Break.

January 16


January 23

Acharya, A. “Equilibrium False Consciousness” *working paper.*


January 30


Duggan, J. “Repeated Elections with Asymmetric Information” *Economics and Politics.*

February 6


Acharya, A. “Coordination and Development in Dictatorships” working paper.

February 13


February 20


February 27


March 6


Acharya, A. "Insecure Property Rights," *working paper*. 