Syllabus, PSC 280

Spring 2012

meetings:  Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:40, Morey 505
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office: Harkness 322
office hours: Thursdays, 11:15 to 1:15

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Recommended Prepartion

There are no official pre-requisites for this class. But I strongly recommend that you come in with some background in game theory or microeconomic theory. If you have taken one or more of the following, you should be fine:

- An intermediate-level course on microeconomics or higher
- A course on game theory
- A course on probability theory

If you have taken NONE of the above, you should at least feel comfortable with math and problem sets. For instance, if you've taken none of the above, this course might be a good fit for you unless you've taken multi-variable calculus or other higher-level math classes.
Requirements and Grading

Assignments

To complete the course, you must turn in:

- 4 problem sets
- 5 short (less than 5 page) papers

Each student in the course will be randomly assigned to one of two groups -- group "A" and group "B". Students in both groups must do all problem sets. In addition, all students must do the short papers assigned for the weeks of February 15 and February 29. After that, you have three more paper assignments to do, but which ones depends on the group to which you're assigned. You'll see in the Schedule below that for each of our meetings there are two assignments listed: one for group A and one for group B. You must turn in only the assignments listed for your group, and your grade will be based only on those assignments.

Deadlines and Format Requirements

Problem sets are due at the beginning of class on the day indicated by the schedule. Papers are due by midnight the day of the class indicated on the schedule. I do not accept late assignments. Assignments turned in after the deadline will be marked '0' (the lowest possible score). Every paper must:

- Be submitted electronically via blackboard
- Be submitted as a .pdf NOT as .doc or .docx
- Run no more than 5 pages
- Be double spaced
- Be printed in no less than 12 point font
- Have no less than 1-inch margins

Grading

Every assignment (both problem sets and papers) is graded on a 4 point scale. At the end of the semester I drop your lowest problem set score. I then calculate a final 4 point score as a weighted average in which each of the three counted problem sets gets a weight of 0.05, and each of the five papers gets a weight of .17. The resulting 4-point overall score, is then coverted to a letter grade according to the following rules:
Overall 4 Point Score | Final Letter Grade
---|---
at or above 3.85 | A
at or above 3.5, less than 3.85 | A-
at or above 3.15, less than 3.5 | B+
at or above 2.85, less than 3.15 | B
at or above 2.5, less than 2.85 | B-
at or above 2.15, less than 2.5 | C+
at or above 1.85, less than 2.15 | C
at or above 1.5, less than 1.85 | C-
at or above 1, less than 1.5 | D
less than 1 | E

**For Example**

Suppose at the end of the semester, you have the following scores on your assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>problem set 1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem set 2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem set 3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem set 4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper 1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper 2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper 3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper 4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper 5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then your final overall score would be calculated by dropping the lowest problem set score (1.0 in this case), and then applying the weights listed above:

\[
\text{Overall Score} = 0.05 \times 2.0 + 0.05 \times 4.0 + 0.05 \times 3.0 + 0.17 \times 1.5 + 0.17 \times 2.0 + 0.17 \times 4.0 + 0.17 \times 3.0 + 0.17 \times 3.7
\]
\[
= 2.864
\]

Then your letter grade would be assigned by your overall score according to the table given above. In this case, 2.864 is at or above 2.85 but less than 3.15, so the final letter grade would be a 'B'.
**Paper Revisions**

If you wish, you may revise and resubmit one of the papers you write for re-grading. To do this you must first schedule an individual appointment with me to go over the first version of the paper. At that meeting, I'll specify the improvements that need to be made to the paper for the grade to be raised, and we'll work out a deadline for the revision. If you wish to do a revision, you must set the required meeting with me before May 8th (Friday of the last week of classes.)

**Schedule**

**Summary of Due Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>problem set 1</td>
<td>problem set 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>problem set 2</td>
<td>problem set 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>paper</td>
<td>paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>problem set 3</td>
<td>problem set 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/29</td>
<td>paper</td>
<td>paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>paper</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>paper</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>problem set</td>
<td>problem set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18</td>
<td>paper</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/25</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Full Schedule**

**January 18**

**topic:** Intro to the Course

**January 25**

**topic:** Basics of Rational Choice Models (preferences, utility, maximization)

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**
February 1
  topic:  Probability, Expectation, and Rational Choice Under Uncertainty
  reading: none
         
         group A assignment:
         Problem Set 1
         
         group B assignment:
         Problem Set 1

February 8
  topic:  An Early Analysis of Political Accountability
  reading: James Mill Essay on Government
         
         group A assignment:
         Problem Set 2
         
         group B assignment:
         Problem Set 2

February 15
  topic:  Game Theory Basics -- Mostly Sequential Move Games; A bit of Dynamic Programming
  reading: none
         
         group A assignment:
         paper on Mill, topic TBA
         
         group B assignment:
         paper on Mill, topic TBA

February 22
  topic:  A First Formal Analysis -- Accountability with "Hidden Actions"
  reading: John Ferejohn (1986) "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control."
         
         group A assignment:
         Problem Set 3
         
         group B assignment:
         Problem Set 3

February 29
  topic:  Screening vs. Sanctioning
         
         group A assignment:
         paper on Ferejohn, topic TBA
         
         group B assignment:
March 7

**topic:** An Empirical Investigation of Accountability

**group A assignment:**

**group B assignment:**

March 14

*Spring Break*

March 21

**topic:** Pandering

**group A assignment:**

paper -- "Does CBC's analysis distinguish between Screening and Sanctioning? Could it?".

**group B assignment:**

March 28

**topic:** Pandering

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

April 4

**topic:** Contract Models and Mechanism Design

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

paper on Maskin and Tirole, topic TBA

April 11

**topic:**

**reading:**

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

paper on Gordon and Huber, topic TBA
topic: Corruption in Government Bureaucracies

        group A assignment:
        Problem Set 4

        group B assignment:
        Problem Set 4

April 18

        topic: Corruption as Collusion

        group A assignment:
        paper on Banerjee, topic TBA

        group B assignment:
        none

April 25 (Last Day of Class)

        topic: Corruption and Oversight

        group A assignment:
        none

        group B assignment:
        paper on Tirole, topic TBA