Political Science 107 - Introduction to Positive Political Theory
University of Rochester Fall 2019
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Course Description: This course provides an introduction to positive political theory, a rigorous set of tools that will help you view politics in a new way and challenge conventional wisdom in the process. We use these tools to address two broad sets of questions. 1.) In institution-free society (anarchy) how can agents obtain cooperation and, under what conditions might the construction of formal political institutions like states help achieve these outcomes? 2.) How does democracy emerge and, when it does, how are preferences aggregated by democratic institutions?

Structure of the Course: Because of the reliance on methodological approaches throughout the course, students will be required to submit (about 5) problem sets over the course of the semester. In addition, there will be two exams, a midterm that will take place around the middle of the course close to spring break, and a final exam that will take place at the end of the semester. The due dates of the problem sets and the exam dates will be determined depending on the course’s pace. No late problem sets will be accepted.

Required Materials: Readings and problem sets will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading: Grading will be assigned based on the following scheme:

- Problem Sets (25%)
- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (35%)
- Class Participation (15%)

Schedule:

1. Probability
2. Social Science Theories
3. The Ecological Fallacy
4. Causality
5. Bayes’ Rule

6. Models

7. Conflict and Strategy

8. Bargaining

9. Conflict & Commitment

10. Conflict & Risk

11. The Principal-Agent Problem—Moral Hazard

12. The Principal-Agent Problem—Adverse Selection

13. Democracy, Representation, & Political Accountability

14. Efficiency

15. Discrimination

16. The State

17. The Social Contract


18. Terrorism


**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**: This classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Resources: 1-154 Dewey Hall disability@rochester.edu (585) 275-9049

**Academic Integrity**: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.html

**Grade Grievances**: If you believe a grade you have received is unfair or in error, you will need to do the following:

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching your TA.

2. Provide an explanation in writing for why the grade you received was unfair or in error.

3. If you believe your TA’s response fails to address your claim of unfairness or error, you may write an appeal to the primary instructor. This appeal must include your original explanation to the TA and a written explanation for what is inadequate in the TA’s response.