

PSCI 107

Introduction to Positive Political Theory

Fall 2023

Syllabus

People

Instructor

Stu Jordan stuart.jordan@rochester.edu Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00pm-3:30pm, 113 Harkness

TAs

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Class Meetings

We meet **in-person** in Wegmans Hall Room 1400 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30-1:45pm.

Attendance at class meetings is optional. Class meetings will be neither recorded nor broadcast.

What is this course about?

Politics is extraordinarily complicated because political outcomes are never attributable solely to the actions of any one person. Instead, explaining political events requires us to account for the distinct beliefs and preferences of multiple persons, and then trace how the actions of those multiple persons combine to determine single outcomes. Positive Political Theory is a set of tools used by political scientists to model processes that are at work in a wide variety of political contexts. Students in this course gain the familiarity they need with these tools to thrive in advanced courses in political science, and to deepen their understanding of the politics they observe and participate in their lives outside classroom.

How should I plan my time and effort to succeed in this course?

If you're already enrolled in the course, go to the course site on Blackboard. Watch the videos called "how to get started" on the course homepage.

If you're *not* enrolled in the course and you want to watch that videos to learn more about the course, just email the instructor at stuart.jordan@rochester.edu and ask!

How does grading work?

Students in the course are graded on homework assignments called "checks of understanding" (COUs) and on in-class exams. Every COU and exam question is worth a certain number of points. The points you earn on the checks-of-understanding and the exam question determine your course letter grade as follows: We compute the ratio of the total points you got on COUs to the total COU points available and the ratio of the points you got on exams to the total exam points available. These will both be numbers between 0 and 1. We then compute the average of these two ratios (so that your overall performance on COUs is weighted equally to your overall performance on exams). You are then assigned a letter grade for the course according to where that average falls on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Your Weighted Average Score
A	Greater than or equal to 0.9625
A-	Less than 0.9625, greater than or equal to 0.875
B+	Less than 0.875, greater than or equal to 0.7875
B	Less than 0.7875, greater than or equal to 0.7125
B-	Less than 0.7125, greater than or equal to 0.625
C+	Less than 0.625, greater than or equal to 0.5375
C	Less than 0.5375, greater than or equal to 0.4625
C-	Less than 0.425, greater than or equal to 0.375
D+	Less than 0.375, greater than or equal to 0.2875
D	Less than 0.2875, greater than or equal to 0.2125
D-	Less than 0.2125, greater than or equal to 0.125
E	Less than 0.125

When Are the Exams? When are Homeworks Due?

The schedule below lists all course activities, including exams and homework deadlines. Note that homeworks in this course are called "checks-of-understanding" and abbreviated as "COUs" in the schedule. **COUs are due most weeks of the semester, AT 8PM ON FRIDAYS.**

As you consider whether this course is right for you, keep in mind that no assignment will be accepted late, and that alternative exam times will not be offered, except for religious holidays, when required by an accommodation arranged through the Office of Disability Services or in the event of documented and extraordinary events beyond the student's control.

Schedule

	Week Of Monday...	What You're Doing on Your Own Time	What We're Doing in Class and Help Sessions
	...08-28	Watch videos "how to get started" on the Blackboard course homepage	Learning how to plan and use your time to succeed in course; First class meeting of the semester on Thursday 8/31 No help sessions on 8/31 or 9/1
MODULE 1	...09-04	All COUs for Lesson 1 due 8pm Friday 9/8	What PPT is like. Is this course right for you? Help sessions on 9/7 and 9/8
	...09-11	COUs 1, 2 and 3 for Lesson 1 due 8pm Friday 9/15	Individual Preference and the Spatial Model. Help sessions on 9/14 and 9/15
	...09-18	COUs 4, 5 and 6 for Lesson 2 due 8pm Friday 9/22	Polarization in the Spatial Model, Inferring Ideal Point Order from Vote Matrices. Help sessions on 9/21 and 9/22
	...09-25	Practice problems for Exam 1	Finishing up Module 1. Help sessions on 9/28 and 9/29
	...10-02	Taking a break	Exam 1 in-class on Tuesday 10/3 No class on Thursday, 10/5 No help sessions on 10/5 and 10/6
MODULE 2	...10-09	All COUs for Lesson 3 due 8pm Friday 10/13	Utility Functions and Individual Choice Help sessions on 10/12 and 10/13
	...10-16	All COUs for Lesson 4 due 8pm Friday 10/20	Probabilistic Models of Uncertainty No class Tuesday 10/17 (Fall Break) Help sessions on 10/19 and 10/20
	...10-23	All COUs for Lesson 5 due 8pm Friday 10/27	Models of Learning Help sessions on 10/26 and 10/27
	...10-30	All COUs for Lesson 6 due 8pm Friday 11/3	Expected Utility Help sessions on 11/2 and 11/3
	...11-06	Practice problems for Exam 2	Finishing up Module 2 Help sessions 9/9 and 9/10
	...11-13	Take a break.	Exam 2 in-class on Tuesday 11/14 No class on Thursday, 11/16 No help sessions on 11/16 and 11/17
MODULE 3	...11-20	All COUs for Lesson 7 due 8pm 11/24	Strategic Interdependence and Game Theoretic Models No class on Thursday, 11/23 No help sessions on 11/23 and 11/24

...11-27	All COUs for Lesson 8 due 8pm 12/1	Nash Equilibrium Help sessions on 11/30 and 12/1
...12-04	Practice problems for Exam 3	Finishing module 3 Help sessions on 12/7 and 12/8
...12-11	Take a break.	Exam 3 in class on Tuesday 12/12 12/12 is the last class meeting of the semester. Help sessions for final exam on 12/14 and 12/15

FINAL EXAM AT 715PM, TUESDAY DECEMBER 19
Location TBD

Academic Honesty

All the requirements of [the AS&E Academic Honesty Policy](#) apply to this course. In addition, the course has a set of very specific rules about *how* you complete the graded work for the course. Following these rules ensures that your performance in the course reflects your own grasp of the material, rather than someone else's. Suspected violations of these rules, or of any provision of the AS&E Academic Honesty Policy, [will be reported as required AS&E's policy](#), and could lead to severe sanctions. So before you do *any* work in this course, make sure you know the rules. Read them in the Academic Honesty content area on the course Blackboard site.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

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; www.rochester.edu/college/disability.

Credit Hour Policy Statement

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 3 academic hours per week. The course also includes 9 academic hours of independent out-of-class assignments.