

Models of Domestic Institutions

University of Rochester, PSCI 527

Spring 2024

Tues/Thur, 12:30 pm - 1:45 am, Harkness 329

Instructor: Dan Alexander
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Office hours: by appointment – email and suggest specific times that work for you.

Course Information

Description This course will familiarize students with the “workhorse” models of domestic political institutions. Students will further develop their ability to consume and create models in contexts ranging from elections to interest groups to interbranch relationships. Throughout, we will explore and emphasize principles of applied modeling. Accordingly, students will complete problem sets and present published papers. The class is intended for graduate students in the social sciences who are familiar with game theory, though advanced undergraduates may take the course with instructor permission.

Assignments and Expectations All students are expected to attend class, to do so having read the assigned material, and to be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussions that draw upon the readings. Students will complete problem sets, present published work, and prepare comment on the material. The weighting given to each assignment in calculating grades is provided below, followed by descriptions of the components.

- 7 problem sets (each worth $\sim 7\%$)
- Presentation(s) (total of 25-30%)
- Comment(s) on notation changes (total of 5-10%)
- Participation/attendance (10%)

Problem sets The problem sets will largely come from the Gehlbach book, but a couple of them will be posted on Blackboard. You may collaborate with others on the problem sets, though please heed the advice regarding effective collaboration given in class. All submissions must be typeset in L^AT_EX.

Presentation(s) Depending on enrollment, students will present one or two published works. The idea here is to present the paper as though it is your own work, giving a scholarly talk and – for the sake of the presentation – taking ownership of the material. You must meet with me once while preparing the presentation.

Comments on notation changes Each student will be assigned one or two papers that underlie the textbook material presented in class. The task will be to identify notational changes or other editorial streamlining in Gehlbach’s presentation of the canonical model. This will help students think about choices in applied modeling and effective presentation techniques.

Materials We will draw extensively from one required book, listed below. Make sure to obtain the 2nd edition of the book. All articles will be posted on Blackboard.

Gehlbach, Scott. 2021. *Formal Models of Domestic Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Schedule

Readings are to be completed before the class on their listed day. When a book is listed, it’s an excerpt available on Blackboard. We do start on January 18, but there are no readings for that day. We do not have class on March 12 and 14 (spring break) or April 4 (MPSA). On February 1, we will have a class field trip to Andre’s Wallis Working Group presentation. Papers to be presented by students are marked with an asterisk (*).

Theory in Theory and Practice			
Jan 23	Jan 25	Jan 30	Feb 1
Ashworth, Berry and Bueno de Mesquita (2021); Clarke and Primo (2012)	Holmstrom (1979); Slough (2023)	Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2006); Bagnoli and Bergstrom (2005)	AVP @ WWG
Elections with Complete Information			
Feb 6	Feb 8	Feb 13	
Gehlbach, ch 1	Baye, Kovenock and de Vries (2012); Hirsch and Shotts (2015)	Hirsch (2023)	
Elections with Incomplete Information			
Feb 15	Feb 20	Feb 22	
Gehlbach, ch 2	Stashko (2023)*	Izzo, Martin and Callander (2023)*	
Interest Groups			
Feb 27	Feb 29	Mar 5	Mar 7
Gehlbach, ch 3	Lohmann (1995)*	Ashworth (2006)*	Hirsch et al. (2023)*
Veto Players			
Mar 19	Mar 21	Mar 26	Mar 28
Gehlbach, ch 4	Banks and Duggan (2006)	Gibilisco (2015)*	Hirsch and Shotts (2023)*
Bureaucracy			
Apr 2	Apr 9	Apr 11	Apr 16
Gehlbach, ch 5	Calvert (1985)*	Gehlbach 8.4; Hirsch (2016)*	Denisenko, Hafer and Landa (2022)*
Political Accountability			
Apr 18	Apr 23 (P.O.)	Apr 25	Apr 30
Gehlbach, ch 7	Bils, Judd and Smith (2023)*	Alt, Bueno de Mesquita and Rose (2011)*	Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita and Friedenber (2017)

References

- Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Shanna Rose. 2011. “Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits.” *The Journal of Politics* 73(01):171–186.
- Ashworth, Scott. 2006. “Campaign finance and voter welfare with entrenched incumbents.” *American Political Science Review* 100(1):55–68.
- Ashworth, Scott, Christopher R. Berry and Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. 2021. *Theory and Credibility: Integrating Theoretical and Empirical Social Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ashworth, Scott and Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. 2006. “Monotone Comparative Statics for Models of Politics.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(1):214–231.
- Ashworth, Scott, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Amanda Friedenber. 2017. “Accountability and Information in Elections.” *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics* 9(2):95–138.
- Bagnoli, Mark and Ted Bergstrom. 2005. “Log-concave probability and its applications.” *Economic Theory* 26(2):445–469.
- Banks, Jeffrey S. and John Duggan. 2006. “A general bargaining model of legislative policy-making.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1(1):49–85.
- Baye, Michael R., Dan Kovenock and Casper G. de Vries. 2012. “Contests with rank-order spillovers.” *Economic Theory* 51(2):315–350.
- Bils, Peter, Gleason Judd and Bradley C Smith. 2023. “Policymaking and Appointments under Electoral and Judicial Constraints.” *Journal of Politics* NA(XX):xx–xx.
- Calvert, Randall L. 1985. “The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice.” *The Journal of Politics* 47(2):530–555.
- Clarke, Kevin A. and David M. Primo. 2012. *A Model Discipline: Political Science and the Logic of Representations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Denisenko, Anna, Catherine Hafer and Dimitri Landa. 2022. “Competence and Advice.” *working paper* pp. 1–34.

- Gibilisco, Michael. 2015. "Fair play in assemblies." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10(3):275–320.
- Hirsch, Alexander V. 2016. "Experimentation and Persuasion in Political Organizations." *American Political Science Review* 110(1):68–84.
- Hirsch, Alexander V. 2023. "Polarization and Campaign Spending in Elections." *Journal of Politics* 85(1):240–249.
- Hirsch, Alexander V., Karam Kang, B. Pablo Montagnes and Hye Young You. 2023. "Lobbyists as Gatekeepers: Theory and Evidence." *Journal of Politics* 85(2):731–748.
- Hirsch, Alexander V. and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2015. "Competitive policy development." *American Economic Review* 105(4):1646–1664.
- Hirsch, Alexander V. and Kenneth W. Shotts. 2023. "Veto Players and Policy." *Working Papers (Faculty) - Stanford Graduate School of Business* (626):1–40.
- Holmstrom, Bengt. 1979. "Moral Hazard and Observability." *The Bell Journal of Economics* 10(1):74–91.
- Izzo, Federica, Gregory J. Martin and Steven Callander. 2023. "Ideological Competition." *American Journal of Political Science* 67(3):687–700.
- Lohmann, Susanne. 1995. "Information, access, and contributions: A signaling model of lobbying." *Public Choice* 85(3-4):267–284.
- Slough, Tara. 2023. "Phantom Counterfactuals." *American Journal of Political Science* 67(1):137–153.
- Stashko, Allison. 2023. "Crossing the District Line: Border Mismatch and Targeted Redistribution." *working paper* pp. 1–45.