

# PSCI 547-01: Modern Political Economy: Empirics

University of Rochester  
Spring Semester

**Instructor:** Scott F. Abramson

**Meeting Time:** Thursdays, 2:00–4:40 PM

**Dates:** January 20 – May 1

**Location:** Harkness 329

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

## Course Description

This seminar examines how political scientists measure ideology, beliefs, and preferences when these objects are latent, multidimensional, and strategically expressed. The course focuses on applications to legislatures, voters, candidates, media, and protest behavior. Throughout the semester we emphasize identification, interpretation, and the link between theoretical models and empirical measurement. The course integrates methods from econometrics, formal theory, experimental design, and text-as-data, and is intended for graduate students preparing to conduct original empirical research in political economy. PSC 404, 405, 407, are prerequisites.

## Evaluation

- **Participation (25%):** Active and informed participation in weekly seminar discussions. Students must attend every class. Reading for the week must be completed by all students before class.
- **Reading Memos (25%):** Short critical memos (1–2 pages) for selected weeks, focusing on identification, assumptions, and contribution.
- **Referee Report (20%):** A journal-style referee report on a paper from the syllabus or a recent related working paper.
- **Final Paper or Proposal (30%):** An original research paper or a serious, well-developed research proposal applying ideas from the course.

## Academic Honesty

Students and faculty at the University must agree to adhere to high standards of academic honesty in all of the work that we do. The College Board on Academic Honesty provides further information on our policies and procedures: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty). In this course the following additional requirements are in effect: You are encouraged to discuss course readings and

assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another. All written work must properly format quotations, use citations, and include a bibliography where necessary. Cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Honesty Board.

## Referee Report Assignment

Each student will write a professional referee report (approximately 3–5 pages) evaluating a paper related to the themes of the course. The report should be written in the style of a top political science or economics journal (e.g., *APSR*, *AJPS*, *QJE*, *Econometrica*) and must address:

- The paper’s research question and contribution
- Theoretical framework and assumptions
- Identification strategy and empirical design
- Interpretation of results
- Strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement

Students may choose a paper from the syllabus or propose a recent unpublished paper for approval. The goal is to develop skills in critical evaluation, constructive feedback, and scholarly judgment.

## Schedule

### Schedule

#### Topic 0: What Are We Doing?

- Canen, Nathan, and Kristopher Ramsay. “Quantifying theory in politics: Identification, interpretation, and the role of structural methods.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* (2024).
- Ashworth, Scott, Christopher R. Berry, and Ethan Bueno De Mesquita. *Theory and Credibility*. Princeton University Press (2021), pp. 1–67.
- Deaton, Angus. “Instruments, randomization, and learning about development.” *Journal of Economic Literature* (2010).
- Heckman, James J., and Sergio Urzua. “Comparing IV with structural models.” *Journal of Econometrics* (2010).
- Imbens, Guido W. “Better LATE than nothing.” *Journal of Economic Literature* (2010).

### **Topic 1: Estimating Legislator Ideology**

- Londregan, John. “Estimating legislators’ preferred points.” *Political Analysis* (2000).
- Clinton, Joshua D., Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers. “The statistical analysis of roll call data.” *American Political Science Review* (2004).
- Clinton, Joshua D. “Using roll call estimates to test models of politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* (2012).
- Canen, Nathan, Charles Kendall, and Francesco Trebbi. “Unbundling polarization.” *Econometrica* (2020).
- Jessee, Stephen A. “Estimating individuals’ political perceptions while adjusting for DIF.” *Political Analysis* (2021).

### **Topic 2: Inferring Politician Ideology from Text and Other Data**

- Slapin, Jonathan B., and Sven-Oliver Proksch. “A scaling model for estimating party positions from texts.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2008).
- Lowe, Will et al. “Scaling policy preferences from coded political texts.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (2011).
- Bonica, Adam. “Mapping the ideological marketplace.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2013).
- Gentzkow, Matthew, Jesse M. Shapiro, and Matt Taddy. “Measuring group differences in high-dimensional choices.” *Econometrica* (2019).
- Meisels, Melissa. “Candidate positions, responsiveness, and returns to extremism.” *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

### **Topic 3: Ideology of the Media**

- Groseclose, Tim, and Jeffrey Milyo. “A measure of media bias.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2005).
- Gentzkow, Matthew, and Jesse M. Shapiro. “What drives media slant?” *Econometrica* (2010).
- Larcinese, Valentino, Riccardo Puglisi, and James M. Snyder Jr. “Partisan bias in economic news.” *Journal of Public Economics* (2011).
- Qin, Bei, David Strömberg, and Yanhui Wu. “Media bias in China.” *American Economic Review* (2018).

#### **Topic 4: The Effects of Media**

- DellaVigna, Stefano, and Ethan Kaplan. “The Fox News effect: Media bias and voting.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2007).
- Snyder Jr., James M., and David Strömberg. “Press coverage and political accountability.” *Journal of Political Economy* (2010).
- Martin, Gregory J., and Ali Yurukoglu. “Bias in cable news: Persuasion and polarization.” *American Economic Review* (2017).
- Abramson, Scott, and Sergio Montero. “The Effect of Local News on Political Knowledge.” SSRN (2024).

#### **Topic 5: Inferring Voter Ideology in Surveys**

- Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. “The dynamics of state policy liberalism.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2016).
- Fowler, Anthony et al. “Moderates.” *American Political Science Review* (2023).
- Broockman, David E., and Benjamin E. Lauderdale. “Letter: Moderates.” *American Political Science Review* (2025).
- Hare, Christopher, Brandon Highton, and Bradford Jones. “Assessing the structure of policy preferences.” *Journal of Politics* (2024).
- Henry, Marc, and Ismael Mourifié. “Euclidean revealed preferences.” *Journal of Applied Econometrics* (2013).

#### **Spring Break — No Class**

#### **Topic 6: Uncovering Respondent Bias in Surveys**

- Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. “Are Emily and Greg more employable?” *American Economic Review* (2004).
- Butler, Daniel M., and David E. Broockman. “Do politicians racially discriminate?” *American Journal of Political Science* (2011).
- Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. “Causal inference in conjoint analysis.” *Political Analysis* (2014).
- Abramson, Scott F., Kocak, K., and Magazinnik, A. “What do we learn from conjoint experiments?” *American Journal of Political Science* (2022).
- Gillespie, Morgan, and Scott F. Abramson. “The effect of gender on perceptions of politicians’ ideology.” *American Journal of Political Science* (conditionally accepted).

## Topic 7: Eliciting Truthful Responses to Sensitive Items

- Rosenfeld, Bryn, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N. Shapiro. “An empirical validation study of popular survey methodologies for sensitive questions.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2016).
- Blair, Graeme, and Kosuke Imai. “Statistical analysis of list experiments.” *Political Analysis* (2012).
- Gonzalez-Ocantos, Ezequiel, et al. “Vote buying and social desirability bias.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2012).
- Hale, Henry E. “Authoritarian rallying as reputational cascade?” *American Political Science Review* (2022).

## Topic 8: Measuring Beliefs and Expectations

- Manski, Charles F. “Survey measurement of probabilistic macroeconomic expectations.” NBER (2018).
- Delavande, Adeline, and Charles F. Manski. “Using elicited choice probabilities.” *Electoral Studies* (2015).
- Wiswall, Matthew, and Basit Zafar. “Preference for the workplace.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2018).
- Mian, Atif, Amir Sufi, and Nasim Khoshkhou. “Partisan bias and economic expectations.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* (2023).
- Bullock, John G., et al. “Partisan bias in factual beliefs.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* (2015).

## Topic 9: Higher-Order Beliefs and Strategic Interaction

- Costa-Gomes, Miguel A., and Georg Weizsäcker. “Stated beliefs and play in normal-form games.” *Review of Economic Studies* (2008).
- Cornand, Camille, and Frank Heinemann. “Reactions to public and private information.” *Experimental Economics* (2014).
- Bosworth, Steven J. “Higher-order beliefs and coordination.” *Experimental Economics* (2017).
- Aoyagi, Masaki, Guillaume R. Fréchette, and Sevgi Yuksel. “Beliefs in repeated games.” *American Economic Review* (2024).

## Topic 10: Beliefs, Protest, and Collective Action

- Cantoni, Davide et al. “Protests as strategic games.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2019).
- Jarke-Neuert, Johannes, Grisca Perino, and Henrike Schwickert. “Free-riding for future: Field experimental evidence of strategic substitutability in climate protest.” arXiv preprint arXiv:2112.09478 (2021).
- Jarke-Neuert, Jonas, Graciela Perino, and Hannah Schwickert. “Free-riding for future.” (2021).
- Canen, Nathan, and Anujit Chakraborty. “Belief elicitation in political protest experiments.” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* (2023).

## Topic 11: Redistribution

- Milanovic, Branko. “The median-voter hypothesis, income inequality, and income redistribution.” *European Journal of Political Economy* (2000).
- Hinnerich, Björn Tyrefors, and Per Pettersson-Lidbom. “Democracy, redistribution, and political participation.” *Econometrica* (2014).
- Karadja, Mounir, Johanna Mollerstrom, and David Seim. “Relative income and redistribution.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* (2017).
- Hoy, Christopher, and Franziska Mager. “Support for redistribution.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* (2021).
- Alesina, Alberto, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso. “Intergenerational mobility and redistribution.” *American Economic Review* (2018).

## Topic 12: Strategic Voting and Beliefs

- Clinton, Joshua D., and Adam Meirowitz. “Testing explanations of strategic voting.” *American Journal of Political Science* (2004).
- Fujiwara, Thomas. “Regression discontinuity test of Duverger’s Law.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* (2011).
- Spenkuch, Jörg L. “Expressive vs. strategic voters.” *Journal of Public Economics* (2018).
- Eggers, Andrew C., and Nick Vivyan. “Who votes more strategically?” *American Political Science Review* (2020).
- Spenkuch, Jörg L., Pablo Montagnes, and Daniel Magleby. “Backward induction in the wild.” *American Economic Review* (2018).

## Topic 13: Student Paper Presentations

Student presentations of final papers or proposals.