• Instructors:
  - Peter Buisseret - buisseret@uchicago.edu, Keller 3011
  - Luis Martinez - luismartinez@uchicago.edu, Keller 2011
  - Adam Zelizer - zelizer@uchicago.edu, Keller 3009

• Class time and place:
  - Buisseret: Mon and Wed, 09:30-10:50am, 11:00am-12:20pm (TBD)
  - Martinez: Mon and Wed, 09:30-10:50am, 11:00am-12:20pm (TBD)
  - Zelizer: Mon and Wed, 02:00-03:20pm, 03:30pm-04:50pm (TBD)

• Office hours:
  - Buisseret: TBD
  - Martinez: TBD
  - Zelizer: TBD

• Head TA: TBD

• Teaching Assistants: TBD

Course Description

This course introduces students to core topics and concepts on the role of political institutions in policy-making. The course develops fundamental theoretical and empirical tools for exploring policy-making and democratic performance. Lessons about political institutions will be understood from the perspective of a policy entrepreneur—that is, an individual or organization that develops strategy in order to advance policy change in legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.
Requirements and Course Grading

Non-examination assessment: Outside of examinations, your assessment will be conducted in two parts.

1. You will be assigned four (4) problem sets, which account for 20% of your final grade (5% each). These problem sets will help you revise the material covered in class and are great practice for the examinations. They must be handed in at the beginning of class on the specified date.
   - Problem set 1 - Assigned: January 15; Due: January 22.
   - Problem set 2 - Assigned: January 27; Due: February 03.
   - Problem set 3 - Assigned: February 17; Due: February 24.
   - Problem set 4 - Assigned: March 02; Due: March 09.

2. You will be assessed on a writing assignment, which accounts for 20% of your course grade. Further instructions will be provided later in the term, but this is basically a short piece of writing in which you employ the analytical tools developed during the course to study a specific policy question. This assessment is managed and evaluated jointly with the Harris Writing Program.
   - Assigned: February 12; Due: March 11.

Examination assessment: There will be two examinations:

1. Mid-term (30% of your course grade). This exam takes place in class, without access to any notes or books. It evaluates the material covered in the first half of the course.
   - DATE: February 10

2. Final (30% of your course grade). This exam takes place after the end of classes. Notes or books are not allowed. It evaluates the material covered in the second half.
   - DATE AND LOCATION: TBD

Policy on late assignments (problem sets): Students will be penalized 20% of the total marks for each assignment for each day late. The penalty may be relaxed in extenuating circumstances, such as illness or family/personal emergencies. If you must submit an assignment late, contact your TA before the due date to make arrangements.

Policy on academic dishonesty: All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students shall not represent another’s work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage. All students suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Harris Dean of Students for investigation and adjudication. The disciplinary process can result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University. In addition to disciplinary sanctions, students who have committed academic dishonesty
will automatically receive a grade of 0 in the corresponding assignment and the instructors reserve the right to fail the student for the course. The Harris policy and procedures related to academic integrity can be found [here](#). The University of Chicago Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism can be found [here](#).

**Lectures:** Attendance at all lectures is advisable. Students must attend the lecture corresponding to the instructor/time that they have signed up to. Exceptions must be approved by the head TA in advance. The material covered in the lecture will usually not follow closely the content of the readings. All lecture material is examinable, unless otherwise stated.

**Discussion sections:** There are XXX discussion sections and you should have enrolled in one before the start of the quarter. Solutions to problem sets, practice exams and actual exams will be provided and discussed during these sessions. The discussion sections are also meant to allow students to ask questions and clarify concepts related to the material covered in the lectures. Attendance to all sessions is strongly advised.

**Readings:** There is one, and only one, required reading for each session. Students are expected to closely engage with every required reading. The number of pages assigned per week is intentionally left small, with the expectation that students will read carefully. Students are expected to participate actively in class, with the quality of participation being much more important than the quantity. The readings will prove very useful for the assessments. Links to each reading are provided. “Gated” links mostly to publishers’ websites (final versions) and may require on-campus access. “Ungated” links to authors’ websites and may correspond to preliminary versions (they may also stop working).

**Contact:** Your initial point of contact for all questions or queries should be the TA assigned to your discussion section. For further assistance, please contact the Head TA. If you would like to talk to the instructors, please come to the weekly office hours. Bear in mind that the instructors’ office hours are not a substitute for the discussion section.

### Course Outline

**PART I: Core Topics**

1. **Monday, January 6:** *Introduction to Course + Electoral Systems Across the World*
   

2. **Wednesday, January 8:** *Social Choice and the Politics of Impossibility*
   

3. **Monday, January 13:** *Introduction to the Spatial Model of Politics*
   
4. **Wednesday, January 15**: *The Spatial Model in Action: Income Inequality and Taxation*  

5. **Monday, January 20**: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (NO CLASS)

6. **Wednesday, January 22**: *The Spatial Model in Action: The Transition to Democracy*  

7. **Monday, January 27**: *The Spatial Model in Action: Candidates and Platforms*  

8. **Wednesday, January 29**: *Voter Turnout: Why it Happens? Does it Matter?*  

9. **Monday, February 03**: *Voting Behavior: Honest or Strategic?*  
*Reading*: TBD

10. **Wednesday, February 05**: *Controlling Politicians: Electoral Accountability*  

11. **Monday, February 10**: MID-TERM EXAMINATION

**PART II: Advanced Topics**

12. **Wednesday, February 12**: *The Role of the Media in Politics*  

13. **Monday, February 17**: *Polarization, Populism and Outsider Candidates*  

14. **Wednesday, February 19**: *Seizing the Initiative: Politics of Direct Democracy*  
15. Monday, February 24: Sub-national Governments and Decentralization


16. Wednesday, February 26: State Formation and State Capacity


17. Monday, March 2: Incentives and the Performance of Bureaucrats


18. Wednesday, March 4: Legislative Politics: Government Formation


19. Monday, March 9: Legislative Politics: Agenda-setting


20. Wednesday, March 11: The Politics of Reform