

PPHA 31610
Analytical Politics II: Political Institutions
(Winter 2022)

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1 Instructors: contact information

- **Luis Martinez:** sections 1, 3, 5
 - **Email:** luismartinez@uchicago.edu
 - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 09:30-10:50am, 11:00am-12:20pm, 02:00-03:20pm
- **Arduino Tomasi:** sections 2, 4
 - **Email:** atomasi@uchicago.edu
 - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 09:30-10:50am, 11:00am-12:20pm
- **Zhaosong (Victor) Ruan:** section 6
 - **Email:** zruan@uchicago.edu
 - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 03:30-04:50pm

2 Teaching assistants: contact information

- **Head TA:** Pepi Pandiloski (ppandiloski@uchicago.edu)
- **TAs:** TBD

3 Canvas website

The course has one shared Canvas website for all sections. We will post on Canvas all course materials, including assignments, lecture slides, any pre-recorded content or class recordings.

4 Course description

This course introduces students to core topics in the political economy of public policy. Its substantive objective is to familiarize students with the crucial role of politics in all realms of public policy. The course covers three major themes. First, we study workhorse models in political economy that allow us to understand the interplay between political preferences, institutions and behavior in various settings (i.e., electoral politics, non-democratic regimes). Second, we examine real-world political institutions and their impact on policy and economic outcomes (i.e., electoral systems, levels of government, bureaucratic delegation). Lastly, we analyze important political agents and the drivers and consequences of their behavior (i.e., voters, media, special interests).

Methodologically, the course aims to build and expand on the skills that students are developing in all three core sequences of the MPP program: microeconomics, statistics,

analytical politics. We use formal mathematical models (mostly game theory) to organize ideas around each topic and derive testable implications. We complement this formal analysis by studying empirical research in economics and political science to test these predictions and gain insight into real-world events. The course assignments require students to work on abstract problem-solving, but also to connect the topics discussed to real-world policy issues. The course also provides an opportunity to develop and strengthen written and verbal communication skills that allow students to advocate for a policy agenda with different audiences.

5 Logistics

This is a nine-week course and we have organized the course material into nine modules (i.e., one module per week). The content of each module is discussed in section 7. Each module involves two class meetings with the instructor, one of which is a lecture while the other is a discussion session. As additional support, the instructors hold weekly office hours and the Teaching Assistants (TAs) have weekly sessions.

5.1 Lectures

One of the class sessions corresponding to each module (i.e., Tuesdays) will be a lecture focusing on the more technical aspects of the course and providing detailed walkthroughs of theoretical models. The concepts developed in the lectures will be useful for (i) the analysis of empirical research in the discussion sessions, (ii) solving the graded problem sets, (iii) the course project. The slides for each lecture can be found on Canvas as we make them available.

5.2 Discussion sessions

The other class meeting (i.e., Thursdays) is meant to be a discussion session in which a specific pre-assigned reading is analyzed and discussed. The discussion sessions serve three purposes. First, we will provide a quick overview of the content of the lecture and answer questions. Second, we will study an academic article providing empirical evidence relevant to the week's topic. All articles can be found on Canvas. Third, we will hold an open discussion about the policy implications of the lecture material and the findings from the article.

5.3 TA sessions

Students should address all questions concerning the logistics of the course to the head TA (dates, grades, IT issues, etc.). The TAs are responsible for holding complementary sessions and for grading student assignments. The TA sessions serve multiple purposes. Some weeks, we will use them to solve practice problem sets or to go through the solution of the actual problem sets. Other weeks we may use them to help students work on their course projects (e.g., hold a training session with the writing team). The TA sessions provide an additional opportunity for students to ask questions about the course material.

6 Evaluations

Students will be evaluated based on two components. First, three problem sets (36% total). Second, a quarter-long research project (64%). Notice that there will be no midterm or final exam.

We will make every effort to return assignments within a week. If you believe that your grade on an assignment is incorrect or unfair, please submit your concerns in writing to the head TA within a week of the assignment or exam being returned. Fully summarize what you believe the problems are and why. The head TA will respond either verbally or in writing. If you still have concerns, you may submit them in writing to the instructor, who will issue a final grade. Core courses at the Harris School are graded on a rough curve. The basic target distribution is: A $[\frac{1}{8}]$, A- $[\frac{1}{4}]$, B+ $[\frac{1}{4}]$, B $[\frac{1}{4}]$, B- or lower $[\frac{1}{8}]$.

1. **Problem sets:** There will be three problem sets during the quarter, which we will post on Canvas under the Assignments tab at least one week before they are due. They must be submitted on Canvas before midnight on the date specified below. We strongly encourage you to work in a problem set group. If you work in a group, you may turn in a single problem set for the whole group. **Groups that turn in a joint problem set can be no larger than four people.** If you turn in an individual problem set, it may not be identical to another student's problem set. **No late assignments will be accepted.** Problem sets represent 36% of the final grade (i.e. 12% each). The problem sets will be single-marked by the TAs.

- Problem set 1 due date: January 27 (week 4).
- Problem set 2 due date: February 17 (week 7).
- Problem set 3 due date: March 09 (finals week).

2. **Research project:** Students will work on a research project throughout the quarter. **They will work in groups of no more than four people.** Each group must work on answering a specific policy question of its choice (i.e, a real problem in a real setting). There are two possibilities for these questions. First, students can work on a policy question that directly involves political agents and/or institutions. For example, "*how can we increase female political participation in the middle east?*" or "*are promotion incentives in the Chinese bureaucracy effective at promoting good governance?*". Alternatively, groups may also choose a topic that is itself not directly about politics, but must then make the study of political incentives and institutions a central part of their analysis. For instance, "*what are the political barriers to an effective solution to police violence against minorities in the United States?*" or "*what are the political challenges to supranational oversight of national commitments to curb climate change?*" Bear in mind that these are just examples and we encourage students to be creative and truly connect the project to their policy interests. We are happy to help to connect students with shared interests. We encourage students to pursue a specific policy position or reform agenda in their project, but they must also consider realistic obstacles and counterarguments. As part of the work on the project, each group must deliver

several outputs throughout the quarter. In total, these outputs represent 64% of the final grade.

- **Project proposal:** Each group must submit a proposal indicating the specific topic/question it will work on, the scope of the project, target audience and a preliminary list of data sources and/or bibliographic references (depending on the setting). This proposal will be single-marked by the course instructors. It is worth 10% of the final grade. Maximum length: 1 page (12 pt font, single spacing). Due date: January 23 (i.e. end of week 3).
- **Op-ed:** Each group must submit a short article in the style of a newspaper op-ed that includes the specific policy question under study, some of the main issues involved and preliminary policy recommendations. This is not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of the question, but rather an eye-catching piece that is addressed at a general public, raises interesting issues and provides a glimpse of an answer. The quality of the writing will be assessed by a member of the Harris writing team, while the content will be evaluated by two of the course TAs (i.e., double marked). The op-ed is worth 22% of the final grade. Maximum length: 2 pages (12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing). Due date: February 13 (i.e. end of week 6).
- **Policy memo:** Each group must submit a final policy memo that lays out in more detail the question, methodology, findings and recommendations from the research project. The memo must be addressed to a relevant specialized audience (e.g. parliamentary committee, funding agency, NGO) and provide evidence of rigorous, careful analysis. The quality of the writing will be assessed by a member of the Harris writing team, while the content will be evaluated by two of the course TAs (i.e., double marked). The policy memo is worth 22% of the final grade. Maximum length: 5 pages (12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing). Due date: March 14. (i.e. end of week 9)
- **Project advertisement:** Each group must submit one final output that either helps divulge the findings of the research project or helps advance the resulting policy agenda. This output can be anything that the group deems appropriate, except a written article (e.g. video, website, data visualization, social media campaign). Groups will be evaluated based on whether they submitted this output (10% of the final grade), but the TAs and instructors will pick the most outstanding advertisements and award them as much as a 10 point bonus on the overall grade for the project. Selected outputs may also be showcased on Harris social media (with permission from the students). Due date: March 06. (i.e. end of week 9)

7 Course schedule

- Week 1: The spatial model of politics
 - Lecture: Arrow’s impossibility theorem, Median voter theorem, political competition

- Reading: *Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?* Lori Beaman, Raghendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, Petia Topalova. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(4), 2009, p. 1497-1540.
- Week 2: Political regimes and regime change
 - Lecture: measuring democracy, theories of democratization and redistribution
 - Reading: *Dictatorship, Higher Education and Social Mobility*. Maria A. Bautista, Felipe Gonzalez, Luis R. Martinez, Pablo Muñoz, Mounu Prem. Working paper. 2020.
- Week 3: Political accountability
 - Lecture: Political agency model, empirical evidence, democratic maladies
 - Reading: *Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil's Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes*. Claudio Ferraz, Frederico Finan. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(2), 2008, p. 703-745.
- Week 4: Electoral systems
 - Lecture: FPTP vs PR, policy implications
 - Reading: *Electoral Rules and Politicians' Behavior: A Micro Test*. Stefano Gagliarducci, Tommaso Nannicini, Paolo Naticchioni. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 3, 144-174.
- Week 5: Levels of government
 - Lecture: Oates model, second generation fiscal federalism
 - Reading: *Decentralization, Collusion, and Coal Mine Deaths*. Ruixue Jia, Huihua Nie. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 99(1), 2017, p. 105-118.
- Week 6: Bureaucratic delegation
 - Lecture: Principal-agent model, incentives and selection
 - Reading: *The Devil is in the Details: The Successes and Limitations of Bureaucratic Reform in India*. Iqbal Dhaliwal, Rema Hanna. *Journal of Development Economics*, 124, 2017, p. 1-21.
- Week 7: Political participation
 - Lecture: evidence on enfranchisement, theories of electoral participation, rallying the base
 - Reading: *Valuing the Vote: The Redistribution of Voting Rights and State Funds following the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. Elizabeth U. Cascio, Ebonya Washington. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(1), 2014, p. 379-433.
- Week 8: The role of the media

- Lecture: information and accountability, media markets,
- Reading: *Local News, Information, and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections*. Daniel Moskowitz. *American Political Science Review*, 2020.
- Week 9: Special interests
 - Lecture: Lobbying, money in politics
 - Reading: *The Party or the Purse? Unequal Representation in the US Senate*. Jeffrey Lax, Justin Phillips and Adam Zelizer. *American Political Science Review*, 113(4), 2019, p. 917-940.

8 Course materials

There is no assigned textbook for this course. However *Political Economy for Public Policy* by Ethan Bueno de Mesquita (Princeton University Press) is a useful reference for several of the topics we will study. All of the papers for the discussion sessions can be accessed on the Modules tab on Canvas. Besides the mandatory reading, we may sometimes post additional background reading for those interested.

9 Academic integrity

The Harris School has a formal policy on academic integrity that you are expected to adhere to. Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) turning in someone else's work as your own, copying solutions to past years' problem sets, and receiving any unapproved assistance on exams. **Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course.** 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 commit academic dishonesty may also be penalized in their course grades, at the discretion of the instructors.

10 Diversity and inclusion

Consistent with the University of Chicago's commitment to open discourse and free expression, we encourage students to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial. Thought-provoking discourse is facilitated when we not only speak freely but also listen carefully and respectfully to others.

11 Accessibility

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of aca-

ademic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. The starting point is to contact disabilities@uchicago.edu. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented.

12 Core Course and Coding Tutoring

Harris offers free tutoring support to students in need of one-on-one help with their core courses as well as coding in Stata, R, and Python. Tutoring opens on Monday of Week 3 each quarter and students can utilize up to 10 hours total of tutoring per quarter. If you would like to learn more about the tutoring program or book an appointment, visit the [Harris Student Handbook tutoring page](#).

13 Harris Writing Program

If you need help with the written assignments in this course please see the Writing Program. The Writing Fellows and Coaches can help you establish best practices in terms of brainstorming, drafting, and editing your assignments, and will critically engage your writing and thinking skills. And if you are an English Language Learner the Writing Program has trained staff on hand to help you with Academic English conventions. Find the Writing Program [here](#).