Analytical Politics I:
Strategic and Theoretical Foundations

Fall 2021

Professor Ethan Bueno de Mesquita

Student Appointments Wednesday, 8:30–10:30 AM (groups of 4 or more can take two slots)

Sign Up Link https://calendly.com/ethanbdm_office_hours/10-minute-meeting, you will receive an email (from my gmail account) with a zoom link

Open Student Hours Wednesday, 10:30–11:30 AM

Zoom Link https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/97236341143?pwd=MWZTRE5UcWp6SWNOampablhLUWZiUT09
Zoom Password 451046
Email bdm@uchicago.edu

Professor Saba Devdariani

Student Appointments Tuesday, 2–4 PM (groups of 4 or more can take two slots)

Sign Up Link https://calendly.com/devdariani/api-office-hours?month=2021-10, you will receive an email with a zoom link

Open Student Hours Tuesday, 4–5 PM

Zoom Link https://uchicago.zoom.us/j/93859498948?pwd=cFI0b0QrZVVDcV2dkRvclVyaC84Zz09
Zoom Password 501094
Email devdariani@uchicago.edu

Professor Wioletta Dziuda

Student Appointments Tuesday, 8:30–10:30 AM (groups of 4 or more can take two slots)

Sign Up Link https://calendly.com/wdziuda/one-on-one-office-hours, you will receive an email with a zoom link

Open Student Hours Tuesday, 10:30–11:30 AM
Professor Alexander Fouirnaies

Student Appointments Mon, 8:30–10:30 AM (groups of 4 or more can take two slots)

Sign Up Link https://calendly.com/alexander-fouirnaies/office-hours

Email fouirnaies@uchicago.edu

Head TA Zhaosong (Victor) Ruan (zruan@uchicago.edu)

TAs Alejandra Chavarria (achavarria@uchicago.edu)
Daniela Perez Giraldo (dperezgiraldo@uchicago.edu)
Jaeho Hahm (jaehoh@uchicago.edu)
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Ana Vasquez (acvasquez@uchicago.edu)
Akshay Vikas (akshayvikas@uchicago.edu)
Ellie Vorhaben (evorhaben@uchicago.edu)
Thomas Whamond (twhamond@uchicago.edu)
Ketian Zhang (ketianzhang@uchicago.edu)

Course website The course has a website at canvas.uchicago.edu

Course Description This course has four objectives, three substantive and one methodological. The three major substantive themes of the course are (i) the normative foundations of policy making, (ii) how strategic interactions give rise to social dilemmas that create room for public policy to improve social welfare, and (iii) how technological, political, and institutional factors constrain policymakers and sometimes prevent good policies from being enacted.

Methodologically, the course introduces basic game theory. Game theory is the mathematical tool used to study situations of strategic interdependence, which is most of life. As such, it is a critical for understanding the substantive issues discussed above. In addition, understanding basic game theory is a valuable skill in its own right for policy professionals. It helps us predict and understand how people and organizations will behave in response to changes in the policy environment.

Participating in Class There are several components to participating in class.

- Reading There are assigned readings for every week which you are expected to complete before class.
• Lectures and Quizzes There are recorded lectures for each week which you should watch before class. The lectures will have quizzes interspersed which you should also complete. For the quizzes, after your first attempt, the quiz will tell you the correct answer and you will have an opportunity to revise your answer. To get full credit for the quizzes, please make sure that you have inputed the correct answer to each question by the end.

• Questions If you have questions based on the readings and lecture, please submit them directly to Canvas. Post them under the appropriate week under the Discussions tab. We will plan to address common questions in discussion sections.

• Attending Class We meet together once a week. There is an expectation that students in this course will be actively engaged in class. If you are unable to be on campus due to illness or COVID symptoms, you are welcome to join the 7:30 AM online class or watch the recording of that class session on Canvas.

Course Requirements The course has three requirements: participation, problem sets, and two exams.

• Problem Sets There will be four problem sets during the quarter. A few guidelines for the problem sets:
  – Problem sets must be turned in via the Gradescope link on Canvas by 9 AM (Central) on the Monday one week after they are assigned.

  – 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.

  – For the sake of your heroic TAs, who check huge numbers of problem sets at a time, please write your answers to problems in a linear, concise, and readable form. This will often mean you have to rewrite your answer after solving it. Doing so is an act of kindness.

  – No late assignments will be accepted.

• Exams There will be two take-home exams, a midterm and a comprehensive final. TA sessions the week prior to exam will be review sessions. We will make at least one sample exam available a week prior to the exams.

Course Materials The required textbook for the course is


Ethan designed this book for this course, so we think it makes sense to use it. That said, he has no interest in profiting from your purchase of his book. To put his money where his mouth is, so to speak, he will donate to charity 100% of the royalties he receives from sales of this book to Chicago students. Which charity he donates to will be determined by members of the class in a way we will fill you in on during the course of the quarter. (His only rule is
that he has a veto over charities that he finds personally objectionable. In this event, he will simply ask the group to choose a different charity. This has never happened.

There are additional readings for many topics. These are available on Canvas.

Grades & Grading Grading will be based on the course requirements as follows: final exam (35%), midterm exam (25%), problem sets (25%), completing the quizzes interspersed in the lecture (15%).

We will make every effort to return assignments and exams within a week.

If you believe that your grade on an assignment or exam question 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 and the TA responsible for the relevant question will respond in writing. If you still have concerns, you may submit them in writing to the professor, who will issue a final grade.

Core courses at the Harris School are graded on a rough curve. The basic target distribution is: A [18], A- [14], B+ [14], B [14], B- or lower [18].

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 cases of cheating will be referred to the Dean of Students office, which may impose penalties per the Harris School Disciplinary Procedures. If you have any questions regarding what would or would not be considered academic dishonesty in this course, please do not hesitate to ask.

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 to listen carefully and respectfully to others.

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 academic 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.
Course Schedule

Normative Frameworks

Week 1 – Normative Frameworks

Watch: Introductory Lecture
Watch: Normative Frameworks Lecture


Week 2 – Pareto Concepts

Watch: Pareto Concepts Lecture
Read: PEPP, Chapter 3

Problem Set 1 Distributed

Game Theory and Social Dilemmas

Week 3 – Game Theory 1: Nash Equilibrium

Watch: Game Theory 1 Lecture
Read: PEPP, Appendix A
Problem Set 1 Due

Week 4 – Externalities

Watch: Externalities Lecture
Read: PEPP, Introduction to Part II and Chapter 4.1–4.3
Problem Set 2 Distributed

Week 5 – Coordination Problems

Watch: Coordination Lecture
Read: PEPP, Chapter 5

Problem Set 2 Due
Midterm will be a take home. You will be able to choose any 90 minute period during We–Fr of Week 5 to complete it online.

Week 6 – Game Theory 2: Subgame Perfection
  Watch: Game Theory 2 Lecture
  Read: PEPP, Appendix B.1–B.4

Week 7 – Commitment Problems
  Watch: Commitment Problems Lecture
  Read: PEPP, Chapter 6

Problem Set 3 Distributed

Governance Dilemmas

Week 8 – Political Institutions and Incentives
  Watch: Political Institutions Lecture
  Read: PEPP, Introduction to Part III, Chapter 11.1–11.2
  Listen: The Ezra Klein Show: How Blue Cities Became So Outrageously Unaffordable

Problem Set 3 Due

Problem Set 4 Distributed

Week 9 – Foreign Aid: Policy and Politics
  Watch: Foreign Aid Lecture
  Read: PEPP, Chapter 11.3–11.4

Problem Set 4 Due

Final exam will be administered during specified finals week time period
  Whether in person or take home will be determined later in the quarter as we see how the situation evolves