

PPHA 31610  
Analytical Politics II: Political Institutions  
(Winter 2024)

## 1 Contact information

### 1.1 Instructors:

- **Luis Martinez:** sections 1, 2, 4
  - **Email:** [luismartinez@uchicago.edu](mailto:luismartinez@uchicago.edu)
  - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 08:00-09:20am, 09:30-10:50am, 11:00am-12:20pm (All in Keller 0001)
  - **Office hours:** TBD
  
- **Zhaosong (Victor) Ruan:** section 3, 5, 7
  - **Email:** [zruan@uchicago.edu](mailto:zruan@uchicago.edu)
  - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 09:30-10:50am (Keller 2112), 11:00am-12:20pm (Keller 2112), 02:00-03:20pm (Keller 1002)
  - **Office hours:** TBD
  
- **Arduino Tomasi:** sections 6, 8
  - **Email:** [atomasi@uchicago.edu](mailto:atomasi@uchicago.edu)
  - **Class time:** Tue and Thu, 02:00-03:20pm, 03:30-04:50pm (All in Keller 0001)
  - **Office hours:** TBD

### 1.2 Teaching Assistants

- **Head TAs:**
  - Giorgio Farace ([farace@uchicago.edu](mailto:farace@uchicago.edu))
  - Kisoo Kim ([kisoo@uchicago.edu](mailto:kisoo@uchicago.edu))

– **Office hours:** TBD

- **Administrative TA:**

– Rutvi Vadera (rutviv@uchicago.edu)

- **TAs:** TBD

## 2 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. Second, we examine real-world political institutions and their impact on policy and economic outcomes (e.g., electoral systems, levels of government). Lastly, we recognize the importance of bureaucratic delegation for the implementation of public policy and study potential avenues for reform and improved government effectiveness. 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 writing skills that allow students to advocate for a policy agenda with different audiences.

## 3 Course content

This is a nine-week course and we have organized the course material into modules consisting of 2-3 sessions. We will use the first class for an introductory session, a later class for the midterm exam, and the final class for a session on current debates regarding the political economy of media and information. The content of each module is listed below. Slides for each class meeting will be available on Canvas beforehand.

- Week 1: Introduction (in-person 01/04 + pre-recorded lecture: 2 sessions)
- Week 2: Political preferences and electoral competition (2 sessions)
- Week 3: Political regimes and public policy (2 sessions)

- Week 4: Political accountability (2 sessions)
- Week 5: Political participation (2 sessions)
- Week 6: Midterm exam (**Tuesday February 06**)
- Week 6/7: Institutional design (3 sessions)
- Week 8/9: Organizational economics of the state (3 sessions)
- Final class (Thursday February 29th): Media and information

## 4 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.

The course has one shared Canvas website for all sections. We will post on Canvas all course materials, including assignments, lecture slides, pre-recorded content, and class recordings. [Canvas link](#)

## 5 Evaluations

Students will be evaluated based on three components. First, there will be two exams: a midterm and a final. These exams will be in person, individual and closed book. The midterm will take place on the Tuesday of week 6 (February 06) and the final will take place during finals week. Each of these evaluations is worth 30% of the final grade. Second, students will also hand in two problem sets in weeks 3 and 7. These assignments must be handed in on Gradescope on the Thursday of the respective week and will be made available at least one week in advance. These assignments can be handed in individually or in groups of no more than four (4) people. Each problem set is worth 15% of the final grade. Third, students will produce a short article in the style of a newspaper op-ed on a specific policy issue that relates to the course material, which will be worth 10% of the final grade. This op-ed must be handed in individually on Gradescope on the Thursday of week 9 (February 29) and must meet the following requirements: 2 pages maximum, 12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing, 1 inch margin. The Harris Writing Team will provide guidance and support for the production of the op-ed. To summarize, the evaluations are:

- Midterm on February 06 during regular class hours (25%)
- Final exam during finals week (30%)

- Two problem sets (15% each)
- Op-ed due on March 02 (15%)

All grading will be anonymous and 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 one of the head TAs within a week of the assignment or exam being returned. **In order for your request to be addressed, you must have attended the TA sessions in which the solution to the assignment was discussed (with the exception of the final exam).** When you file a complaint, please 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 your instructor, who will issue a final grade (which may be higher or lower than the initial 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  $[\frac{1}{8}]$ .

## 6 Teaching assistants and TA Sessions

The course has 13 Teaching Assistants (TAs), two head TAs and one administrative TA. Students should address all questions concerning the logistics of the course to the admin TA (dates, attendance, IT issues, etc.) and all questions concerning grades to the Head TAs. The TAs hold weekly support sessions and grade student assignments. All TAs took the class last year and had an outstanding performance. They are in an ideal position to provide additional academic support and help students navigate through the course material and assignments.

The TA sessions serve multiple purposes. The first session will provide a refresher on basic concepts of game theory covered in AP I. Some other weeks, we will use the TA sessions to go through the solution of the problem sets or the midterm. We will use other sessions to help students prepare for the midterm and the final (i.e., solve mock exams). In general, the TA sessions provide an additional opportunity for students to ask questions about the course material. The specific content of each TA session is listed below:

- Week 1: No TA session (Monday schedule)
- Week 2: Game theory refresher
- Week 3: Practice exercises
- Week 4: Problem set 1 solution
- Week 5: Mock midterm solution
- Week 6: Midterm solution
- Week 7: Op-ed workshops
- Week 8: Problem set 2 solution
- Week 9: Mock final solution

## 7 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 previous years' assignments, and receiving any unapproved assistance on exams. **We have a zero tolerance policy for academic dishonesty 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 will may also be penalized in their course grades, at the discretion of the instructors.

### 7.1 Recording and deletion policy

By attending course sessions, students acknowledge that:

- They will not: (i) record, share, or disseminate University of Chicago course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats; (ii) retain such materials after the end of the course; or (iii) use such materials for any purpose other than in connection with participation in the course.
- They will not share links to University of Chicago course sessions with any persons not authorized to be in the course session. Sharing course materials with persons authorized to be in the relevant course is permitted. Syllabi, handouts, slides, and other documents may be shared at the discretion of the instructor.
- Course recordings, content, and materials may be covered by copyrights held by the University, the instructor, or third parties. Any unauthorized use of such recordings or course materials may violate such copyrights.
- Any violation of this policy will be referred to the Area Dean of Students.

## 8 Diversity and inclusion

The Harris School of Public Policy welcomes and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives as part of our commitment to building an inclusive community. Fostering an environment that encourages rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the involvement and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. As a leading public policy school, Harris holds diversity as a core value. That includes not only diversity of opinion, but diversity along a broad spectrum of factors, including race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, religion, socio-economic background, and social or political belief. Recognizing the value of diversity and inclusion is essential to combating discrimination, addressing disparities, and cultivating ethical and clear-eyed policy leadership.

## 9 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 the Harris School of Public Policy](#).

Timely notifications are required to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Currently registered students are asked to notify the Harris Student Disability Liaison, Marley Mandelaro ([mbmandelaro@uchicago.edu](mailto:mbmandelaro@uchicago.edu)) of their access requests by the end of the first week of the quarter. The Harris Student Disability Liaison will work with the student and instructor to coordinate the implementation of student accommodations. Harris students are not required to submit their accommodations letter to the instructor.

Students who are facing extenuating circumstances at any point during the quarter should reach out to their Academic Advisor in the Dean of Students Office for support. If you feel you need accommodations on an ongoing basis, contact [Student Disability Services](#). Email: [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu). Phone: (773) 702-6000.

## 10 Additional academic resources

### 10.1 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](#). If you are an English Language Learner and looking for more specialized help, our Writing Coach Matt Fleming is a highly trained linguist on hand to help you with Academic English conventions, drafting, and polishing your work. Find Matt's coaching sessions [here](#).

### 10.2 Harris Tutoring Program

Harris offers 10 hours of free tutoring for support with core courses and coding. Tutoring will be available starting Week 2 of the quarter and you can read more about the program on the [Harris Student Handbook Canvas site](#). Any questions should be directed to your academic advisor or [harrisdeanofstudents@uchicago.edu](mailto:harrisdeanofstudents@uchicago.edu).

## 11 Health measures

- Students seeking a remote learning accommodation should contact the Dean of Students, Kate Biddle at [kbiddle@uchicago.edu](mailto:kbiddle@uchicago.edu). All such requests may only be approved centrally, not by individual instructors. Our expectation is that students attend class in-person, barring short term absences as discussed below.

- The university's guidance on health protocols and other measures related to COVID-19 are provided at the [UChicago Forward site](#).
- **Students should not attend class or take exams if they are feeling unwell and will not be penalized so long as they let the instructors or TAs know.** If students cannot attend class in person because they are required to quarantine, are ill, or have childcare disruptions, they are expected to contact instructors or their TAs directly about accommodations.
- To help students who are unable to attend a class for any of the reasons above, we will record at least one class session and TA session each week and upload on Canvas.
- Students and instructors are allowed to have drinks in the classroom, though we ask that food not be consumed.