PPHA 58202
Analytical Politics II: Politics and Policy Making
(Fall 2024)

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1 Instructor: contact information

- **Adam Zelizer**

  - **Email:** zelizer@uchicago.edu
  - **Class time:** Tu, 06:00-09:00pm
  - **Class zoom link (Passcode 964451):** Zoom Room for class
  - **Office hours:** By appointment
  - **Office hours link:** Zoom Room for OH

2 Teaching assistant: contact information

- **TBA**

  - **Email:** TBA

3 Canvas website

I will post on Canvas all course materials, including assignments, lecture slides, and any pre-recorded content (should that be necessary). Please email the TA or instructor if you are not able to access the Canvas site or if any materials are missing.

4 Course description

This course introduces students to core topics in policymaking. Its substantive objective is to familiarize students with the crucial role of politics in all realms of public policy, from the selection of lawmakers, to their decisions about which policies to adopt, to how those policies are implemented. The course covers three major themes. First, we study theoretical models that highlight how individuals with "reasonable" preferences interact within political institutions or processes to yield political outcomes, some of which we may find normatively undesirable. Second, we examine real-world political institutions and their impact on policy and economic outcomes. Third, we review empirical research, motivated by theoretical models, that illuminate how the policymaking process works (or doesn't).

Methodologically, the course aims to build and expand on the skills that students are developing in all Harris public policy master's programs: microeconomics, statistics, analytical politics. We use formal mathematical models (mostly game theory) to think about how individuals act strategically within given contexts. 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 strategic thinking, to interpret empirical findings, and to strengthen written communication skills that allow students to advocate for a policy agenda with different audiences.

5   Logistics

This is a nine-week course and the course material has been organized into nine modules (i.e., one module per week). The content of each module is discussed in section 7. Slides for each class meeting will also be available on Canvas beforehand.

The course has one Teaching Assistant. Students should address all questions concerning the logistics of the course to the TA (dates, grades, IT issues, etc.). The TA is primarily responsible for grading problem sets. As a result, the TA will also hold several additional sessions, to be scheduled, to answer questions in advance of assignment deadlines and after assignments are due to cover solutions to the assignments. TA sessions are NOT a substitute for asking questions to the instructor; each class will begin with a question-and-answer period during which students are encouraged to ask any about course-related material, whether from previous lectures or how the course relates to real-world events.

5.1   Lectures

Each lecture will include both technical and practical discussions of the topic in that module. I will provide detailed walkthroughs of theoretical models that address key concepts in public policy, politics, and political economy. The concepts developed in the models will be useful for (i) the analysis of empirical research in the discussion sessions, (ii) solving the graded problem sets, (iii) the course project.

Each class will also include discussion of empirical applications of the theoretical models. I have included on the syllabus, and uploaded to Canvas, one research paper for each week. The academic articles reflect the best empirical research on the topic in that module. Many of them include advanced statistical methods and analyses, and as a result I expect there will be parts of most papers that are difficult to follow. **That is why we will discuss the articles together in class.** If you find the articles too lengthy or dense, you may consider reading the abstract, introduction, and conclusion (the so-called "graduate student read"). We are reading them because they offer the best evidence available to learn about policy-making, and even if there are some elements that are difficult, the main takeaways of each article should be informative about the key concepts we are covering in the course.

5.2   Office hours

The course instructor will hold office hours throughout the course. Because this is a course for working professionals, all office hours will be available by appointment. Please do not hesitate to ask for a meeting! Talking with students about the course, or about your interests and experience in policymaking, is one of my joys in teaching. Holding office hours by appointment is intended to make sure I am available to you whenever your schedule permits, including nights and weekends.

6 Evaluations

Students will be evaluated based on two components. First, two problem sets (30% total). Second, a quarter-long research project (70%). **Notice that there will be no midterm or final exam.**

Grading of the problem sets and the outputs from the research project will be anonymous. We will make every effort to return assignments within a week if possible. If you believe that your grade on an assignment is incorrect or unfair, please submit your concerns in writing to the instructor (unless it is a simple matter, as of tabulation, which the TA can address) within a week of the assignment or exam being returned. Fully summarize what you believe the problems are and why. The instructor will respond either verbally or in writing and 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 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 $[\frac{1}{8}]$. Please bear in mind that due to the nature of the course evaluations (take-home problem sets and group assignments), the distribution of numerical scores is likely to be fairly tight. Small differences in performance could make all the difference for your final grade!

1. **Problem sets:** There will be two problem sets during the quarter, which will be posted 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. **If you need additional time for an assignment, communicate with the instructor ASAP. Assignments will not be accepted under any conditions one week after the due date**. Problem sets represent 30% of the final grade (i.e. 15% each). The problem sets will be single-marked by the TA. They are tentatively due April 25 and May 16.

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 the widespread adoption of electric vehicles 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 70% 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 instructor. It is worth 10% of the final grade. Maximum length: 1 page (12 pt font, single spacing). Tentative due date: October 25.

- **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 op-ed is worth 30% of the final grade. Maximum length: 2 pages (12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing). Tentative due date: November 22.

- **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 (though this analysis need not be quantitative in nature). The policy memo is worth 30% of the final grade. Maximum length: 5 pages (12 pt font, 1.5 line spacing). Tentative due date: December 10.

7 Course schedule

- Week 1: Social choice
  - Lecture: Arrow's impossibility theorem
  - Reading: Chapter 1, *Liberalism Against Populism* William Riker. Click Here for link to chapter on Google Books

- Week 2: The spatial model of politics
  - Lecture: Median voter theorem, political competition
  - Reading: *Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?* Lori Beaman, Raghabendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, Petia Topalova. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 124(4), 2009, p. 1497-1540.

- 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: *Do Presidents Favor Co-partisan Mayors in the Allocation of Federal Grants?* Heonuk Ha and Jeffrey Jenkins. Political Science Research & Methods, 2024, p. 1-10.
    - Supplemental 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: *Political Power of Bureaucratic Agents: Evidence from Policing in New York City.* Elisa Wirsching. Working Paper
    - Supplemental 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 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 Canvas. Besides the supplemental reading, I 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 honesty will 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 academic accomodations 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   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 brain

storming, 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.

13   Modalities and Other Information

This course is planned as an in-person experience, and students are expected to attend class in-person.