

# Analytical Politics I: Strategic and Theoretical Foundations

Fall 2024

**Professor** Martin Castillo Quintana

**Location** Keller Center, Rm. 2095

**Student Appointments** Wednesdays, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Sign Up Link** [here](#)

**Drop-in Student Hours** Wednesdays, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Email** castilloquintana@uchicago.edu

**Professor** Anna Denisekno

**Location** Keller Center, Rm. 2058

**Student Appointments** Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Sign Up Link** [here](#)

**Drop-in Student Hours** Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:30 PM – 5:00 PM

**Email** annadenisenko@uchicago.edu

**Professor** Wioletta Dziuda

**Location** Keller Center, Rm. 2077

**Drop-in Student Hours** Mondays 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

**Email** wdziuda@uchicago.edu

**Professor** Alexander Fournaies

**Location** Keller Center, Rm. 3013

**Drop-in Student Hours** Mondays 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

**Email** fournaies@uchicago.edu

**Professor** Zhosong (Victor) Ruan

**Location** Keller Center, Rm. 3099

**Student Appointments** Wednesdays, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Sign Up Link** [here](#)

**Drop-in Student Hours** Fridays, 2:00 PM – 3:00PM

**Email** zruan@uchicago.edu

**Head TA** Giorgio Farace (farace@uchicago.edu)

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00 – 4:00pm, Keller 2082

**Head TA** Jake Nicoll (jwnicoll@outlook.com)

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:00 – 2:00pm, Keller 2082

**TAs** Alison Spencer, Attaullah Abbasi, Eduardo (Eddie) Andujar, Katherine Tu, Vedant Monger, AT Craig

**Graders** Cynthia Ma, Luxi (Lucy) Jiang, Nuki Suprayitno, Yuejiu (Yuliana) Zhang, Fernanda Garcia Antonio Oliveira, Cristian Bancayan Navarro, Jingyi Ma, Su (Oliver) Wang, Christine O'Brien, Sania Mahabaleshwarkar, Clarice Tee, Dodi Duda

## Course Description

The Analytical Politics sequence is concerned with the *politics* of policy making. Over the course of the sequence, students will develop tools to understand the political constraints that shape policy making. The tools will be applicable to political situations in a broad range of settings where someone makes decisions on behalf of a group.

The key focus in Analytical Politics I is understanding the political interactions between members of a group who are setting collective goals, taking collective action, and making collective decisions. We study three overarching questions: What should be the goal of public policy? How do group members take action to achieve their shared goals? How do members resolve disagreements when they have conflicting goals?

Over the course of the sequence, students will be introduced to basic game-theory tools that will help them analyze strategic situations.

## Course Schedule

### Part I: Collective Goals: What Should Be the Goal of Public Policy?

Week 1, Meeting 1 – Introduction; Liberalism: Liberty as a Policy Goal

*Read:* PEPP Preface, Introduction, Introduction to Part I

New Normative Theory Chapter on Canvas: Introduction, Parts 1 and 2

Week 1, Meeting 2 – Welfarism: Wellbeing as a Policy Goal

*Read:* New Normative Theory Chapter on Canvas: Part 3

Week 2, Meeting 1 – Egalitarianism: Equality as a Policy Goal

*Read:* New Normative Theory Chapter on Canvas: Part 4

*Additional readings:* Charles W. Mills. 2018. “Black Radical Kantianism.” *Res Philosophica* 95(1)

Week 2, Meeting 2 – Application: Redistribution

PROBLEM SET 1 DISTRIBUTED

Week 3, Meeting 1 – Political Community

*Read:* Ernest Gellner: Nations and Nationalism: Ch. 1

Week 3, Meeting 2 – Game Theory 1: How to Rigorously Think of Complex Interactions

*Read:* PEPP, Appendix A

PROBLEM SET 1 DUE

PROBLEM SET 2 DISTRIBUTED

## **Part II: Collective Action: How Do We Achieve the Shared Policy Goals?**

Week 4, Meeting 1 – Collective Action: Coordination Problems

*Read:* PEPP, Chapter 5

*Listen:* *Nice White Parents Episode 1: The Book of Statuses.* Podcast from the New York Times.

Week 4, Meeting 2 – Collective Action: Externalities Problems

*Read:* PEPP, Introduction to Part II and Chapter 4.1 – 4.4

PROBLEM SET 2 DUE

PROBLEM SET 3 DISTRIBUTED

Week 5, Meeting 1 – Collective Action: Repeated Interactions

*Read:* PEPP, Chapter 4.6.3

Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Chapter 1

Week 5, Meeting 2 – Application: Protests

PROBLEM SET 3 DUE

Week 6, Meeting 1 – **Midterm Exam** (In class)

Week 6, Meeting 2 – Game Theory 2: How to Rigorously Think of Dynamic Interactions

*Read:* PEPP, Appendix B.1 – B.4

## Part III: Collective Decisions: How Do We Resolve Disagreements?

Week 7, Meeting 1 – How Negotiations Shape Policy

Week 7, Meeting 2 – How Voting Shapes Policy

*Read: PEPP, Chapter 2*

PROBLEM SET 4 DISTRIBUTED

Week 8, Meeting 1 – How Political Processes Shape Policy: Agenda Setters

Week 8, Meeting 2 – How Political Processes Shape Policy: Veto Players and Status Quo

PROBLEM SET 4 DUE

PROBLEM SET 5 DISTRIBUTED

Week 9, Meeting 1 – How Pressure Groups Shape Policy: Concentrated and Diffuse Interests

*PEPP, Chapter Ch. 4.2.3*

*Listen: The Ezra Klein Show: How Blue Cities Became So Outrageously Unaffordable*

Week 9, Meeting 2 – Application: Inflation Reduction Act

PROBLEM SET 5 DUE

**Final exam will be administered during finals week**

## Important Course Information

**Course Requirements** The course has three requirements:

- **Participation** Students are required to attend class, and go to their assigned section, per the Harris School's attendance policy. Class attendance is worth 5% of the course grade. We will start taking attendance in Week 3 (when the rosters have been finalized), after that everyone gets two free passes. Being absent from each extra class will decrease the course grade by one percentage point. Students missing many classes will also be reported to the Dean of Students Office and may be denied credit for the class. Students should come to class prepared and participate in the discussions.
- **Problem Sets** There will be five problem sets during the quarter.
  - **Problem sets must be turned in via the Gradescope link on Canvas by 5 PM (Central) on the day they are due.**
  - 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. Only the four highest scores will count toward your grade.** If you need to miss an assignment for whatever reason, there is no need to inform the instructor.

- 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. Doing so is an act of kindness.
- **Exams** There will be two in-class exams, a midterm and a comprehensive final during the final week. We will make at least one sample exam available a week prior to the exams.

**Questions** The course will have a Piazza site, accessed through Canvas. If you have questions or thoughts based on the readings, please post them on Piazza. Piazza will be monitored by the instructors. For the sake of everyone having access to the same information, instructors will not answer questions about the course or problem sets via email.

**Course Materials** The required textbook for the course is

Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. *Political Economy for Public Policy*. Princeton University Press.

Electronic copies are available from the University of Chicago library.

Any readings not from this book will be available on Canvas.

We will also record *one* section each week and post the recording on Canvas. This recording is *not a substitute* for coming to class and is only intended to be a supplemental resource.

**Grades & Grading** Grading will be based on the course requirements as follows: final exam (40%), midterm exam (35%), problem sets (20%), and participation (5%).

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. Note that your grade on that question can go up or down depending on the TA's findings. 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:  $A$  [ $\frac{1}{8}$ ],  $A-$  [ $\frac{1}{4}$ ],  $B+$  [ $\frac{1}{4}$ ],  $B$  [ $\frac{1}{4}$ ],  $B-$  or lower [ $\frac{1}{8}$ ].

**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.

**Use of AI** We do not expect AI to be beneficial in this course. Nevertheless, any student using AI takes full responsibility for the accuracy of AI-generated content. Overreliance on AI content, without proper attribution, may lead to unintentional plagiarism. It may also limit the students' accumulation of skills and understanding of the material.

**Use of Technology in Class** Because there is substantial evidence that student use of laptops and phones in the classroom negatively affects learning outcomes (for evidence, see here, here, here, and here), student use of these devices will generally not be permitted during class. Tablets are only allowed for hand-written note taking and they need to lie flat on the desk. We do not allow the use of cell phones or laptops in class. Exceptions will be made for students who have an official accommodation.

**General Resources Available to Students** • Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook • Student Wellness • University Learning Resources

**Harris School and University of Chicago Policies** • Harris School Policies • University General Policies • University Academic Policies • Policies on audio and video recordings and deletion.