

Analytical Politics II:  
Strategic and Theoretical Foundations

Winter 2025

PRELIMINARY

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**TAs** TBD

**Graders** TBD

## Course Description

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

Analytical Politics II has four parts. In the first part, we recognize that groups frequently delegate decision making to leaders, and ask when the decisions of such leaders are legitimate. When do the members of the group have an obligation to accept those decisions even if they personally disagree with them? We also study how ways in which we select leaders change the leaders' incentives to deliver good outcomes. How democracies differ from autocracies in providing these incentives? In the second part we ask what constraints should be placed on leaders and when leaders themselves benefit from those constraints. In the third part, we recognize that most decisions made by leaders must then be implemented by bureaucrats. We study incentives that good leaders have to create for bureaucrats so that their policies are carried out faithfully and efficiently. In the last part of the course we focus on a few policy applications where the concepts introduced in the Analytical Politics sequence help us understand what went wrong with policy making of the past and what can be done better *when you* are in charge.

## Course Schedule

### Part I: Selection of Leaders

Week 1, Meeting 1 – Introduction; Legitimacy of Leaders I

Week 1, Meeting 2 – Legitimacy of Leaders II

Week 2, Meeting 1 – Rules for selecting Leaders affect policy: Selectorate Model

*Read: PEPP, Chapter 11.1–11.2*

Week 2, Meeting 2 – Rules for selecting Leaders affect policy: Elections

PROBLEM SET 1 DISTRIBUTED

Week 3, Meeting 1 – Rules for selecting Leaders affect policy: Elections and Selection in Autocracies

Week 3, Meeting 2 – Application

PROBLEM SET 1 DUE

PROBLEM SET 2 DISTRIBUTED

### Part II: How Much Power Should Leaders Have?

Week 4, Meeting 1 – Reasons and ways to limit Leaders' power

*Read: PEPP, Chapter 6*

Week 4, Meeting 2 – Application: Central Bank independence

PROBLEM SET 2 DUE

Week 5, Meeting 1 – **Midterm Exam** (In class)

Week 5, Meeting 2 – Application: Decentralization

**Part III: How Leaders Ensure Their Policies Are Implemented?**

Week 6, Meeting 1 – Delegation to Bureaucracy: Whom to select and how to provide incentives?

Week 6, Meeting 2 – Dangers of rewarding for A while hoping for B

*Read:* "On the folly of rewarding A, while hoping for B," by Steven Kerr, *The Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1975), pp. 769-783

PROBLEM SET 3 DISTRIBUTED

Week 7, Meeting 1 – Promotions in bureaucracy

Week 7, Meeting 2 – Unintended consequences

*Read:* *PEPP*, Chapter 7

PROBLEM SET 3 DUE

PROBLEM SET 4 DISTRIBUTED

Week 8, Meeting 1 – Application to healthcare.gov

**Part IV: Applications of all AP concepts**

Week 8, Meeting 2 –How to achieve your goals: Advocacy and incentives

PROBLEM SET 4 DUE

PROBLEM SET 5 DISTRIBUTED

Week 9, Meeting 1 – Foreign Aid

*Read:* *PEPP*, Chapter 11.3–11.4

George Ayittey. 1999. *Africa in Chaos*, Chapter 8. Palgrave Macmillan.

Nancy Qian. 2015. "Making Progress on Foreign Aid." *Annual Review of Economics* 7: 277–308.

Week 9, Meeting 2 – Application and Wrap up

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 3:30 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** There is no textbook for this course, although for selected topics we will continue to use

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. Repeated violations of the technology policy will result in lower participation grade.

**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.