Analytical Politics I:
Strategic and Theoretical Foundations

Fall 2025

Professor Gregory Lane
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Student Appointments Monday 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (Zoom)
                                       Tuesday 12:50 PM - 1:50 PM (Office)
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In addition to the teaching TAs, we will have a group of support TAs who will hold office hours and one-on-one meetings with students. Time and place will be announced.

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 rules and decisions on behalf of a group.

The key focus in Analytical Politics I is understanding the political interactions between members of a group. We explore how public policy is influenced by normative ideas about collective goals, the mechanisms used to make collective decisions, and the capacity for collective action. We study three overarching questions: What should be the goals of public policy? How do members resolve disagreements when their policy objectives differ? And how do group members act to achieve their agreed-upon policy goals?

Course Schedule

Part I. Collective goals: What should be the goal of public policy?

Week 1: What is good public policy?

- Class 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

- Class 2 – Welfarism: Wellbeing as a Policy Goal

  Read: New Normative Theory Chapter on Canvas: Part 3

Week 2: What is good public policy? (continued)

- Class 1 – Egalitarianism: Equality as a Policy Goal

  Read: New Normative Theory Chapter on Canvas: Part 4

- Class 2 – Application (Redistribution)

Week 3: Who should public policy serve?

- Class 1 – Political Community: What is the population that public policy should target?

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

  Interview with Martha Nussbaum about the Cosmopolitan Tradition

- Week 3, Class 2 – Application

Part II. Collective Decisions: How should we decide what goals to pursue?

Week 4: From individual preferences to collective decisions

- Class 1 – Social Choice: What rule should we use to aggregate individual preferences?

  Read: PEPP, Chapter 2

- Class 2 – Game Theory I: Analyzing strategic situations with sequential moves

  Read: PEPP, Chapter 2

Week 5: Bargaining over policy

- Class 1 – Introduction to bargaining

  Read: PEPP, Appendix B.1 – B.4

- Class 2 – Bargaining and institutions: Agenda setters

Week 6: Bargaining and institutions

- Class 1 – Veto players and status quo

- Class 2 – Game Theory II: Analyzing strategic situations with simultaneous moves

Part III. Collective Action: How can we achieve our shared policy goals?

Week 7: Why do groups fail to take collective action?

- Class 1 – Coordination Problems

  Read: PEPP, Chapter 5

- Class 2 – Externalities Problems

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

Week 8: Can repeated interactions solve collective action problems?

- Class 1 – Repeated interactions

  Read: PEPP, Chapter 4.6.3

  Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Chapter 1

- Class 2 – Application (Protests)

  PEPP, Chapter Ch. 4.2.3

Week 9: Why can certain groups overcome collective action problems more easily than others?

- Class 1 – Concentrated and Diffuse Interests

- Class 2 – Application + summing up

Final exam will be administered during finals week

Important Course Information

Course Assignments & Assessment: The composition of your overall grade is calculated based on the percentages indicated in Table 1. Details on how the grade is calculated for each of these components is discussed further below. As a core course in the Harris School, we must follow the strict grading curve indicated in Table 2. In other words, after your numerical score is calculated at the end of quarter, the students with the top 12.5% of overall scores will receive a grade of A, the 25% of students with the next highest scores will receive an A-, and so on. Because of the nature of a strict curve, your numerical scores may not translate into a letter grade in the way to which you might be accustomed. The course schedule (subject to change) with the (due) date of practice questions, in-person quizzes, and exam is provided in Table 3.

Table 1: Grade Composition

Component	Share
Attendance	5%
Practice Questions	30%
In-person Quizzes	30%
Final Exam	35%

Table 2: Grade Distribution

Grade	Share of Students
A	12.5%
A-	25%
B+	25%
B	25%
B- or below	12.5%

Table 3: Course schedule

Item	Week of Quarter	Date
Practice Questions #1	1	Oct 2
Practice Questions #2	2	Oct 9
In-person quiz # 1	2	Oct 9 or Oct 10
Practice Questions #3	3	Oct 16
Practice Questions #4	4	Oct 23
Practice Questions #5	5	Oct 30
In-person quiz # 2	5	Oct 30 or Oct 31
Practice Questions #6	6	Nov 6
Practice Questions #7	7	Nov13
Practice Questions #8	8	Nov 20
Practice Questions #9	9	Dec 4
Final Exam	10	Dec

- **Attendance** As per the Harris School's policy, students are required to attend lecture sessions for core courses. Class attendance is worth 5% of your overall grade. There is no penalty to your grade for missing up to two class sessions to allow for illness, emergencies, and other similar circumstances. Students do not need to communicate with the teaching staff regarding absences. For each additional absence beyond the two non-penalty absences, students will experience a one percentage point deduction to their attendance grade component. Students who are chronically absent will also be reported to the Dean of Students Office and may be denied credit for the class. Students should come to class prepared to engage with the material. We will begin tallying absences as part of your grade in week 3 of the quarter, as students' course schedules are sometimes in flux during the first two weeks.

- **Practice Questions** Each week, a set of practice questions will be provided to reinforce the week's material. These questions are designed to help you grasp key concepts and prepare for quizzes and the final exam. Your submission of answers via Canvas by the deadline will earn full credit for completion, regardless of your score. You can find the practice questions on the course Canvas site under 'Quizzes.' While group work on these questions is encouraged, each student must submit their own answers through their individual Canvas account to receive credit. The due date is Thursday at 3.30PM. No late submissions will be accepted. To get full credit, you must submit the online practice questions before the deadline 8 out of 9 weeks of the quarter. In other words, you can miss one assignment and still get full credits, and if you need to miss an assignment for whatever reason, there is no need to inform the instructor.

  The questions will primarily be in a multiple-choice format to provide immediate feedback. To further support your learning, TA sessions on Thursdays and Fridays will review solutions and address common areas of difficulty identified from the practice question submissions.

- **In-person quizzes** A 35-minute in-person quiz will be administered at the beginning of TA sessions in Weeks 2 and 5. Students are required to take the quiz in the specific TA session for which they are registered. Each quiz is worth 10% or 20% of the overall grade.

- **Final exam** Students will take a comprehensive 3 hour exam in finals week.

Questions Administrative questions should be addressed to the admin TA. 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. To encourage students to show up to TA sessions, questions on Piazza about the weekly practice questions will not be answered until after the TA sessions for a given week have concluded. We will not answer content-related questions posted after 6pm during the night before an exam.

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 If you believe that your grade on a quiz or exam question is incorrect or unfair, please submit your concerns in writing to the administrative TA *within a week of the assignment or exam being returned.* Fully summarize what you believe the problems are and why. The TA team 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.

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 Polices • Policies on audio and video recordings and deletion.