

Analytical Politics II

Winter 2025

Professor Alvaro Delgado Vega

Location Keller Center Rm. 3049

Drop-in Student Hours TBD

Email adelgadovega@uchicago.edu

Professor Wioletta Dziuda

Location Keller Center, Rm. 2077

Drop-in Student Hours Tuesdays 1:00 PM – 2:00PM

Student Appointments Tuesdays, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Sign Up Link TBA

Email wdziuda@uchicago.edu

Professor Zhosong (Victor) Ruan

Location Keller Center, Rm. 3099

Drop-in Student Hours TBD

Student Appointments TBD

Sign Up Link TBD

Email zruan@uchicago.edu

Administrative TA Nathan Vellekoop (nvellekoop@uchicago.edu)

Teaching TAs Alexander Evert (aevert@uchicago.edu) Hongding Zhu (hongding@uchicago.edu)

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

Policy making is making a decision on behalf of a group, and hence it is deeply political. The Analytical Politics sequence is concerned with this process. Over the course of the sequence, students develop tools to understand the political constraints affecting policy making and how to leverage those constraints to shape policy. These tools are applicable to political situations in a broad range of settings where someone makes and implements decisions on behalf of a group: e.g., national or local politics, decisions by international organizations, decisions in firms or non governmental organizations.

Analytical Politics II mainly focuses on the interactions between groups and their leaders. The course has three parts. In the first part, we discuss why we need leaders, what gives a leader power to impose decisions, and how the process of selecting leaders and other institutional solutions affect leaders' policies. In the second part, we recognize that leaders need others to help them implement their decisions: they need organizations that they must manage, be it a governmental bureaucracy or employees of a firm. We study how leaders can shape incentives within their organizations so that their policies are carried out faithfully and efficiently. In the third part, we focus on subtle consequences that leaders' decisions may have and the importance of anticipating those. And finally, we summarize the lessons of the entire AP sequence and the Harris Core into a Policy Making Framework and illustrate how one can apply this framework to shape policy effectively. You will learn how the concepts introduced in the Analytical Politics sequence help us understand how policy making can be done better *when you* are in charge.

Course Schedule (topics may change slightly as we go)

Part I: Leaders and How to Shape Their Incentives

Week 1, Meeting 1 – Introduction; Why do we need leaders? How do leaders achieve their goals?

Week 1, Meeting 2 – Commitment problem of leaders and ways to address it

Week 2, Meeting 1 – Institutions for selecting leaders: how does the size of the leader's winning coalitions affects policy?

Week 2, Meeting 2 – Institutions for selecting leaders: What rules incentivize good behavior and select good leaders?

Week 3, Meeting 1 – Elections: Whose interests are represented by the leader?

Week 3, Meeting 2 – Elections: Pandering and Shorttermism

Week 4, Meeting 1 – Application to judges

Week 4, Meeting 2 – Separation of power as a tool to constrain leaders

Part II: How Do Leaders Manage Organizations?

Week 5, Meeting 1 — How do leaders incentivize those who implement their decisions?

Week 5, Meeting 2 – How do leaders elicit correct effort?

Week 6, Meeting 1 – Subjective evaluations and promotions

Week 6, Meeting 2 – Expertise

Week 7, Meeting 1 – Application to bureaucracy

Week 7, Meeting 2 – Application to corruption

Part III: Leaders Must Anticipate Subtle Consequences of Their Decisions

Week 8, Meeting 1 – Strategic adjustment and unintended consequences

Week 8, Meeting 2 – Theory of second best, complexity v simplicity, rules v discretion

Part IV: Putting This All Together

Week 9, Meeting 1 – Lessons from the core: Policy Making Framework

Week 9, Meeting 2 – Application of the policy making framework to foreign aid

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.

- **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

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	Jan 8
Practice Questions #2	2	Jan 15
In-person quiz # 1	2	Friday Jan 16
Practice Questions #3	3	Jan 22
Practice Questions #4	4	Jan 29
Practice Questions #5	5	Feb 5
In-person quiz # 2	6	Friday Feb 13
Practice Questions #6	6	Feb 12
Practice Questions #7	7	Feb 19
Practice Questions #8	8	Feb 26
Practice Questions #9	9	Mar 5
Final Exam	10	March

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 2 of the quarter, as students' course schedules are sometimes in flux during the first week.

- **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** The in-person quizzes will be administered on Fridays in Weeks 2

and 6, during Harris Core Assessment, from 9–10:30. Students will be assigned to one of two groups that will take a 30-minute assessment during this time. will be assigned to a 30 min portion of this at the beginning of TA sessions. 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 Ed Discussion site, accessed through Canvas. If you have questions or thoughts based on the readings, please post them on Ed Discussion. This site 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 Ed Discussion 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 There is no required textbook for the course, although sometimes we may use readings from

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 Policies • Policies on audio and video recordings and deletion.