

Analytical Politics II

Winter 2026

Professor Álvaro Delgado-Vega

Location Keller Center, Rm. 3049

Drop-in Student Hours Fridays, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Student Appointments Fridays, 10:00 AM – 12:00 AM

Sign Up Link [here](#)

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 [here](#)

Professor Zhosong (Victor) Ruan

Location Keller Center, Rm. 2051

Student Appointments Tuesdays, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Sign Up Link [here](#)

Drop-in Student Hours Tuesdays, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Course Email (for administrative questions only) core-ap@uchicago.edu

Administrative Coordinator Nathanael Vellekoop (core-ap@uchicago.edu)

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

TAs Ralph Valery Valiere, Hari Dharshini Koundinya Swaminathe, Juan Camisassa, Sakkhi Raheel, and Rachel Suominen will hold office hours and one-on-one meetings with students. Time and place will be announced.

Course Description

Policy making involves making decisions on behalf of a group and is therefore inherently political. The Analytical Politics sequence is concerned with understanding this process. Over the course of the sequence, students develop tools to analyze the political constraints that shape policy making and to learn how those constraints can be leveraged to influence policy outcomes. These tools are applicable to a wide range of political settings in which individuals make and implement decisions on behalf of a group, including national and local politics, international organizations, firms, and non-governmental organizations.

Analytical Politics II focuses primarily on the interactions between leaders and the groups they govern. The course is organized into three parts. In the first part, we examine why leaders are needed, what gives leaders the power to impose decisions, and how leader selection processes and other institutional arrangements affect policy outcomes. In the second part, we recognize that leaders depend on others to implement their decisions. Leaders must therefore manage organizations—such as government bureaucracies or firms—and we study how they can design incentives so that policies are implemented faithfully and efficiently. In the third part, we explore the often subtle and unintended consequences of leaders' decisions and emphasize the importance of anticipating these effects. Finally, we synthesize the lessons of the entire Analytical Politics sequence and the Harris Core into a comprehensive Policy Making Framework and demonstrate how this framework can be applied to shape policy effectively. By the end of the course, you will understand how the concepts introduced in the Analytical Politics sequence can help improve policy making when *you* are in charge.

Course Schedule (topics may change slightly)

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 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 they are enrolled in for core courses. A sign-up sheet is going to be distributed 5 minutes into each lecture. If you are not there to sign your name during that time, we will register it as an absence. No late sign-ups (i.e., after the first 5 minutes of the class) will be accepted. 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

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
Practice Questions #6	6	Feb 12
In-person quiz # 2	6	Friday Feb 13
Practice Questions #7	7	Feb 19
Practice Questions #8	8	Feb 26
Practice Questions #9	9	Mar 5
Final Exam	10	Mar 9

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. If you are experiencing any life even that forces you to miss more lectures, please contact our Administrative Coordinator Nathanael Vellekoop at core-ap@uchicago.edu.

- **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 9–10:30AM. 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. The first quiz is worth 10% and the second 20% of the overall grade.
- **Final exam** Students will take a comprehensive 3 hour exam in finals week.
- **Exam and absence accommodations** If you have an unexpected life event that prevents you from attending an assessment or requires more than 2 class absences, please email core-ap@uchicago.edu. Note that job interviews or similar are not an excuse for an absence.

Questions Administrative questions should be addressed to the Administrative Coordinator. The course will have Discussions site accessed through Canvas. If you have questions or thoughts based on the readings or lectures, please post them on Discussions. 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 Discussions 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 PhD TAs (Alex and Hongding) *within a week of the quiz 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.