

# PS 122: POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Spring 2023

<b>Instructor:</b>	Michael Gibilisco (he/him)	<b>Time:</b>	M 19:00-21:55
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<b>TA:</b>	Jack Adeney (he/him)	<b>TA Office Hours</b>	T 10:00–12:00
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**Objectives:** When can Congress agree on the best policy for the country (and what does “best” even mean)? How does the electoral college affect Presidential campaigns? How does the Supreme Court choose what cases to hear? This course uses a rigorous set of tools including game theory to help students understand the structure of American government. With these tools, we will study U.S. electoral systems, Congress, the Presidency and the executive branch, federalism, and the courts, with a focus on the challenges of group decision making and the inevitable conflicts that arise between the branches of government. Students will leave the course with a deeper understanding of how rules and strategy shape U.S. democracy.

I have two goals when teaching this course. Primarily, we use rational choice theory to understand how the rules of American political institutions affect the strategic choices made by citizens and politicians and how these choices affect policies and outcomes. As such, we cover major problems in organizing groups such as collective action problems, coordination problems, and conflicting values, and apply these topics to the study of American politics and institutions. Secondarily, we review and learn modern techniques used in rational choice and institutional analysis including social choice and game theory.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for the course. *Warning:* This course is still in development. It may overlap with PS 12. Please review the syllabus to ensure this class is worth your time.

**Instructor Office Hours:** Office hours are by appointment. Please email me to schedule a time to meet. My office is Baxter Hall 104, but I can hop on zoom most days of the week. Do not interpret “by appointment” as meaning I do not want to meet. As an assistant professor on the tenure clock, my schedule is a bit of a mess. So I find it easier to schedule meetings over email.

**Course Materials:** This class is primarily lecture based, and I will publish slides on Canvas for reference. In addition, having access to the following reference books may be helpful:

- *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*, 2nd Edition, by Kenneth A. Shepsle (New York: W.W. Norton).
- *Political Game Theory*, by Nolan McCarty and Adam Meirowitz (Cambridge University Press).

All other materials (journal articles, book chapters, etc.) will be posted on Canvas. It is not required that you read the journal articles or book chapters on the syllabus when we meet for class. I place them on the syllabus for reference and for use on the exams or problem sets.

## Tentative Course Outline:

### Introduction to Rational Choice

- Chapters 1 and 2 in Shepsle, Chapter 2 in McCarty and Meirowitz
- “The Paradox of Not Voting” Ferejohn and Fiorina (1974) *American Political Science Review*, 68.2: 525–536

### Collective choice & Majority rule in spatial models

- Shepsle: Chapters 3, 4 & 5 (until “Spatial models of Legislatures”)
- McCarty and Meirowitz: Chapters 3 & 4
- “A Reanalysis of Canonical Experiments on Majority-Rule Decision Making” Bianco *et al.* (2006) *Journal of Politics*, 68.4: 838–851

### Normal form games and elections

- Normal form games; McCarty and Meirowitz: Chapters 5
- “A Rational Theory of the Size of Government” Meltzer and Richards (1981) *Journal of Political Economy*, 89.5: 914–927
- “Voter participation and strategic uncertainty” Palfrey and Rosenthal (1985) *American Political Science Review*, 79.1: 62–78.

### Extensive form games and bargaining

- Extensive form games; McCarty and Meirowitz: Chapters 7
- “An Experimental Study of the Centipede Game” McKelvey and Palfrey (1992) *Econometrica*, 60.4: 803–836
- “Political resource allocation, controlled agendas, and the status quo” Romer and Rosenthal (1978) *Public Choice*, 33.4: 27–43.

### (Even more) Bargaining in the Federal Government

- “Bargaining in Legislatures” Baron and Ferejohn (1989) *American Political Science Review*, 83.4: 1181–1206
- “Fair Play in Assemblies” Gibilisco (2015) *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 10.2: 275–320.

### Decentralization and Public Goods

- “Centralized Versus Decentralized Provision of Local Public Goods: A Political Economy Approach” Besley and Coate (2003) *Journal of Public Economics*, 87.12: 2611–2637
- “Elective Enforcement: The Politics of Local Immigration Policing” Magazinnik (2018) Manuscript, MIT.
- “Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions” Alesina *et al.* (1999) *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114.4: 1243–1284.
- “Gridlock: Ethnic diversity in government and the provision of public goods.” Beach and Jones (2017). *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 9.1: 112–136.

### Delegation and Bureaucracy

- “Congressional oversight overlooked: Police patrols versus fire alarms” McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) *American Journal of Political Science*, 2.1: 165–179.
- “Divided Government and the Design of Administration Procedures: A Formal Model and Empirical Test” Epstein and O’Halloran (1996) *Journal of Politics*, 58.2: 373–397.
- “Delegating Power to Bureaucracies: Evidence from the States” Volden (2002) *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 18.1: 187–220

### Signaling Models of Political Agency [We might run out of time]

- “Principled Agents? The Political Economy of Good Government,” Chapter 3.3. Besley (2005) Oxford University Press
- “Leadership and pandering: A theory of executive policymaking.” Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts (2001) *American Journal of Political Science* 45.3: 532-550.

### Erosion of Democratic Institutions

- “Measuring Democratic Backsliding” Little and Meng (2022) Working paper, Berkeley: <https://osf.io/n32zk/>
- “Democracy by Deterrence: Norms, Constitutions, and Electoral Tilting” Helmke, Kroeger and Paine (2021) *American Journal of Political Science*, 66.2: 434–50.
- “Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States” Graham and Svobik (2020) *American Political Science Review*, 114.2: 392–409.

**Grading Policy:** There will be four problem sets, each one comprising 20% of your grade. Participation in class will comprise the remaining 20% of your grades.

- Problem sets. Each problem set is worth 100 points and is comprised of three types of questions. The first consists of identification of terms (roughly 20 points), and the second will be problems that will test your comprehension of the technical material (roughly 40 points). The third will be an essay to be no longer than 750 words (roughly 40 points). I will post problem sets Tuesdays after class (around noon). They will be due the following Tuesday at midnight. All problem sets will be uploaded to Canvas and must be in pdf form. Of course, you may hand write the problem set, but please upload an electronic copy; we will not accept hard copies and other file formats besides pdf.

Outside materials: The problem sets are open note so use any class materials including lecture slides, class notes, and assigned readings. You may also use Mathematica or other outside references. You cannot consult homework solutions from prior years, and you must cite any use of material from outside references. I actually encourage you to check your algebra, derivatives, and integrals in Mathematica. We might drop a negative sign accidentally, but Mathematica will not. You need to be explicit when you are using Mathematica to simplify/solve equations, etc., however.

Working with peers: You may work with other students on your problem sets but each person must submit their own copy and write up their analysis independently from the other. That is, you may discuss the problems with peers, you may discuss your answers and proofs, but you need to write up your own problem set. You may not copy the answers from someone else.

Late policy: No problem set can be turned in 72 hours after the due date without an explicit extension from me, where extensions require a good excuse (family or health emergency, etc) and/or a letter from the Dean, a health official, resident head, coach, etc. Each student gets one chance to turn in a problem set 3 days late no questions asked. Students do not need to contact me or the TA to exercise this option. After the student has exercised the 3-day grace period, a late problem set will have 10 points deducted for every 24 hour period after the due date, until 72 hours have passed in which case a problem set cannot be submitted.

Conflicts over grading: If a student believes a problem set has been incorrectly graded, they should discuss this with the TA either in the office hour or over email/zoom. The TA will have the opportunity to regrade the specific problems/questions discussed with the student. If the student still believes the grade to be incorrect, then they can appeal to the instructor, who will then regrade the entire problem set.

- Participation and attendance. During class, I expect you to contribute significantly to class discussion and to class review problems. Although attendance is not mandatory, it is necessary for participation, which makes up a considerable portion of your final grade.

- Exams. There are no exams, but two of the four problem sets will correspond to the midterm period and the final period for the 2023 quarter. These should be considered take home exams. As is customary, we will cancel  $1/2$  of the class that falls within midterm week. Of course, the rules above will apply.

**Academic Integrity & Collaboration:** Please be familiar with Caltech's honor code ([url](#)) and our divisions plagiarism policy ([url](#)). Violations of either will be handled with the utmost seriousness.

**Students with Documented Disabilities:** Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with Caltech Accessibility Services for Students (CASS). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an accommodation letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact CASS as soon as possible, since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

**My Status as a Responsible Employee:** As a faculty member, I am required to notify the Institute's Equity and Title IX Office when I become aware of discrimination, sexual harassment, or sex- or gender-based misconduct involving our community members. If one of my students shares such an experience with me, I can help connect them to support resources but will not be able to keep that information confidential as part of fulfilling my responsibility to make sure my students are offered the opportunity to access information and support by the Institute. For more information, you can email [equity@caltech.edu](mailto:equity@caltech.edu), go to [equity.caltech.edu](https://equity.caltech.edu), or review the Institute's Sex- and Gender-Based Misconduct Policy.

If you have experienced such prohibited conduct and would like confidential support, please feel to contact [Student Wellness Services](#); [Taso Dimitriadis](#), Center for Inclusion and Diversity; or [Teresa Mejia](#), Campus Sexual Violence Advocate.

**Disclaimer:** The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.