

# Designing American Democracy

University of Rochester, PSC 227

Spring 2020

Tue/Thur, 9:40 am - 10:55 am, Lattimore 210

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Office hours: Mon/Tue, 12:30 pm - 2 pm, Harkness 311

## Course Information

### Description

**Assignments and Expectations** All students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and should be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussions that draw upon the readings. Participation and attendance will not be graded, but I reserve the right to revise this policy if it becomes necessary. Students will complete three problem sets (each worth 10% of the grade), two in-class exams (the each worth 20% of the grade), and a final paper (worth 30% of the grade). Details about each of these elements of course may be found below.

**Problem Sets** The problem sets are intended to encourage timely learning of the technical concepts in the course, as well as to identify areas of difficulty such that these issues may be addressed as early as possible. Students may work in groups, though all students must hand in a completed assignment that they wrote up (not simply multiple copies of one completed assignment). Students are particularly encouraged to spend time understanding why/when points are deducted, as material from the problem sets is likely to appear on the exams.

**Exams** A mid-term (leading up to spring break: March 5, 2020) and a final exam (in the final class: April 28, 2020) will cover methodological tools but also the substantive content of the course, which students are expected to synthesize within and across units. The exams will entail short-answer,

some problems (i.e., models to solve), and one or two short essays. The best preparation will be thoughtfully attempting and reviewing the problem sets, as well as engaged class attendance and participation (including keeping up with the reading!). If you have a conflict with either of these dates, please let me know immediately.

**Term Paper** Students will complete a (10-page, double-spaced) term paper, inspired by a storied “contradiction” found in the U.S. Constitution (see Guerra-Pujol article in Week 1). In practice, students will be asked to identify a strategic tension in the U.S. Constitution and to model it via a write-up that is heavily-structured around a set of questions/components. Due May 3, 2020.

**Materials** The course has only one “textbook” to obtain – listed below. It is available at the bookstore (or from other book sellers), and a copy will be on reserve at the library (though this is a scarce resource).

Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2nd edition.

In addition to readings from *Analyzing Politics* (henceforth “AP”), each week will include a number of other readings pertinent to the theme. These include an excerpts from the U.S. Constitution or other founding document, the syllabi from U.S. Supreme Court Cases,<sup>1</sup> and academic papers presenting theoretical models. These supplemental materials will be posted on blackboard. I expect students to attempt reading and processing the academic papers, though I will spend significant time in class presenting their results and explaining their methodology. In-class I will draw on historical writings as well as empirical work. Slides related to this material will be posted after the class.

For the first several weeks of the course, we will draw upon a chapter (an appendix, actually) on game theory from the book below (henceforth “PEPP”). This reading, too, may be found on blackboard. The material it covers will help us to develop the necessary tools to understand and even create formal-theoretic models of politics.

Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2016. *Political Economy for Public Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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<sup>1</sup>The syllabus of a case is a short summary of the facts, rulings, and opinions. Links to these may be found underneath each case listed below.

Assistance and Resources to Promote Student Success Please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the course with any concerns or information that you would like me to know to

Week 2+ The state; introduction to game theory

AP: chapters 8 - 10

PEPP: Appendix A<sup>2</sup>

U.S. Const. art. V - VI; amend. 16

Articles of confederation

National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/567/519/>

Weeks 3 - 5 A democracy, representative government, and elections (with two major parties); introduction to game theory (ctd.)

AP: chapters 3 - 7, 16

PEPP: Appendix B

U.S. Const. art. 1, §4-5; amend. 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22-24, 26

Shelby County v. Holder

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/570/529/>

Rucho v. Common Cause

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/588/18-422/>

Riker, William H. 1988. Liberalism against populism : a confrontation between the theory of democracy and the theory of social choice. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Chapter 1.

Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." Annual Review of Political Science, 15(1): 183-201.

Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. 2011. "Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits." The Journal of Politics, 73(01): 171-186.

Problem Set #1

Week 6 Federalism

AP: NA

U.S. Const. art. I, §10; art. IV; art. VII

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<sup>2</sup>For reference on mathematics and notation, see: Osborne, Martin J. 2004. Appendix: Mathematics. In An Introduction to Game Theory, Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 17, pp. 493-506.



Week 11 A justice system

AP: chapters 15 and 17

U.S. Const. art. III

Marbury v. Madison

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/5/137/>

Clinton, Robert L. 1994. "Game Theory, Legal History, and the Origins of Judicial Review: A Revisionist Analysis of Marbury v. Madison." *American Journal of Political Science*, 38(2): 285–302.

Week 12-13 Interest groups: campaign finance and lobbyists

Ainsworth, Scott H., 2002. "Lobbying (6); Elections, Groups, and Money (9)." In *Analyzing Interest Groups: Group Influence on People and Policies*, New York and London: W. W. Norton, chapter 6, 9, pp. 119–143, 185–202.

U.S. Const. amend. 1