SYLLABUS

Collective Action and Collective Choice
PLSC 802
Classroom TBA
Wednesday 9:25-11:15am

Deborah Beim
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30pm to 4:00pm and by appointment

The field of American politics is roughly divided into studies of political behavior and studies of political institutions. This class aims to bridge these two subfields. The bridge it uses is game theory, which is a tool for studying interactions of individuals and is therefore well-suited to studying how voters and their governing institutions interact.

In the first third of the class we will read theoretical models of political behavior (that is, of voters). In the second third of the class we will read theoretical models of political institutions (that is, of members of government). In the last third, we will reflect back on what each subfield ignored about the other, and will read some papers on representation, responsiveness, and accountability.

The intended student is a first- or second-year PhD student in the political science department. Undergraduates and other graduate students who have adequate preparation and interest are allowed to take the course with my written permission. The course will have a seminar format, though I will occasionally lecture on material as is necessary.

Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on the following:

• 36%: Weekly Reading Responses (3 points per paper)
• 30%: Two homework assignments (15% each)
• 21%: Take-home final exam
• 13%: Participation (1 point per class)

Weekly Reading Responses

Each week, you will write a response to the assigned readings. These should be no more than two pages, double-spaced. The readings for this class are difficult; this response paper is intended to help guide your reading and ensure you have understood each paper’s contribution, strengths, and weaknesses. You are encouraged to talk with your classmates about the readings before writing your responses, but you must each write your own response. (Please familiarize yourself with Yale’s academic honesty policy by visiting
http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/academic-dishonesty). Your response should state, for each paper we read: the author’s question, any important assumptions the author made, and the answer the author reached. We will discuss the response papers in more detail on the first day of class.

Reading responses are due via e-mail every Tuesday at 9:00am. Those received after 9:00 will be penalized 1 point (33%).

**Homework assignments and final exam**

You will complete two homework assignments over the semester. These will be short papers or problem sets. At the end of the semester there will be a take-home final exam, which will be a mock comprehensive exam.

Late submissions of homework assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per 24 hours past due. (So, for example, an A paper submitted two hours late will receive an A-.)

Academic integrity is a core institutional value at Yale. It means, among other things, truth in presentation, diligence and precision in citing works and ideas we have used, and acknowledging our collaborations with others. In view of our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity, the Graduate School Code of Conduct specifically prohibits the following forms of behavior: cheating on examinations, problem sets and all other forms of assessment; falsification and/or fabrication of data; plagiarism, that is, the failure in a dissertation, essay or other written exercise to acknowledge ideas, research, or language taken from others; and multiple submission of the same work without obtaining explicit written permission from both instructors before the material is submitted. Students found guilty of violations of academic integrity are subject to one or more of the following penalties: written reprimand, probation, suspension (noted on a student’s transcript) or dismissal (noted on a student’s transcript).

**Participation** Preparation for and active participation in our weekly discussions is of the utmost importance. You should expect to be called on at any time, to discuss any reading in any session. Preparation involves more than just doing the readings, but coming to class having thought about the material and having organized your thoughts. Each week, you should bring questions and points to discuss. Participation is graded at a rate of 1 point per class. If you do not attend or do not participate satisfactorily you will receive a 0 for that day.

**Readings** Students are expected to have completed the required weekly reading before each class and to arrive prepared to contribute actively to all discussions. A warning—some of the readings are quite difficult, particularly for those without previous exposure to formal theory. This does not mean such exposure is a prerequisite for the course. Rather, it means that you need to set aside sufficient time to work through these papers, to understand the substantive assumptions, intuitions,
and results (even if you cannot work through the formal results or the statistical analyses themselves). If you get stuck, you should arrange to discuss such readings with me—which means you should start the readings early enough before the relevant class so that there is time for us to meet. We also will spend time in class working through the theoretical models from the readings. Most of the readings are journal articles, available online and easily accessed through course reserves on the classes*v2 site or through the library’s website.

**Required Books** You will need the following books for the course. I have ordered these books and they are available at the Yale bookstore; most are available more cheaply online. There are also reserve copies available at the library.

- McCarty, Nolan, and Adam Meirowitz. *Political Game Theory.*
- Huber and Shippem, *Deliberate Discretion.*
- Pitkin, Hannah. *The Concept of Representation.*
- Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections.* This book is seminal and therefore required, but out of print and therefore very expensive. You can buy one on Amazon, or the library has a few copies. Plan ahead in order to get your reading done on time.

**Overview**

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**Readings**

All readings are required unless otherwise noted.

**January 20. Class 1. Introduction.**

**Section I: Voters and voting**

**January 27. Class 2. Individual Voters**


February 3. Class 3. Voting as collective action


February 10. Class 4. Candidate Competition

• McCarty, Nolan, and Adam Meirowitz. Political Game Theory. Ch. 5, pgs. 87-107.

Section II: Government
February 17. Class 5. Policy-Making on One Dimension

• Ferejohn and Shipan. 1990. “Congressional Influence on Bureaucracy.” JLEO.
• Lax, Jeffrey, and Charles M. Cameron. 2007. “Bargaining and Opinion Assignment on the U.S. Supreme Court.” JLEO.

February 24. Class 6. Distributional Politics


March 2. Class 7: Commitment Problems within government


March 9. Class 8: Delegation and hierarchy

• Cameron, Segal, and Songer. 2000. “Strategic Auditing in a Political Hierarchy.” APSR.
• Huber and Shipan, Deliberate Discretion. Chapters TBA.

Section III: Voter-Government Interaction


• Pitkin, Hannah. The Concept of Representation.


April 13. Class 11. Reputational Models


April 27. Class 13. Voter competence

Interest Groups: Lobbying and Contributing
We will not read these together, but you may want to read them on your own.