

PSC 107 —Introduction to Positive Political Theory

University of Rochester Summer 2020
Time: MTWR 9–12 Location: Zoom
Instructor: Xiaoyan Qiu
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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to positive political theory, a rigorous set of tools that will help you view politics in a new way and challenge conventional wisdom in the process. We use these tools to address the following broad sets of questions. 1.) What is the problem of collective action? How do we overcome it? 2.) What is political conflict about? Why do states fight wars? 3.) How do elections aggregate voter preferences? What are the implications for party competition? 4.) How does democracy emerge and how does inequality impact this process? Some of the analysis will require basic mathematical skills, including algebra and rudimentary calculus, but background will be provided as needed.

Adjustment to Online Course: The course will take place online via Zoom. The link to the class has been posted separately on Blackboard. In general, students are expected to turn on the camera and interact with the instructor just like in a normal class. Lectures will be recorded and posted on Blackboard for later access and review. Students with any concern or situation that affects their ability to do so are encouraged to talk to the instructor.

- Students must attend with cameras on if internet access stable (required); students should arrange to minimize internet usage in household during lecture sessions to maximize bandwidth for lecture and camera (recommended).
- Students must watch video recordings of lectures if large disparity in time zones prevents synchronous participation (required); students should review lectures and proactively use office hours to ask questions on materials if unable to watch lecture live due to time zone disparity (recommended)

- Students must have ability to scan or photograph materials with adequate resolution for average reader (required); students should have a printer/scanner of high quality resolution and scanning rate for submitting assignments (recommended)

Structure of the Course: Because of the reliance on methodological approaches throughout the course, students will be required to submit three problem sets over the course of the next few weeks. In addition, there will be a take-home final exam. The due dates of the problem sets will be determined depending on the course's pace. Late problem sets will be discounted by 0.7 per day of delay. Any time less than a full day will be counted as a day.

Grading: Students are encouraged to work together on problem sets. But the final answers must be written and submitted separately. Students are not allowed to cooperate on the final exam. Grading will be assigned based on the following scheme:

- Problem sets (20% each)
- Final Exam (30%)
- Class Participation (10%)

Schedule: There is no mandatory textbook for the course. The course will be based the instructor's notes and suggested readings for each topic. These readings will be provided via Blackboard. Students are not required but encouraged to read them.

1. Social Science Theories

- Coleman, J. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Belknap, Ch. 1-2
- Angrist, J.D. and Pischke, J.-S. (2008). *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton university press, Ch. 1

2. Models

- Gibbard, A. and Varian, H. R. (1978). Economic models
- Gilboa, I. (2010). *Rational choice*. MIT press, Ch. 1-3

- Paine, J. and Tyson, S. A. (2018). Uses and abuses of formal models in political science
3. Introduction to Game Theory
 - Osborne, M. J. et al. (2003), *An Introduction to Game Theory*, Oxford University Press, Ch. 2,4,5
 4. Electoral Competition and Rational Turnout
 - Osborne, M. J. et al. (2003), *An Introduction to Game Theory*, Oxford University Press, Ch. 3.3
 5. Collective Action and Public Good Provision
 - Ostrom, E. (2015). *Governing the commons*. Cambridge university press, Ch. 1,3
 6. State Formation
 - Hobbes, T. (1651). *Leviathan*. 2009, Oxford University Press, Ch. 13-14
 - Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, democracy, and development. *American Political Science Review*, 87(3): 567-576.
 7. Conflict Bargaining
 - Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. *International Organization*, 49(3):379-414
 8. Democratization
 - Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. A. (2005). *Economic origins of dictatorship and democracy*, Cambridge university press, Ch. 4-6

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Resources: 1-154 Dewey Hall disability@rochester.edu (585) 275-9049

Academic Integrity: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at:
<http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.html>.