PE I: Formal Models of Domestic Politics
PECO/PPHA 40102, PLSC 41105
Fall 2023

Instructor: Professor Scott Gehlbach, `gehlbach@uchicago.edu`
Teaching assistant: Shuyi Yu, `yushuyi@uchicago.edu`
Lecture time: Wednesday 1:30–4:20, Keller 0010
Discussion section: Monday 11:00–12:00, Pick 407
Office hours: Reserve at `https://calendly.com/gehlbach/office-hours`

Overview

This course presents an overview of formal models of domestic politics. The material, in other words, covers theories of politics *within* (rather than between) countries—those theories having been formalized as game-theoretic models. Some students will take the course intending to use formal theory in their own work. Others will anticipate a more empirical orientation, albeit one that is informed by foundational theories of domestic politics. The course speaks to both audiences.

Prerequisites

The material assumes a basic understanding of game theory, calculus, and optimization theory. Students who have taken any of the following should be well prepared: a) the three-course sequence in Formal Political Theory taught in the Political Economy program, b) the two-course sequence in Game Theory taught in the Political Science Department + Math 19520, c) PhD microeconomic theory in any economics program.

Reading

We will use the second edition of my textbook, *Formal Models of Domestic Politics*. I will provide a copy to everybody in class.

Grading

The final grade is based on:

- Problem sets (30 percent)
- Final exam (70 percent)

Grading of problem sets is coarse. We will primarily give checks, with the occasional check-minus to signal the need for more effort and the occasional check-plus to acknowledge superlative performance. You should understand that seeking out solutions to problems will do little to improve your problem-set grade, which in any event is worth only 30 percent of the total, but will do much to keep you from knowing the material well enough to receive a good grade on the final exam.

More on problem sets

Problem sets are due at the start of class the week after they assigned. Your solutions to all problem sets should be written in LaTeX. For those new to LaTeX, an excellent point of entry is Overleaf—a free online editor. Overleaf itself provides a good introduction to LaTeX, which you can find at `https://www.overleaf.com/learn/latex/Learn_LaTeX_in_30_minutes`.

Most of you will find this course easier if you cooperate with your classmates. Problem sets especially lend themselves to collaboration. A particularly good strategy is to begin work on a problem set yourself, meet with one or more classmates on Friday or the weekend to talk through any issues, ask questions in discussion section on Monday, and then finish your work. The final writeup should be your own.

Political Economy Workshop

We strongly encourage you to attend the Political Economy Workshop (Thursday, 12:30–1:50), where you will have an opportunity to see outside speakers present work related to material learned in this course. You can find the list of speakers at `https://harris.uchicago.edu/academics/design-your-path/workshops/political-economy`. In addition, you should try to attend the Political Economy Lunch (Friday, 12:00–1:20), where Chicago faculty, postdocs, and PhD students present work in progress.

Schedule

We have nine weeks and nine textbook chapters. We will cover one chapter each week.

September 27
    Chapter 1: Electoral Competition Under Certainty
October 4
    Chapter 2: Electoral Competition Under Uncertainty
October 11
    Chapter 3: Special Interest Politics
October 18
    Chapter 4: Veto Players
October 25
    Chapter 5: Delegation
November 1
    Chapter 6: Coalitions
November 8
    Chapter 7: Political Agency
November 15
    Chapter 8: Nondemocracy
November 22
    No class: Thanksgiving
November 29
    Chapter 9: Regime Change
December 6
    Final exam: 1:30–4:30, Keller 0010