

# Syllabus, PSC 280

Spring 2012

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**meetings:** Wednesdays, 2:00 - 4:40, Morey 505

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**office:** Harkness 322

**office hours:** Thursdays, 11:15 to 1:15

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## Contents

- [Recommended Preparation](#)
- [Requirements and Grading](#)
  - [Assignments](#)
  - [Deadlines and Format Requirements](#)
  - [Grading](#)
    - [For Example](#)
  - [Paper Revisions](#)
- [Schedule](#)
  - [Summary of Due Dates](#)
  - [Full Schedule](#)

## [Recommended Preparation](#)

There are no official pre-requisites for this class. But I strongly recommend that you come in with some background in game theory or microeconomic theory. If you have taken one or more of the following, you should be fine:

- An intermediate-level course on microeconomics or higher
- A course on game theory
- A course on probability theory

If you have taken NONE of the above, you should at least feel comfortable with math and problem sets. For instance, if you've taken none of the above, this course might be a good fit for you unless you've taken multi-variable calculus or other higher-level math classes.

# Requirements and Grading

## Assignments

To complete the course, you must turn in:

- 4 problem sets
- 5 short (less than 5 page) papers

Each student in the course will be randomly assigned to one of two groups -- group "A" and group "B". Students in both groups must do all problem sets. In addition, all students must do the short papers assigned for the weeks of February 15 and February 29. After that, you have three more paper assignments to do, *but which ones depends on the group to which you're assigned*. You'll see in the [Schedule](#) below that for each of our meetings there are two assignments listed: one for group A and one for group B. You must turn in *only* the assignments listed for your group, and your grade will be based only on those assignments.

## Deadlines and Format Requirements

Problem sets are due at the beginning of class on the day indicated by the schedule. Papers are due by midnight the day of the class indicated on the schedule. I do not accept late assignments. Assignments turned in after the deadline will be marked '0' (the lowest possible score). Every paper must:

- Be submitted electronically via blackboard
- Be submitted as a .pdf NOT as .doc or .docx
- Run no more than 5 pages
- Be double spaced
- Be printed in no less than 12 point font
- Have no less than 1-inch margins

## Grading

Every assignment (both problem sets and papers) is graded on a 4 point scale. At the end of the semester I drop your lowest problem set score. I then calculate a final 4 point score as a weighted average in which each of the three counted problem sets gets a weight of 0.05, and each of the five papers gets a weight of .17. The resulting 4-point overall score, is then converted to a letter grade according to the following rules:

Overall 4 Point Score	Final Letter Grade
at or above 3.85	A
at or above 3.5, less than 3.85	A-
at or above 3.15, less than 3.5	B+
at or above 2.85, less than 3.15	B
at or above 2.5, less than 2.85	B-
at or above 2.15, less than 2.5	C+
at or above 1.85, less than 2.15	C
at or above 1.5, less than 1.85	C-
at or above 1, less than 1.5	D
less than 1	E

### For Example

Suppose at the end of the semester, you have the following scores on your assignments:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Score</i>
problem set 1	2.0
problem set 2	4.0
problem set 3	3.0
problem set 4	1.0
paper 1	1.5
paper 2	2.0
paper 3	4.0
paper 4	3.0
paper 5	3.7

Then your final overall score would be calculated by dropping the lowest problem set score (1.0 in this case), and then applying the weights listed above:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Overall Score} &= 0.05 * 2.0 + 0.05 * 4.0 + 0.05 * 3.0 + 0.17 * 1.5 + 0.17 * \\
 &2.0 + 0.17 * 4.0 + 0.17 * 3.0 + 0.17 * 3.7 \\
 &= 2.864
 \end{aligned}$$

Then your letter grade would be assigned by your overall score according to the table given above. In this case, 2.864 is at or above 2.85 but less than 3.15, so the final letter grade would be a 'B'.

## Paper Revisions

If you wish, you may revise and resubmit one of the papers you write for re-grading. To do this you must first schedule an individual appointment with me to go over the first version of the paper. At that meeting, I'll specify the improvements that need to be made to the paper for the grade to be raised, and we'll work out a deadline for the revision. If you wish to do a revision, *you must set the required meeting with me before May 8th (Friday of the last week of classes.)*

## Schedule

### Summary of Due Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>
2/1	problem set 1	problem set 1
2/8	problem set 2	problem set 2
2/15	paper	paper
2/22	problem set 3	problem set 3
2/29	paper	paper
3/7	paper	nothing
3/21	paper	nothing
3/28	nothing	paper
4/4	nothing	paper
4/11	problem set	problem set
4/18	paper	nothing
4/25	nothing	paper

## Full Schedule

### **January 18**

**topic:** Intro to the Course

### **January 25**

**topic:** Basics of Rational Choice Models (preferences, utility, maximization)

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

none

## February 1

**topic:** Probability, Expectation, and Rational Choice Under Uncertainty

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

Problem Set 1

**group B assignment:**

Problem Set 1

## February 8

**topic:** An Early Analysis of Political Accountability

**reading:** James Mill *Essay on Government*

**group A assignment:**

Problem Set 2

**group B assignment:**

Problem Set 2

## February 15

**topic:** Game Theory Basics -- Mostly Sequential Move Games; A bit of Dynamic Programming

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

paper on Mill, topic TBA

**group B assignment:**

paper on Mill, topic TBA

## February 22

**topic:** A First Formal Analysis -- Accountability with "Hidden Actions"

**reading:** John Ferejohn (1986) "Incumbent Performance and Electoral Control."

**group A assignment:**

Problem Set 3

**group B assignment:**

Problem Set 3

## February 29

**topic:** Screening vs. Sanctioning

**reading:** James D. Fearon (1999) "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types vs. Sanctioning Poor Performance." In Przeworski, Stokes and Manin *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press.

**group A assignment:**

paper on Ferejohn, topic TBA

**group B assignment:**

paper on Ferejohn, topic TBA

### March 7

**topic:** An Empirical Investigation of Accountability

Brandice Canes-Wrone, David W. Brady and John F. Cogan (2002) "Out of

**reading:** Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Member's Voting." *American Political Science Review*. 96(1): 127 -- 140.

**group A assignment:**

paper on Fearon

**group B assignment:**

none

### March 14

*Spring Break*

### March 21

**topic:** Pandering

Eric Maskin and Jean Tirole (2004) "The Politician and the Judge:

**reading:** Accountability in Government" *American Economic Review* 94(4), 1034 -- 1054.

**group A assignment:**

paper -- "Does CBC's analysis distinguish between Screening and Sanctioning? Could it?" .

**group B assignment:**

none

### March 28

**topic:** Pandering

Sanford C. Gordon and Gregory A. Huber (2004) "Accountability and

**reading:** Coercion: Is Justice Blind When It Runs for Office?" *American Journal of Political Science*. 48(2): 247 -- 263.

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

paper on Maskin and Tirole, topic TBA

### April 4

**topic:** Contract Models and Mechanism Design

**reading:** none

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

paper on Gordon and Huber, topic TBA

### April 11

**topic:** Corruption in Government Bureaucracies

**reading:** Abhijit Banerjee "A Theory of Misgovernance." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 112(4) 1289 -- 1332.

**group A assignment:**

Problem Set 4

**group B assignment:**

Problem Set 4

### April 18

**topic:** Corruption as Collusion

Jean Tirole (1986) "Hierarchies and Bureaucracies: The Role of Collusion in Organizations." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 2(2): 181 -- 214.

**group A assignment:**

paper on Banerjee, topic TBA

**group B assignment:**

none

### April 25 (Last Day of Class)

**topic:** Corruption and Oversight

**reading:** Canice Prendergast (2000) "The Limits of Bureaucratic Efficiency." *American Economic Review*. 90(1): 194 -- 211.

**group A assignment:**

none

**group B assignment:**

paper on Tirole, topic TBA

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