

PSC 580 INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE POLITICAL THEORY

Spring, 2002
TTh 2:00-3:15
Harkness 112

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Hours: whenever

This course is a rigorous introduction to the main concepts and results in positive political theory. It is designed to be both an initial introductory course for students planning on taking further courses in the positive political theory sequence and a self-contained overview of the field for students who do not intend to do additional coursework in the field. The course will cover both social choice theory, which concerns finding an axiomatic basis for collective decision-making, and game theory, which analyzes individual behavior in strategic situations.

Course work: There will be some problem sets. The exact meaning of “some” will be determined as we go, but expect assignments to be roughly every other week. There will also be a midterm and a final exam.

Schedule: Below is the list of topics and scheduled reading for the course. Naturally, this schedule may change as the semester unfolds.

Topic 1 Introduction, individual preference, choice, ordinal utility

- Ordeshook, Chapter 1 (pp. 1–37)
- Schwartz, Hunk 1

Topic 2 Choice under uncertainty, expected utility, risk aversion, paradoxes, turnout

- Ordeshook, Chapter 1 (pp. 37–52)
- excerpt from Kreps, “A Course in Microeconomic Theory”

Topic 3 Voting rules, sincere agendas, examples of paradoxes and problems in voting, May’s theorem

- Ordeshook, sec. 2.2, pp. 65–71
- Schwartz, Hunks 2 & 3

Topic 4 Condorcet paradox, divide the dollar, Arrow’s Theorem

- Ordeshook, sec. 2.1, pp. 56–71
- Schwartz, Hunk 4

Topic 5 Black’s theorem, Plott’s theorem, McKelvey’s theorem

- Ordeshook, sec. 2.3, pp. 71–82, secs. 4.6 & 4.7, pp. 160–175
- Schwartz, Hunks 5 & 6

Topic 6 Misrepresentation of preferences, Gibbard-Satterthwaite Theorem

- Ordeshook, sec. 2.4, pp. 82–89

Topic 7 Moulin’s theorem, Border and Jordan’s theorem, phantom voters

- articles

Topic 8 Strategic form games, weak and strong dominance, IEWDS

- Ordeshook, sec. 3.5 & 3.6, pp. 114–119

Topic 9 Pure strategy Nash equilibrium, mixed strategies

- Ordeshook, sec. 3.8, pp. 133–137

Topic 10 Zero-sum games, median voter theorem, core and uncovered set, local public goods

- Ordeshook, secs. 4.1–4.5, pp. 144–160, sec. 4.9, pp. 180–187

Topic 11 Extensive form games, strategies in the extensive form, information sets

- Ordeshook, secs. 3.1–3.3, pp. 98–112

Topic 12 Backward induction, subgame perfection, credible threats, sophisticated voting in agendas

- Ordeshook, sec. 3.7, pp. 120–133, sec. 3.9, pp. 137–142, sec. 6.4, pp. 266–284

Topic 13 Collective action, coordination, repeated games and cooperation

- Ordeshook, Chapter 5, pp. 203–241

Topic 14 Voting models: strategic voting, issue-by-issue voting, setter model

- Ordeshook, secs. 6.1–6.3, pp. 243–266

Topic 15 Bargaining and models of legislatures