

# Political Institutions

## Political Science 7905

Spring 2018  
Wednesday 8:45 - 11:30 a.m.  
Derby Hall 150

**v2.0**

Prof. Alex Acs  
Department of Political Science  
Office: Derby 2008  
Office hours: Wed. 2-4 pm, or by appointment  
acs.1@osu.edu

### Course Description

The goal of this course is to introduce graduate students to the study of political institutions and to provide a foundation upon which they can teach themselves additional works in the literature. In addition, the course is designed to advance students' ability to conduct their own scholarly research, evaluate the work of others, and to offer some professionalization in terms of learning how to serve as discussants and reviewers. There are no specific prerequisites, but we will not shy away from the prevailing methodological approach of the discipline, which includes both technical theoretical modeling and statistical analysis. Exposure to these methods will be beneficial. All that is required, however, is a willingness to engage carefully and thoughtfully with the readings.

The concepts covered will apply to a mix of research questions in American politics, comparative politics and international relations—and class discussions will welcome further inquiry into the linkages between these fields. The class will be a lecture/seminar format. The early part of the semester will be heavy on the lecture component because it involves concepts that you may have yet to cover in your coursework, including an introduction to game-theoretic reasoning and modeling. The latter part of the semester will involve more discussion.

## Books

There is one required text for the course. (Other course readings are listed in the course schedule below and will be made available on Carmen.)

1. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita (henceforth BDM). [Political Economy for Public Policy](#).

## Course Requirements

- *Midterm exam*. An in-class midterm will cover material from the readings and lectures.
- *Seminar paper*. A 15-page double-spaced seminar paper on political institutions will be due during the exam period on Monday April 30 at 5pm, printed and placed in my mailbox. Your paper can either be a *critical* literature review or, with my permission, a piece of original research. (One way to be critical is to identify where the gaps are.) If you are doing a literature review, your paper can include readings that have not been assigned, such as the optional readings, though you should include at least a half-dozen or so of the required readings. In other words, the required readings may only be a starting point for you.
- *Presentations*. In the second half of the semester (starting in week 8) we will read collections of academic books and papers. You will be assigned to two readings, each from a different week, where you will be responsible for presenting that reading in class. You should plan for a 20-minute presentation, with the expectation that questions and reactions from the class will add an additional 15 to 20 minutes. The point of this exercise is to give you experience in "discussing" the work of other scholars. You will have discretion to present the reading in the manner you see most fit, but, in general, good presentations will:
  - Summarize the main points of the reading
  - Relate the reading to the larger literature
  - Offer critiques of the reading.
- *Reaction papers*. Beginning in week 8 you will turn in a reaction paper at the start of class on most weeks. Specifically, reaction papers are due during the weeks you are not presenting, but you only need to turn in four reaction papers, so if you have a look at the schedule below, you will see that this means that you have one week off where you won't present or turn anything in. (You can choose the week you want off.) The goal of the reaction paper is to critically analyze that week's readings from the perspective of theory, logic, design, method, or evidence. For each paper, you should react to at least two of the week's readings and, to

stay focused, you should generally avoid bringing in readings from other weeks or outside of the course. Also, avoid summarization and dwelling on smaller points within an article. Papers should be no shorter than one page, single-spaced, and no longer than three pages. Note that you can use the reaction papers to develop ideas for your seminar paper, especially if you are doing a critical literature review.

- *Class attendance and participation.* You are expected to attend each class and to participate in class discussion and debate.

## Grade Breakdown and Scale

- 40% midterm exam
- 30% seminar paper
- 20% reaction papers
- 10% class presentations

Your final grade will be determined using a standard conversion chart:

Letter	Prct.
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66
E	0-60

## Course Policies

- *Laptops closed, cell phones off.* You are encouraged to take notes during class, though you will have to do so the old-fashioned way, with pencil and paper.
- *Course announcements.* Any course announcement will be made through Carmen, such as a syllabus change, lecture preview or a relevant current events topic.
- *Contacting me.* The best way to get in touch is through my OSU email, [acs.1@osu.edu](mailto:acs.1@osu.edu). You can also use the Carmen email system, though I check it less frequently.

## Schedule

(Readings should be completed before class)

### Introduction

- Week 1
  - Daniel Diermeier and Keith Krehbiel. 2003. "Institutionalism as a Methodology." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 15:123-144
  - Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2007. "Rational Choice Institutionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, ed. Rhodes, Binder and Rockman.
  - Roger Myerson. 1992. "On the Value of Game Theory in Social Science" *Rationality and Society*
  - Kevin A. Clarke and David M. Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics*
  - *Optional*
    - \* Timothy Besley and Anne Case. 2003. "Political Institutions and Policy Choices: Evidence from the United States." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41:7-73
    - \* Elizabeth Sanders. 2007. "Historical Institutionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, ed. Rhodes, Binder and Rockman.
    - \* John P. A. Ioannidis. [Why Most Published Research Findings Are False](#)

### Foundations

How do political scientists study institutions? We start with an overview of the theoretical concepts in the study of political and market-based institutions, paying particular attention to the game theoretic approach.

- Week 2
  - BDM Appendices on Game Theory (read A, skim B)
  - *Optional*
    - \* Robert Gibbons. [Game Theory for Applied Economists](#). Chapters 1 and 2 (Static Games of Complete Information and Dynamic Games of Complete Information)
    - \* McCarty and Meirowitz. *Political Game Theory*. Chapter 5 (Games in the Normal Form)
- Week 3

- BDM Chapter 4: Externalities
- BDM Chapter 5: Coordination Problems
- Week 4
  - BDM Chapter 6: Commitment Problems
  - BDM Chapter 7: Strategic Adjustment
- Week 5
  - BDM Chapter 8: Dynamic Inconsistency
  - BDM Chapter 9: The Need for Information (optional)
- Week 6
  - BDM Chapter 10: Influence over Elected Officials
  - BDM Chapter 11: Incentives, Institutions and Power
  - *Optional.*
    - \* Ashworth and BDM. 2006. "Delivering the Goods: Legislative Particularism in Different Electoral and Institutional Settings." *JOP*
    - \* Dixit and Londregan. 1996. "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics." *JOP*.
    - \* Gordon and Huber. 2007. "The Effects of Electoral Competitiveness on Incumbent Behavior." *QJPS*.
- Week 7 – February 23, **Midterm Exam**

## The Origins of Political Institutions

- Week 8
  - Milgrom, Paul R., Douglass C. North and Barry Weingast. 1990. "The Role of Institutions in the Revival of Trade: The Medieval Law Merchant, Private Judges, and the Champagne Fairs." *Economics and Politics* 2(March): 1-23.
  - McGuire, Robert 1988. "Constitution Making: A Rational Choice Model of the Federal Convention of 1787." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(2): 483-522.
  - Boix, Carles. 1999. "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies." *American Political Science Review*
  - *Optional.*
    - \* Adam Przeworski. "Institutions Matter?" *Government and Opposition*. Volume 39 Issue 4 Page 527 - September 2004

- \* Dixit, Lawlessness and Economics. Chapter 1.
- \* Shepsle, K. 1991. "Discretion, institutions and the problem of government commitment", in P.Bordieu y J.Coleman (eds.), *Social Theory for a Changing Society*. Boulder: Westview Press. 4.

## Elections

- Week 9
  - Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2012 15:1, 183-201
  - Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Shanna Rose. 2011. "Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections." *Journal of Politics* 73(3).
  - Gordon and Huber. 2004. "Accountability and Coercion: Is Justice Blind when it Runs for Office?" *American Journal of Political Science*.
  - *Optional*.
    - \* Besley, Timothy. 2006. *Principled Agents*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. (Ch. 3)
    - \* Lee, Moretti, and Butler. 2004. "Do Voters Affect Or Elect Policies? Evidence from the U. S. House." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.
    - \* Lax and Phillips. 2012. "The Democratic Deficit in the States." *American Journal of Political Science*
    - \* Fenno, Richard. 1977. "U.S. House Members and their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review*

## Legislative Politics I

- Week 10
  - Weingast, Barry and William J. Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress; or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets." *Journal of Political Economy*
  - Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Chapters 2 & 3 (skim Chapter 1)
  - Lanny W. Martin and Georg Vanberg. 2015. "Parties and Policy-making in Multiparty Governments: The Legislative Median, Ministerial Autonomy, and the Coalition Compromise." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 979-996. (**presented by Acs**)
  - *Optional*

- \* Keith Poole. *Spatial Models of Parliamentary Voting*. Chapters 1 & 2
- \* McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal. 2005. "Polarization of the Politicians." Chapter 2 of *Polarized America*

## Legislative Politics II

- Week 11
  - Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*. Chapters 1-3
  - Londregan, John. *Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile*. pp. 1-49
  - Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office" *American Political Science Review*.
  - *Optional*
    - \* Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Muller and Daniel Markham Smith. 2010 "Parliamentary Control of Coalition Governments." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 13: 517-35.
    - \* Huber, John. 1996. "The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 269-282.

## Executive Politics

- Week 12
  - Canes-Wrone, Brandice. Who Leads Whom? Chapters 2 & 3 (pp. 15 - 81)
  - Epstein, David and Sharyn O'Halloran. *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making under Separate Powers*. Chapters 3 & 4
  - David Lewis. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Chapters 3 & 5
  - *Optional*.
    - \* Weingast, Barry and Mark Moran. Bureaucratic Discretion or Congressional Control: Regulatory Policymaking by the Federal Trade Commission," *Journal of Political Economy* 91 (1983), pp. 765-800.
    - \* Gailmard, Sean and John W. Patty. 2012. "Formal Models of Bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Political Science*
    - \* Gailmard and Patty. 2007. "Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise." *American Journal of Political Science*

- \* Gordon. 2011. "Politicizing Agency Spending Authority: Lessons from a Bush-era Scandal." *American Political Science Review*
- \* Bendor and Hammond. "Rethinking Allison's Models." *American Political Science Review* (1992).
- \* McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1983. "Police Patrol versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- \* McNollgast. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *JLEO*.

## The Separation of Powers

- Week 13
  - Cameron, Charles and Nolan McCarty. 2004. "Models of Vetoes and Veto Bargaining." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7(1): 409-435.
  - Lisa Baldez and John M. Carey. 1999. "Presidential Agenda Control and Spending Policy: Lessons from General Pinochet's Constitution." *American Journal of Political Science* 43(1): 29-55
  - Rivers, Douglas, and Nancy Rose. "Passing the President's Program: Public Opinion and Presidential Influence in Congress," *American Journal of Political Science* 29 (1985), pp.183-96.
  - *Optional*.
    - \* Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Cristian Pop-Eleches, and Andrei Shleifer, "Judicial Checks and Balances," *Journal of Political Economy*. 2004.
    - \* Shipan, Charles. 2004. "Regulatory Regimes, Agency Actions, and the Conditional Nature of Congressional Influence." *American Political Science Review*.

## Other topics: Bargaining & Deliberation

- Week 14
  - Gehlbach, Scott and Edmund J. Malesky. 2010. "The Contribution of Veto Players to Economic Reform." *Journal of Politics* 72(4): 957-975.
  - Landa, Dimitri and Adam Meirowitz. 2009. "Game Theory, Information, and Deliberative Democracy." *American Journal of Political Science*.
  - Lopez-Moctezuma, Gabriel. 2015. Sequential Deliberation in Collective Decision-Making: The Case of the FOMC. Manuscript.
  - *Optional*
    - \* Romer, Thomas, and Howard Rosenthal. 1978. Political Resource Allocation, Controlled Agendas, and the Status Quo. *Public Choice* 33: 27-43.



## Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

All students believe that they know how not to plagiarize. Many of them are wrong. Every year, many of them find that out the hard way. Don’t be one of them.

The short version is that passing off another person’s work or ideas as your own is plagiarism. That includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use or paraphrasing of another person’s work or ideas. It is not enough, for example, simply to copy and paste a passage and then cite the source at the end. If the passage is taken word-for-word, it must be in quotes as well to indicate that fact.

There is an excellent video [here](#), if you have any doubts. You should be crystal clear, as the University’s policies exist to ensure fairness, and violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely.

## Disability Services

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614-292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).