

POSC 319/419: Politics and Money

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2-3 or any time my door is open

Description

One of the most famous definitions of politics comes from Harold Laswell, who described it as the struggle over “who gets what, when, how.” Money is at the center of most political conflict. It is a resource, a motivation, and an end unto itself. This course will examine the role of money in politics, with particular emphasis on American politics. We will discuss the role of money in elections, in the policy-making process, and what it means for representation. The course will begin with the question of the role that financial considerations play in public opinion and voting behavior. We will then address the role that money plays in election results, both in terms of its role in financing campaigns, and the relationship between the state of the economy and election results. Finally, we will discuss the policy-making process. In that context, we will address the role that interest groups play in the process, and how the quest for economic benefits for one’s constituency motivates the behavior of elected officials. We will conclude by discussing how policy changes at the systemic level occur and the influence that various groups have on policy outcomes.

Formal requirements

The formal requirements for the course are: one short paper (15%), one term paper (35%), one take-home midterm (15%), a take-home final (20%), and course participation (15%).

Graduate students will be required to incorporate applied research into their term papers in order to address an empirical question currently unresolved in the Political Science literature.

Graduate students should consult with the Professor as soon as possible in order to determine topic-appropriate requirements.

Class structure

This course meets three times per week. Monday and Wednesday sessions will be interactive lectures. I will speak a lot, but you will be expected to participate.

Friday sessions will be based around student presentations. Beginning on 2/6, Friday sessions will proceed as follows. First, at least one student will make a roughly 10 minute presentation. Consider the following suggestions for the direction your presentations may take: 1) Provide additional comments supporting an important claim from the week’s course materials. 2) Provide a *counterargument* to an important claim from the week’s course materials. 3) Provide either modern or historical context to understand some aspect of the week’s materials. These are merely broad suggestions, though, and as long as a presentation is directly related to the topic of the week and makes a coherent point, that will be fine. Please look over the syllabus and decide

which topics are of most interest to you. Each student will make 3 presentations throughout the semester, and students will sign up for dates in advance. Presentations will be factored into course participation grades.

Attendance

Attendance is required. You may miss three sessions. Each absence beyond that will result in a three percentage point deduction from your course grade. That does not mean three absences plus doctor's notes or whatever else seems reasonable to you. That means three total. At some point, you may be tempted to ask the following: "I have to miss class on ___ because _____. Will that count as one of my excused absences?" The answer is "yes." There is no need to ask. Attendance and participation are critical.

You are also expected to show up on time. I find it distracting and disrespectful when students walk in after class has begun. You may show up late once during the semester. Each time you show up late beyond that, one percentage point will be deducted from your course grade. The objective is not to punish you for being late. The objective is to get you to show up on time. If you have a class on the other side of campus just before our class, you need to speak with me about it at the beginning of the semester.

Classroom rules

- 1: Check your ideology at the door. The classroom is not the place to preach. It is a place to keep an open mind.
- 2: Be respectful. Show up on time, pay attention, participate, and **TURN OFF YOUR IPHONES/OTHER GIZMOS**. Laptops, however, are welcome, with the caveat that an open laptop may be commandeered by me at any time since its presence indicates an open-ended offer to look up anything I need looked up at any time. If you fall asleep in class, five percentage points will be deducted from your course grade. You don't get any free passes on this. Drinking heavily caffeinated beverages during class is perfectly acceptable. (I can't teach an early class without coffee). If you don't think you can stay awake, it is also acceptable to say you aren't feeling well, and ask to be excused. Doing so will not count against your permitted absences.

Texts include the following books

Buchanan, James and Gordon Tullock. The Calculus of Consent

Gelman, Andrew. Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State

Gilens, Martin. Affluence and Influence

Wright, John. Interest Groups and Congress

Additional readings will be available on-line. You may download them as pdf documents.

Schedule

1/12 INTRODUCTION

1/14-1/16 Money, utility and basic divide-the-pie interaction

1/19 NO CLASS: MLK DAY

1/21-1/23 Politics as the distribution of resources

Readings: Buchanan & Tullock, Chapters 1-7, 9, 10

1/26-1/30 Financial self-interest and public opinion

Readings: Beck, Rainey & Traut, "Disadvantage, Disaffection, and Race as Divergent Bases for Citizen Fiscal Policy Preferences" (Blackboard)

Chong, Citrin & Conley, "When Self-Interest Matters" (Blackboard)

Lau & Heldeman, "Self-interest, Symbolic Attitudes, and Support for Public Policy: A Multilevel Analysis" (Blackboard)

2/2-2/6 Wealth and voting

Readings: Gelman, complete text

2/9-2/13 Campaign finance law

Readings: *Buckley v. Valeo*, (again, you can skip the dissent) (Blackboard)

Citizens United v. FEC, majority opinion (you can skip the dissent) (Blackboard)

2/16-2/20 Campaign spending effects

Readings: Jacobson, "The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections" (Blackboard)

Ansolahehere & Gerber, “The Mismeasure of Campaign Spending: Evidence from the 1990 U.S. House Elections” (Blackboard)

Benoit & Marsh, “The Campaign Value of Incumbency: A New Solution to the Puzzle of Less Effective Incumbent Spending” (Blackboard)

Lott, “Does Additional Campaign Spending Really Hurt Incumbents?: The Theoretical Importance of Past Investments in Political Brand Name” (Blackboard)

2/23-2/27 Election forecasting and the state of the economy

Readings: Abramowitz, “Forecasting in a Polarized Era” (Blackboard)

Erikson & Wlezien, “The Objective and Subjective Economy and the Presidential Vote” (Blackboard)

Hibbs, “Obama’s Reelection Prospects under ‘Bread and Peace’ Voting in the 2012 US Presidential Election” (Blackboard)

Holbrook, “Incumbency, National Conditions, and the 2012 Presidential Election” (Blackboard)

Lewis-Beck & Tien, “Election Forecasting for Turbulent Times” (Blackboard)

Recap: Forecasting the 2012 Election (Blackboard)

3/2-3/6 Distributive politics in Congress

Readings: Selections from Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection

Selections from Fiorina, Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment

Stein & Bickers, “Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel” (Blackboard)

3/9-3/11 SPRING BREAK

3/16-3/20 Campaign contributions and policy effects

Readings: Wright, complete text

3/23-3/27 Lobbying effects

Readings: Baumgartner, Larsen-Price, Leech & Rutledge, “Congressional and Presidential Effects on the Demand for Lobbying” (Blackboard)

Buchanan & Tullock, Chapter 19

Hall & Deardorff, “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy” (Blackboard)

Richter, Samphantharak & Timmons, “Lobbying and Taxes” (Blackboard)

3/30-4/3 Budgetary brinksmanship

Readings: Selections from Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict

Groseclose & McCarty, “The Politics of Blame: Bargaining Before an Audience” (Blackboard)

Buchanan & Tullock, Chapter 8

Bai, “The Game Is Called Chicken” (Blackboard)

4/6-4/10 Policy responsiveness across time

Readings: Gilens, complete text

4/13 Ideology of economics

Readings: Selections from...

Selections from Van Dyke, Ideology and Political Choice

Krugman, “How Did Economists Get It So Wrong?” (Blackboard)

Cochrane, “How Did Paul Krugman Get It So Wrong?” (Blackboard)

4/15-4/17 NO CLASS- PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE

4/20-4/22 Continuation of Ideology of economics with presentations on 4/22

4/24, 4/27 Wrap-up