

POSC 319: Politics and Money

Spring, 2017

Professor Justin Buchler

Justin.Buchler@case.edu

9 Mather House

368-2646

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2 and by appointment

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%).

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 2/3, 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. Exceptions will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances. To be clear, you do not have three excused absences plus however many doctors' notes you can get. You have three excused absences total, so it would be best to save them for when you are ill. Please contact me as soon as possible if you have an extended bout of serious illness. 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 CELL PHONES/IPHONES/BLACKBERRIES/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.

Guidelines for all written assignments

Short papers due mid-semester:

Except in the case of hospitalization or similarly severe documentable crises, late papers will not be accepted. If you are dissatisfied with the level of work that you have ready by the deadline, you may hand in what you have, and conclude with the following line: "I can write a better paper than this." The paper you hand in must be at least recognizable as a draft that covers the basic requirements of the assignment. You then have 48 hours to submit an improved version. I will then assign a grade that includes half of the improvement. For example, suppose you have an exam in another class on the same day the paper is due. The exam in the other class is worth 30% of that course grade, and the paper is worth 20% of the grade in this class, so you decide to spend more time studying for the exam. As a result, you can only hand in a half-assed rough draft deserving of a C. You hand in that draft with the line, "I can write a better paper than this." Within 48 hours, you hand in an A-level paper once your exam is out of the way. I will record your grade as a B. Using this option requires handing in a recognizable rough draft on time, and obeying the 48 hour subsequent deadline. If you have nothing to hand in by the initial deadline, you may not submit a late paper, except as mentioned in extreme cases such as hospitalization.

Term papers, research papers or other projects due at the end of the semester:
Late work will not be accepted unless, as above, the reason is something on the order of hospitalization or other documentable crisis that suggests taking an “Incomplete” in the course.

Regarding computer problems, follow this simple trick: every time you take a break (I do so about once per hour when in heavy writing mode), email a current copy of your assignment to yourself. If you send an email from your Case account to your Case account, the email won't show up in your inbox, but will be saved as a sent message. Personally, I email documents from my Case account to an old Yahoo account, thus saving two extra copies of the document every time I take a break. I cannot lose more than an hour's worth of work, and no computer problem short of an EMP will ever cause me to miss a deadline. You can do the same, and it is your responsibility to do so.

All assignments must be printed out and stapled. There must be a cover page, and while your name should appear on the cover page, it should not appear on any other page. This will facilitate blind grading. Any assignment that does not meet these guidelines will not be accepted. If you are worried about the consequences a last minute printer glitch at the computer lab, or an inability to find a stapler at the last minute etc., then my advice is simple. Don't wait until the last minute.

All academic honesty requirements apply. Any act of plagiarism or other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the academic integrity board. You must provide proper attribution any time you draw on anyone else's work, and that includes both written work and presentations. Please mimic the citation style in the academic journal articles on the syllabus.

Pursuant that, for all written work, you must email me a .rtf electronic version of your paper to be uploaded to a plagiarism-checker. I am sorry, and I wish I didn't have to do this, but, well...

Unless otherwise stated, though, you may not cite any URL. The internet is a cesspool of nonsensical garbage written by cranks and charlatans still living in their parents' basements. You may reference articles by scholars in peer-reviewed journals, books published by peer-reviewed university presses and respected trade presses, and newspaper/magazine articles from outlets that include a print addition and follow standard fact-checking procedures. If you find a newspaper article, journal article, etc. on the internet, cite the publication itself, not a URL. As a simple rule, if the only thing you *could* cite is a URL, you may not use it as a source. See previous comment about cranks and charlatans in their parents' basements. I know which internet sources are useful, and which aren't. You don't, so don't just Google shit and hope to find something you can cite. Do proper research.

Every URL or internet-only citation in every paper will be subject to a grade penalty as follows: the use of an internet-only citation on the first assignment will result in a 1/3 of a letter grade penalty. The second assignment using prohibited sources will be subject to a 2/3 of a letter grade penalty, and so on.

Google is not a research tool, so stop treating it as such.

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

1/18 INTRODUCTION

1/20-1/25 Money, utility and basic divide-the-pie interaction

1/27 NO CLASS (probably)

1/30-2/3 Politics as the distribution of resources

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

2/6-2/10 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)

2/13-2/17 Wealth and voting

Readings: Gelman, complete text

2/20-2/24 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)

2/27-3/3 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)

3/6-3/10 Election forecasting and the state of the economy

Readings: Forecasting the 2016 election, from October, 2016 issue of *PS*

3/13-3/17 SPRING BREAK

3/20-3/24 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)

3/27-3/31 Campaign contributions and policy effects

Readings: Wright, complete text

- 4/3 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)
- 4/5-4/7 NO CLASS— PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE
- 4/10-4/14 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)
- 4/17-4/21 Policy responsiveness across time
- Readings: Gilens, complete text
- 4/24-4/28 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)

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Concluding comments