

Pol 1: Midterm Review Exam Sheet

Summer Session 1

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

This midterm exam review sheet is designed to provide a framework and road map for effective studying. The exam format will be multiple choice, short answer, an analytical question, and essay question. The analytical question will ask you to interpret a graph or table and discuss the implications of the data you analyzed. Thus, it is important to understand and accurately interpret the empirical evidence and how this evidence relates to course concepts. This can be found in the slide sets.

General comment: Think critically as to how each of the unit topics relate to one another and to the main conceptual theory discussed in the course. Pay close attention to the “big picture” general questions articulated under each section header of the syllabus.

1 Madison’s Republican: Foundation of American Democracy

Meeting 1: “First-Attempts” at American Democracy

- Collective Action problems
- Principal-Agent Model of Delegation
- Coordination Problems (i.e. prisoner’s dilemma) & Free-Riding
- Role of institutions in mitigating collective action problem (think with respect to agent selection & preventing agency loss)
- Transaction versus conformity costs (generally, i.e. what are they?)
- Collective action & the “first attempt” at American government: *Articles of Confederation*

Meeting 2: The Problem of Human Nature: Self-Interest, Factions, & Collective Action

- Madison’s Theory of Human Nature (particularly slide #5): Human Nature → Faction → Conflict
- Madison’s conception of the public good
- Madison’s solution of controlling the “*effects*” rather than the *causes* of human nature
- Understanding the critical mechanism of elections with respect to ensuring “men who possess the most attractive merit & the most diffusive & established characters” (Madison, Federalist 10)

Meeting 3: Madison’s Theory: Self-Interest & Ambition as the Solution

- Understanding of the fundamental of human nature & how this relates to the rejection of “great statesmen” as reliable agents of faction
- How Madison proposes to control the *effects* of faction by involving *spirit of party* & *faction* in the constitutional design articulated in Federalist 51
- How American constitutional government insures “controlling of the effects of faction” in design (the table presented in slideset 3 is particularly useful here, as well as the formalization of Madison’s Theory)
- Mechanisms of control by department
- Implications of the design on *policy change* & *transaction costs*
- The explicit trade-off in institutional design between *transaction costs* and *conformity costs*

2 Citizen Political Behavior: Functioning as Critical Principals

Meeting 4: Variation in Citizen Participation: Resources & Free-Riding Incentive

- Why contemporary political scientists have a problem with Madison’s theoretical assumption in his conceptualization of human nature
- Defining political participation both as a contemporary concept in political science (i.e. how we measure it) and how Madison defines it
- Defining *participation costs* and how this varies over *forms* of participation
- Information versus intrinsic costs of participation
- Cite evidence *against* Madison’s assumption of human nature
- Understanding Riker & Ordeshok’s Model of Vote Choice and what the model predicts with respect to participating in politics
- *Paradox of Voting*
- Understand Schudson’s argument on why Americans know relatively little about politics in his article *America’s Ignorant Voters*.
- How citizens overcome information costs & potential resource bias
- Implications of costs to participation for Madison’s theory (how he defines it)
- Evidence (or lack thereof) for bias in representation

Meeting 5: Developing Political Preferences: Citizen Self-Interest

- Citizen incentive to rationally abstain & free-ride from the political process (also understand the public good in this context)
- How we respecified Riker & Ordeshok's Model (i.e. what *motivates* citizens to participate in politics in spite of the rational incentive of citizen abstention from politics)
- Understand the causal model of political participation (personal resources, self-interest/preferences, mobilization efforts) and how these are conceptualized in Riker & Ordeshok's Model
- How voters engage in *Pocket Book Voting* and how this is a *valence model*. Why is *Pocket Book Voting* a heuristic for voters?
- Who gets blamed and reward for valence evaluations of the economy?
- What is the *Democratic dilemma* & which citizens are more "fully informed?" Implications of the dilemma for Madison's theory
- Understand **Zaller's Model** how this relates to the retention of political information and development of citizen preferences? (Zaller's assumption of citizen capacity to politics and his axioms help here)

Meeting 6: Overcoming Limited Information: How Citizens use Short-Cuts to Act

- Implications of **Zaller's Model** for development of citizen self-interest and the *democratic dilemma*
- Understand each heuristic and the consequence of each heuristic on responsiveness of agents in Madison's framework
- What does it mean to possess a *political ideology*? Is there *variation* in citizen capacity to develop one? (i.e. does developing an ideology vary across citizen demographics)
- Understand the spatial model in detail: what does it assume and what does it predict? How do you know if the model works as a heuristic? Variation in model predictions over electoral contexts? Implications of the model on representation?
- Understand why the spatial model formalizes Madison's model of representation with respect to citizen decisions in elections. Why would two candidates converge to the **median voter position**?
- Why does the utility of the spatial model, with respect to predicting citizen vote-choice, increase as the parties become more ideologically polarized (distinct from one another)? Is there evidence that even relatively low sophisticated voters can still vote in accordance with the spatial model?
- Understand the Michigan Model (Partisan) model in detail: what variables shape partisan preference? What does partisanship help predict as an independent variable? Evidence of the partisan model?

- Potential limitations of the partisan model as a heuristic for voting & other considerations
- Individual candidate valence considerations: what do we mean by this? Is there evidence that voters *care* about candidate valence and that candidate differences in valence influence voting outcomes?
- Potential limitations of the valence model, both respect to candidate valence & “pocket book voting”.

Meeting 7: Electoral Dynamics: The Role of Campaign Context in Voting Choice

- Be able to cite evidence articulating the decline in competition in U.S. legislative elections
- Be familiar with Abramowitz et al.’s three hypotheses, how they relate to campaign context, and whether they find support for them
- *Incumbency Advantage* & its effect on elections over time
- *Quality candidates* & why they are desirable for parties. Why are they strategic political actors? In what campaign context should we expect them to emerge in?
- *Redistricting* and its effect (or lack thereof) as a theoretical explanation for decline in electoral competition
- Cite evidence of the ascension of partisanship as a predictor of electoral outcomes
- Why campaign spending is not a salient predictor of electoral outcomes in American elections (think about its *dynamic nature*), be sure to be able to cite evidence
- Nationalization of congressional elections, particularly in midterm elections, and how this relates to the concept of collective responsibility
- How Madison would view nationalization of elections, increased partisan nature of elections, and the notion of collective responsibility

Meeting 8: An Alternative to the Madisonian Model of Representation: Pluralism & By-Product Representation through Interest Groups

Meeting 9: Does Pluralism Provide Equitable Representation? Critiques of the By-Product Model