

POSC 182: Politics and Economic Policy

University of California, Riverside

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Summer Session A, 2015

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Office Hours: M/W, 12 - 2 PM

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Class Hours: M/W, 02:10 - 05:00 PM

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Course Description

This course focuses on the intersection between politics, the economy, and policy. Individually, these three areas of study can and often do stand on their own across disciplines (and in many cases, each area of study is the focus of its own courses). In this course we will cross the three. In the case of politics, we will primarily focus on the American political system, with two case studies of other nations to better inform our understanding of the American case. In the case of the economy, we will be exploring the recent financial crisis and the circumstances surrounding it. In the case of policy, we will focus on the different policies passed within the United States relating to both politics and the economy, which ultimately led to the financial crisis.

The course places special emphasis on understanding how economic theories influence economic policies and how the economy and the government interact. While this may seem a like a great endeavor, this course is meant to be accessible to students without backgrounds in any of the areas mentioned above. While we will focus considerably on politics, economics, and in particular economic policy, students need not have a background in politics, public policy, or economics. The course will explore the following:

- How does politics affect the economy?
- How does politics affect policymaking?
- How does the economy affect politics?
- How does the economy affect policymaking?
- What are the administrative processes of economic policymaking?

- How does economic theory shape economic policy?
- How does economic theory shape economic outcomes?
- Why does the prevailing economic theory change over time?
- What are the nature and causes of, as well as remedies for, the financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession?

Course Objectives

The objectives for the course are fivefold:

1. To gain a mastery of theoretical approaches to American economic policy
2. To better understand and evaluate the political forces that affect the American economic system
3. To gain an ability to assess, with a critical eye, current practices in both politics and economics
4. To understand the impact of the financial crisis and ensuing recession on American economic policy
5. To improve the student's ability to present cogent analytical arguments, both in writing and in oral discussion.

To achieve all this, we will focus on three areas of literature: the varieties of capitalism, game theory, and public policy. By exploring varieties of capitalism and extending the idea of liberal market economies as the foundation for study, we can move onto the Financial Crisis through a comparison of other crises in American history, and in some cases their impact internationally. We can study these events from a domestic perspective, for the United States is not surprisingly the locus point of several crises; and from a global perspective, for the crises extended outward to several countries. From here, we can examine specific political and economic policies before, during, and after the most recent crisis. In doing this, students will achieve a thorough understanding of why models of market capitalism are important, but more importantly how they are important.

Prerequisites

Upper-division standing or consent of instructor.

Course Structure

Class Structure

As this is a 4-unit course, grading is facilitated through three exams (two midterms and a final), a term paper, lecture attendance, and lecture quizzes.

Assignments

The weights associated with each of the course assignments are as follows:

- Lecture Attendance (5%)
- Lecture Quizzes (5%)
- Discussion Section (20%)
- Midterm 1 (Assigned Week 1, Due Week 2: 10%)
- Midterm 2 (Assigned Week 2, Due Week 3: 20%)
- Term Paper (15%)
- Final Paper (Assigned Week 3, Due Week 5: 25%)

Lecture Attendance and Lecture Discussions

Lecture Attendance will be taken randomly once per week. As there are five (5) weeks during the Summer, this amounts to 1% per week.

During three specific lectures outlined in the course schedule, students will be presented with questions relating to the material that week. Students will need to answer these questions in groups and be asked to present their responses in class. These questions are open-book and require critical thinking rather than definitional knowledge. In this way, if you are following along with the lectures and supplemental readings, it is suggested you read and review *before* the discussion.

Term Paper

Information on the term paper will be distributed at the start of Week 1.

Grading Policy

The typical University of California, Riverside grading scale will be used. I reserve the right to curve the scale dependent on overall class grades at the end of the quarter (not before it). Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade.

The grade grading scale is as follows:

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| A+ = 100% | B+ = 87 - 89.99% | C+ = 77 - 79.99% | D+ = 67 - 69.99% |
| A = 94 - 99.99% | B = 84 - 86.99% | C = 74 - 76.99% | D = 64 - 66.99% |
| A- = 90 - 93.99% | B- = 80 - 83.99% | C- = 70 - 73.99% | D- = 60 - 63.99% |

Grades 59.99% and lower will receive an F.

Textbooks

There is one (1) required textbook for this course, and two (2) recommended textbooks:

Required:

- Hall, Peter A., and David Soskice. 2001. *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Oxford University Press.
 - This reading will be referred to as "VoC" in the Course Schedule.

Recommended:

- Kraft, Michael E., and Scott R. Furlong. 2014. *Public Policy; Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives* (5th Edition). CQ Press.
 - This reading will be referred to as "PPPAA" in the Course Schedule.
- Dutta, Prajit K. 1999. *Strategies and Games: Theory and Practice*. The MIT Press.
 - This reading will be referred to as "SGT" in the Course Schedule.

While the notes are comprehensive due to the intensive nature of Summer session courses, you will be held responsible for the material assigned from the book. See the **Weekly Schedule** section of the syllabus for chapter assignments related to each lecture.

Please note: Any supplemental readings will be posted on iLearn under Course Materials at least one week prior to use in class.

Course Policies

During Lecture

Mobile devices and electronic recording devices are allowed during lecture. However, while you are allowed to use electronic devices during lecture, this is not *carte blanche* to do whatever you wish during lecture on your mobile devices. Please refrain from using mobile devices for anything but activities related to the course.

Eating and drinking are allowed in lecture but please refrain from it affecting the course. Be courteous of others.

Attendance Policy

As this is a summer course, we are moving through material twice as fast as we would otherwise. Moreover, the material is complex and may become overwhelming if you do not attend lecture. While I cannot force you to attend lecture, I suggest you attend as many lectures as you can. If there is an issue preventing you from attending, do come see me.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments will be deducted one (1) whole letter grade for every twelve (12) hours it is late, up to a maximum of forty-eight (48) hours. After forty-eight (48) hours, the student will receive a grade of zero (0) for the assignment.

Emergencies and Exceptional Circumstances

Should an emergency arise, a student must contact the Instructor as soon as possible, and preferably before a course session. Any emergencies must be accompanied by evidence (i.e., note from a Doctor as evidence of having been in a hospital). Routine checkups are not considered medical emergencies and should thus be discussed with the Instructor as soon as possible *before* they occur. Any accidents must be accompanied by photographic evidence by email. Failure to contact the Instructor in a timely manner will result in a judgment call on the Instructor's part and is completely dependent on the gravity of the situation. In all cases, the Instructor's decision on the matter is final.

Challenging a Grade

Students who wish to challenge a grade are required to submit a written grievance, which includes: the reasons for their dissatisfaction, the grade received, and what grade they believe is merited. Reasons why the requested grade is merited should be supported by evidence from the assignment in question to justify this appeal. The written grievance should be submitted at least two business days before meeting with the Instructor to discuss the assignment. If you choose to appeal your grade, the Instructor reserves the right to issue a grade that is lower than the existing grade. This second, post-appeal decision is final. *The deadline to challenge and possibly change a grade is within forty-eight (48) hours after the posting of the grade on iLearn.*

Academic Integrity and Honesty

UCR has a detailed and strict academic dishonesty policy. Please review [Section 6 of the Academic Senate Bylaws](#). There is zero tolerance for any type of academic dishonesty (note: using your own past work is plagiarism if it is not cited appropriately). **If you violate this policy, you will receive an "F" in the course and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.**

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities seeking accommodation services should contact the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) as soon as possible for accommodations. They are located at 125 Costo Hall and can be reached at (951) 827-3861. Accommodations take time and should be done well in advance. We cannot accommodate you last minute so it necessary you seek accommodations well in advance. For this reason, you should contact the SDRC within the first week of the course if you do need accommodations.

Respect for Others

Discriminatory/hateful/pejorative and/or demeaning language will not be tolerated. All participants must feel comfortable asking questions and speaking, as voicing one's ideas is essential to the learning experience. Please be respectful of all questions, ideas and views. You will be asked to leave if you disrespect anyone and/or exhibit any form of the above, and you will automatically receive a zero (0) for any graded assignments due that day. This zero (0) grade cannot be made up under any circumstances.

DISCLAIMER: This Course Contains Mature Content

Like most university-level courses, this course deals with material that may be controversial and sensitive for some people. Often, these topics may invoke strong responses based on political affiliation, religious beliefs, personal identity, and experiences. While we will need to engage with such details at times, they will not be the focus of our inquiry. You should nevertheless be prepared to encounter these references. If you have any concerns about any of the material we will be covering in this course at any time, please see do not hesitate to come see me.

Weekly Schedule

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. As this is a Summer course, every course session is equivalent to approximately one (1) week's worth of material during the regular quarter session.

Week 01, 06/22 - 06/26:

Monday, June 22

- Agenda:
 - Introduction
 - Areas of Study
 - Game Theory
- Assignments:
 - **Term Paper Assigned**

Wednesday, June 24

- Agenda:
 - Case Study: U.S., Theoretical Foundations
 - LMEs and CMEs

Readings For the Week:

- Required:
 - VOC: Introduction
- Recommended:
 - PPPAA: Introduction, Ch. 1
 - SGT: Ch. 1, Ch. 2, Ch. 3

Week 02, 06/29 - 07/03:

Monday, June 29

- Agenda:
 - LME and CME Review

Wednesday, July 1

- Agenda:
 - The Financial Crisis
- Assignments:
 - **Midterm Exam 1**

Readings For the Week:

- Required:
 - VOC: Ch. 3
- Recommended:
 - PPPAA: Ch. 2, Ch. 3, Ch. 7
 - SGT: Ch. 4, Ch. 5

Week 03, 07/06 - 07/10:

Monday, July 6

- Agenda:
 - Our Fault? Corporations and Case Studies 1

Wednesday, July 8

- Agenda:
 - Our Fault? Corporations and Case Studies 2

Readings For the Week:

- Required:
 - VOC: Ch. 7, Ch. 8
- Recommended:
 - PPPAA: Ch. 7
 - SGT: Ch. 6, Ch. 7

Week 04, 07/13 - 07/17:

Monday, July 13

- Agenda:
 - Policy Problems: Institutions 1
- Assignments:
 - **Midterm Exam 2**

Wednesday, July 15

- Agenda:
 - Policy Problems: Institutions 2

Friday, July 17

- Assignments:
 - **Final Paper Due (Online via iLearn)**

Readings For the Week:

- Required:
 - VOC: Ch. 2, Ch. 5, Ch. 10
- Recommended:
 - PPPAA: Ch. 9, Ch. 10, Ch. 11
 - SGT: Ch. 8, Ch. 9

Week 05, 07/20 - 07/24:

Monday, July 20

- Agenda:
 - Policy Problems: After the Crisis

Wednesday, July 22

- Agenda:
 - The Problem of Regulation and Conclusion
 - Wrap-Up
 - Concluding Thoughts

Friday, July 24

- Assignments:
 - **Final Exam (In-Class)**

Readings For the Week:

- Required:
 - VOC: Ch. 14
- Recommended:
 - PPPAA: Ch. 13
 - SGT: Ch. 10, Ch. 11