

# PS 311 American Political Process. Fall 2005

## Objective

In this class, you will examine how politics transforms individual desires into government actions. In the process, you will learn how government makes choices when different people want different things. We begin by building skills relevant to political debate. We then use these skills to examine a set of controversial issues. The course culminates with students preparing written and oral defenses of chosen policies.

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## Primary Texts

- Kenneth A. Shepsle and Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- J. Bruce Lindeman. 1992. *Microeconomics*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc. (a.k.a., Study Keys in Microeconomics).
- George McKenna and Stanley Feingold. 2005. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues*. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.
- Reader - available during the first week of class.

## Recommended Text (all of this material also appears in the reader).

- Elisabeth R. Gerber, Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 2001. *Stealing the Initiative: How State Government Responds to Direct Democracy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Pages 1-26, 34-47.
- Mancur Olson. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pages 1-65.
- Bruce Waller. 2001. *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Chapters 2-3.

Date	Topic	Readings
September 7	Introduction  The Logic of Political Debate: Deductively valid, inductive, or logically inconsistent?	Shepsle and Bonchek. 1997. Chapter 1.  B.N. Waller. 2001. <i>Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict</i> . Prentice-Hall. Chapters 2-3. (from reader).
September 14	The Economics of Policy Analysis.	J. Bruce Lindeman. 1992. <i>Microeconomics</i> .

September 21	The Strategy of Policy Making	Shepsle and Bonchek: Chapter 2, 3, 4(p. 49-71), 5(p. 115-136), 6 (p. 137-151, 155-160). 9 (p. 220 - 250).
September 28	Collective Action and Implementation	Olson. Pages 1-22, 33-52 (from reader). Gerber, et. al., 1-7, 15-26 (from reader)
<b>October 5</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>  <b>Hand in Position Paper prospectus. 1 pg.</b>  Hand in Debate Preferences	
October 12	Practice Debate: Is Capital Punishment Justified?  Practice Debate: Do We Need Tougher Gun Control Laws?	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 7 & 8.
October 19	Practice Debate: Does Affirmative Action Advance the Cause of Racial Equality?  Practice Debate: Should Hate Speech Be Punished?	Taking Sides, Chapters 9 & 12
October 26	Practice Debate: Do Political Campaigns Promote Good Government?  Practice Debate: Is the Filibuster of Judicial Nominees Justifiable?  Meet with your debate team (final ½ hr).	Taking Sides, Chapters 2 & 6
November 2	Practice Debate: Is America Becoming More Unequal?  Practice Debate: Is There an Emerging Democratic Majority?  <b>1st draft of Position Paper due (10-15 pg)</b>	Taking Sides, Chapters 16 & 3
November 9	Practice Debate: Does the Patriot Act Abridge Essential Freedom?	Taking Sides, Chapters 17 & 14

	Practice Debate: Should Abortion be Restricted?  Meet with your debate team (final ½ hr)	
November 16	Meet with your Debate Teams.	
November 30	Debate I: Should there be a Constitutional Amendment Banning Gay Marriage?  Debate II: Are Tax Cuts Good for America?  Debate III: Should America Restrict Immigration?	Taking Sides, Chapters 13, 15 and 18
December 7	Debate IV: Is “Middle Eastern” Profiling Ever Justified?  Debate V: Was the Invasion of Iraq Justified?  Debate VI: Must America Exercise World Leadership?	Taking Sides, Chapter 11, 20, 21

#### HOW YOUR GRADE IS DETERMINED

Component	% of Grade
Midterm	10
Participation in 10 Practice Debates	50, 5 percent for each debate (2% for attending, up to 3% more for making an original contribution).
Debate – Each team receives a grade	20
First Draft of Position Paper	5
Final Draft of Position Paper (15-20pp)	15. Due Tuesday, 12/13 at noon.

#### Debate Rules

Each team will have 4-6 members.

You can choose a topic from the list. I will choose which side you are on.

*Discovery procedure.*

- Two copies of all evidence that will be presented in the debate is due to the professor and to the opposing team at the beginning of class one week before the debate date.
- Evidence submitted after that time is inadmissible.
- The evidence submitted must be legible and properly cited.
- For any debate, a team may submit no more than 50 single sided pages of evidence.

*Debate Format: Total time about 55 minutes.*

- Pro-Team Opening Statement – 2 minutes
- Anti-Team Opening Statement - 2 minutes
- Question and Answer - Part I - 24 minutes. In this round, the teams ask each other questions supplied in the discovery packet. Pro-team asks the first question. Each team will ask three questions each.
  - The total time for each question is 4 minutes. Answer - 2 minutes. Response - 1 minute. Reply – 30 seconds.
- Open-Ended - Part II - 10 minutes. In this round, the teams ask each other questions not supplied in the discovery packet. Anti-team asks the first question. Each team will ask one question each.
  - The total time for each question is 5 minutes. Answer - 2 minutes. Response - 1 minute. Reply – 30 seconds.
- Questions from the Audience – 10 minutes. I will randomly select student names from a list. The student must direct the question to the team I name and ask a question that is relevant to the debate. If you are not in class when your name is called, your team loses a point.
- Pro-team Closing Statement - 1 minute
- Anti-team Closing Statement - 1 minute

### **Paper Requirements (by Laura Evans and Arthur Lupia)**

Requirement 1. *Identify a problem.*

Be attentive to the way you define the problem at hand. That definition sets up the rest of the paper and shapes the reader's perceptions of appropriate remedies.

Requirement 2. *Suggest a defensible alternative.*

Think carefully about the links you've drawn between problems and your proposals. Does your proposal fix the major components of the problem? If not, why? Are there easier, cheaper, or simpler means to address the problem as it's been described? Where there are multiple consequences of a problem, you'll need to make an argument about which are most important to fix, and why.

Requirement 3. *Defend your argument.*

Keep in mind that there's a difference between expressing an opinion and defending an argument. Your task here is to persuade your audience, based on available evidence, of the merits of a particular proposal. What you want to avoid: just telling the reader what you believe and thinking that's enough, or presenting a conclusion without explaining to the reader the rationale and evidence that leads to that conclusion.

Requirement 4. *Eliminate straw men. Give adequate attention and respect to opposing arguments.*

When discussing arguments against the policy for which you're advocating, take that task quite seriously. We expect you to identify the most compelling alternative to your proposal, and to argue persuasively about the strengths of that proposal. You should also explain why your proposal is preferable, of course, but don't present alternatives that are just a strawman. Don't give short shrift to the side with which you disagree.

*Requirement 5. Provide reasonable evidence.*

You are proposing an alternative that the decision makers in question have not done before or are not doing now. As a result, it is impossible to obtain direct evidence on how your proposal and other alternatives will work. The persuasiveness of your evidence, therefore, will depend on its credibility and on its relevance to your case. Evidence is credible if it is based on assumptions that your audience is likely to find reasonable. Evidence is relevant if your audience finds the source of the evidence and your case sufficiently analogous.

*Requirement 6. Provide complete references to all sources of evidence.*

Whenever you refer to factual information or to an author's argument, you must provide an attribution. This applies when you quote someone or when you paraphrase another's ideas or findings. Please include a parenthetical phrase in the text that includes the author's last name and the date of publication. If you're referring to a quote or to information or ideas from particular page(s), include the page number(s) to which you are referring. Example : (Lupia 2000, 22). In addition to providing a parenthetical citation in the text, you should include full bibliographic information in a list of references at the end of the paper. Check with a style manual on how to structure the bibliography.

*Requirement 7. Your paper can be up to 20 pages.*

Don't try funny stuff to get within those limits—papers should be double spaced, in 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Plagiarism is also a very bad idea. We now have multiple ways to find passages from published materials. A paper that includes plagiarized materials of any kind will earn a grade of 0.

**Requirement 8.** To the greatest possible extent, your paper should resemble a report that a person could give a legislator or policymaker to influence their views on the consequences of an upcoming decision.

### **More Information About the Paper**

Papers will be graded on both content— how you develop and defend your arguments— and presentation. Papers should include a clear introduction, thesis statement, and conclusion. Your introductory paragraph should provide an overview of the key points you're making in the paper. Most importantly, your intro should contain a thesis statement that summarizes the argument you're making in the paper.

Attention to writing style is important— keep an eye out for correct spelling and grammar, and for well-organized paragraphs. Do at least one round of editing where you go over your spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Also, pay special attention to the overall structure of your paper. Do you move clearly and logically from one idea to the next? Are the points you're covering really critical to your overall argument?

Finally, in arranging paper format, you are expected to consult a standard style manual. Our favorite: Strunk & White's Elements of Style.

We strongly recommend that you take advantage of the assistance available at the Sweetland Writing Center. The Center is located at 1139 Angell Hall. For further information on the services provided, please consult the Center's web page: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/>

### **More Information About Course Procedures**

- PS 111 is a prerequisite. There are no exceptions.
- The use of cell phones and beepers or any other device that disrupts a lecture is strictly prohibited. If an object in your possession interrupts a class session, you will be asked to leave for the remainder of that session.
- It is your responsibility to attend all classes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to acquire the materials from lecture. I will not use office hours or time outside of class to repeat lecture materials for those who did not attend.
- A large part of your grade comes from class participation and participation in debates. This, in turn, involves public speaking. If you are reticent to speak publicly, do not take this class.
- I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating. Cheating on an exam or engaging in plagiarism with respect to your paper will result in you failing not only the assignment, but also the course.
- Appeals about exam grades must be type-written, double spaced, and no more than one page long. It must be submitted to your GSI. His/her decision is final.
- There are no appeals on paper or debate grades.
- Part of your grade is based on participation in seven practice debates. To get the highest participation grade, you should attend all classes, make contributions that are not merely restatements of the reading, and say nothing that suggests you have not done the reading. I am interested in quality of expression and not quantity. In addition, arguments count more than opinions.
- Position Paper. Up to 20 pages on any approved policy topic. Your paper will describe a policy problem, propose a remedy, provide a strong defense of why the policy you advocate can remedy the problem you identify. It must also anticipate at least one credible, non-trivial counterargument and show why your argument is sustainable against it. You must cite all sources of information and hand in a complete bibliography. Papers that fail to have these attributes will be penalized one letter grade. You should provide evidence for any original claims and you must show how your conclusion follows from clearly-stated premises.
- I do not accept late papers. Late drafts cost one letter grade per occurrence.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. Have fun with this opportunity.