

PS 389 Political Strategy and Debate, Fall 2013 (revised 9/13/13)

Objective

In this class, we will examine how politics transforms individual desires into government actions. In the process, we will use various kinds of data and evidence to clarify how government makes choices when people have diverse preferences. As the class proceeds, we will move from discussing how other people make these choices to your own actions. My goal is to help you better understand how many political debates are waged and to empower you to engage in such activities more effectively.

Preparation is a point of emphasis in this class. To obtain the type of credibility, legitimacy, and leverage that is essential in building or maintaining political coalitions, you will need special knowledge about relevant topics and the various constituencies with which you will engage. In the time that we have together, I will introduce you to several forms of knowledge (logical argument, economic reasoning, decision strategies, and persuasive techniques) that you may find useful in many decision contexts. In the middle weeks of the course, I will give you opportunities to use these and other skills to develop and evaluate strategies for making increasingly effective arguments with respect to set of controversial issues. In lieu of a final exam, you will write a report and participate in a series of debates that will allow you to experience opportunities and challenges that are present in many decision contexts. Preparation will be your key to success in all of these ventures. I look forward to working with you.

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Primary Texts

There are four required texts. I have chosen books that you may find useful outside of class as well as within class. All other material is available on C-Tools.

- Greg Ip. 2013. *The Little Book of Economics: How the Economy Works in the Real World*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- J. Bruce Lindeman. 1992. *Microeconomics*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc. (a.k.a., Study Keys in Microeconomics).
- George McKenna and Stanley Feingold. 2012. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues*. 18th Edition. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.
- Kenneth C. Williams. 2012. *Introduction to Game Theory: A Behavioral Approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Recommended Texts (all of this material also appears on C-Tools).

- 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.

- Frank Luntz. 2007. *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say It's What People Hear*. New York: Hyperion.
- Arthur Lupia. 2013. "Communicating Science in Politicized Environments." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 110: 14048-14054.
- Mancur Olson. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pages 1-22, 33-65.
- Bruce Waller. 2001. *Critical Thinking: Consider the Verdict*. 4th Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Chapters 2-3.

Date	Topic	Readings
September 4 & 9	Introduction & The Logic of Political Debate.	Lupia, "Public Value" Waller, Chapters 2-3.
September 11 16 & 18	Economics Primer	Lindemann & Ip books.
September 23	Practice Debate: Is Congress a Dysfunctional Institution? Practice Debate: Do Corporations Have the Same Free Speech Rights as Persons? Hand in Position Paper prospectus. 1 pg.	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 7 & 17
September 25, 30 & Oct 2	Strategic Behavior Primer	Williams. Chapters 5, 7-9, and as much of Chapters 1, 3, and 4 as you need to understand Chs 5 and 7-9.
Oct 7	Practice Debate: Should American Adopt Public Financing of Political Campaigns? Practice Debate: Should the President be Allowed "Executive Privilege?"	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 4 & 9
October 9, 16, 21	Persuasion Primer	Lupia "Necessary Conditions for Persuasion" Luntz "Words that Work"
October 23	Practice Debate: Should Same-Sex Marriage be a	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 15 & 21

	<p>Constitutional Right?</p> <p>Practice Debate: Is Warrantless Wiretapping Ever Justified to Protect National Security?</p>	
October 28	Collective Action and Implementation	Olson. Pages 1-22, 33-65. Gerber, et. al., 1-7, 15-26, 34-37
October 30	Midterm Exam, Hand in Debate Preferences	
Nov 4	<p>Practice Debate: Should the Courts Seek the “Original Meaning” of the Constitution?</p> <p>Practice Debate: Does the President Have Universal War Powers?</p>	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 5 & 6
Nov 6	<p>Practice Debate: Does Affirmative Action Advance Racial Equality?</p> <p>Practice Debate: Does the Tea Party Represent a Revival of America’s Revolutionary Ideals?</p>	<i>Taking Sides</i> . Chapters 2 & 10
Nov 6	1st draft of Position Paper due (10-15 pg)	
Nov 11	<p>Practice Debate: Should Abortion be Restricted?</p> <p>Practice Debate: Should There be a “Wall of Separation” Between Church and State?</p>	<i>Taking Sides</i> , Chapter 11 & 16
Nov 13	<p>Practice Debate: Is America Becoming More Unequal?</p> <p>Practice Debate: Is Bigger</p>	<i>Taking Sides</i> : Chapter 3 & 14

	Government Better Government? Meet with your debate team (final ½ hr)	
Nov 18, 20, 25	Each of you will participate in a debate on one of the following three topics. Debate I: Is the Welfare State Obsolete? Debate II: Are Americans Overtaxed? Debate III: May Congress Require People to Buy Health Insurance?	Taking Sides, Chapters 8, 12, and 13.
Dec 2	Meet with Debate Teams	
Dec 4, 9 & 11	Each of you will participate in a debate on one of the following three topics. Debate IV: Is Indefinite Detention of Suspected Terrorists Justified? Debate V: Do We Need to Curb Global Warming? Debate VI: Should Americans Believe in a Unique American Mission?	Taking Sides, Chapter 1, 19 and 20.

HOW YOUR GRADE IS DETERMINED

Component	% of Grade
Midterm	15
Participation in 7 Practice Debate Days	35, 5 percent for each debate day. Each day, there are two debates. (1% for attending, up to 3% more for making an original contribution to your debate, 1% for making a valuable contribution to the debate in which you are not participating).
Debate I-III – Each team receives a grade	10

Debate II-IV – Each team receives a grade	15
Grades of Other Debates	5, 1 percent for each review submitted plus a one-point bonus for submitting five high quality reviews.
First Draft of Position Paper	5
Final Draft of Position Paper (15-20pp)	15. Due Friday, 12/13 at noon.

Debate Rules

Each team will have 8-9 members.

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

Debate teams will work together to develop debate presentations and strategies. The group will receive a collective grade for their team's performance. Any materials you present must be completely original or the source must be clearly indicated.

Discovery procedure.

- Two copies of all evidence that will be presented in the debate are due to the professor and to the opposing team at the beginning of class five days before the debate date. The evidence must be submitted electronically.
- 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. All text must be 10-point font equivalent or greater.
- Teams must attach to the front page of the discovery packet three questions that they want the other team to answer. Questions can be no longer than 25 words in length.

Debate Format: Total time about 60 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, each team asks the other one question 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 – 18 minutes. I will randomly select student names from a list. The student must ask a question that is relevant to the debate. If you are not in class when your name is called or do not have a question prepared, you receive no credit for that day.
 - Each team will receive two to three questions each.
 - Teams will have one minute to develop an answer.
 - Answer - 2 minutes. Response - 1 minute. Reply – 30 seconds.

- Teams will have three minutes to coordinate a closing statement.
- Pro-team Closing Statement - 1 minute
- Anti-team Closing Statement - 1 minute

Your team's grade will depend primarily on the extent to which the class judges your strategy to be effective. The winning team in each debate gets the maximum number of points. The losing team's grade depends on its performance relative to the winning team. Performance is measured through answers to questionnaires that student complete and points that I give for argument quality. Questionnaire answers are standardized with respect to students' pre- and post- comment opinions.

Paper Requirements

A focal point in this class is your ability to write a paper that could inform a policymaker's decisions. The paper can be no less than 1500 words and no more than 5000 words (all inclusive) on any approved policy topic.

- I do not accept late papers. Late drafts cost one letter grade per occurrence. 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.

Papers will be graded on 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.

Your paper will be graded on a 15-point scale.

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. *Two points for clearly identifying a problem to which an alternative can be defended in a 15-page paper.*

Requirement 2. *Suggest a defensible alternative.*

Think carefully about the links you've drawn between problems and your proposal for an alternate way of moving forward. Does your proposal fix the major components of the problem? If not, why? Are there easier, less expensive, or simpler means to address the problem as it's been described? Where there a multiple consequences of a problem, you'll need to make an argument about which are most important to fix and why. *Two points for clearly presenting a plausible alternative to the status quo that can be defended in a 15-page paper.*

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. *Two points for developing an argument that is built from multiple premises and evidentiary sources.*

Requirement 4. *Your argument should be based on clear logic.*

Your task is to demonstrate that your conclusion follows from the premises and evidence you have provided. *Two points for clearly demonstrating that your main argument contains at least three distinct premises and is deductively valid.*

Requirement 5. *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 alternatives to your proposal, and to argue persuasively about the strengths of these other ideas. 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. *Two points for providing plausible arguments and evidence in favor of a course of action that you will ultimately oppose.*

Requirement 6. *Provide reasonable evidence.*

You are proposing an alternative that the decision makers in question have not implemented before. 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. *Two points for drawing at least ten percent of the evidence you provide from at least five distinct sources.*

Requirement 7. *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: (McCubbins 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. *One point for having a complete bibliography.*

Requirement 8. *Your paper can be up to 5000 words.*

Papers should be double spaced, in 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Plagiarism is also a very bad idea. We have multiple ways to identify strings of words as having come from previously published materials. A paper that includes plagiarized materials of any kind will earn a grade of 0. *One point for proper formatting and staying within the page limit.*

Requirement 9. *Attention to writing style is important— keep an eye out for correct spelling and grammar, and for well-organized paragraphs.*

Do multiple rounds 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/>
One point for a paper that is free of spelling errors and obvious grammatical errors.

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 Course Procedures

- Cell phones must be turned off at the beginning of class. 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. If it is not possible for you to accept these responsibilities, then you might consider taking another class.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. There are no appeals on paper or debate grades.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. This class is about you. It is about your ability to defend arguments that are of value to you and communities about which you care. My motive is to help you as much as possible and I learn from the questions that you ask.