Course Description

Political Science 210 is one of four gateway courses into the study of political science at Reed College. The course is targeted at first- and second-year students, although more advanced students are welcome. Pol210 exposes you to the major approaches used by political scientists to understand individual political action or what is often called “political behavior.” This stands in contrast to approaches that focus on comparing political systems, or modeling the dynamics of international relations, or analyzing philosophical and normative arguments and texts.

In this course, we focus on the dominant analytical approach in behavioral political science – rational or social choice – and its implications for how we understand politics. Rational choice, imported from economics, remains controversial in many quarters, but it is an approach that you will encounter frequently in social science readings and research. If rational choice is an important approach in behavioral social science, then survey statistics are one of its primary analytical tools. We spend a significant amount of time learning how to retrieve and analyze survey data and to understand its associated statistics.

If you have previously taken Econ 311, Math 141, or especially Soc 311, you may find this part of the course very repetitive and you may wish to consider an alternative course.

Our goal as a class is to get to a point where, by the end of the semester, every student has sufficient familiarity and comfort with social choice theory so that he or she can use it to identify and critically analyze some basic puzzles in political science that many in the discipline argue can be productively explored with rational choice theory, such as:

Why don’t more people vote? Why do more people vote for President than for School Board? Are riots and revolutions examples of rational action? Why have

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1 “Individuals” in this context refers to any individual acting in a political context. This may be an individual citizen deciding whether to turn out to vote, participate in a rally, or contribute to a political cause. However, it includes individual members of Congress deciding upon the content of legislation, an interest group leader trying to decide on political strategies, a farmer trying to decide whether to obey an environmental regulation, or even a leader of a nation getting ready to enter treaty negotiations.

2 There are other competing accounts of political behavior, including emotions or “affect,” genetic predispositions, adherence to social expectations or cultural norms, “mob” psychology, etc. The rational choice account offered in this course is not intended to exclude other competing accounts.
fisheries collapsed worldwide and how can we best protect them? If everyone says they support a particular cause, why do interest groups struggle to raise money? Why is it smart politics to be purposely bland and vague?

We use survey data and statistics in this course as an empirical tool—not the only empirical tool, but a very important empirical tool—that you can use to test your hypotheses about political behavior (whether those hypotheses come from rational choice, psychological theory, or something else). Early exposure to quantitative material will also help you as you encounter this material in upper division courses and as you write your thesis.

This course is a mix of lecture and conference. Some of the materials often do not lend themselves to conference-based discussion. I have made specific provisions in the syllabus for sessions devoted to discussion. The class is small enough that participation should be possible even at other times, but there will be many sections of the course where lecturing will be necessary.

Guide to Readings and Assignments

Books: The following books have been ordered from the Reed College Bookstore. Five copies of each are available at the library reserve.

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1997 (there is a second edition of this book which has problem sets, but it is OK to use the first edition).
- “University of Denver IDEAS Guide to SDA” Photocopy available at the bookstore.

Additional Readings: Most readings are either linked from the online syllabus or are in PDF from the Moodle page for this course. Additional articles are available through the JSTOR electronic journal archive and other electronic databases. JSTOR in particular is a system that is useful to learn. See http://www.jstor.org or link from the Reed Library website for more information. JSTOR and e-reserves are available from on-campus connections or off campus via the proxy server (see http://www.reed.edu/cis/help/proxy-overview.html for information on setting up your web browser to use the proxy).

Even though many of the readings are in PDF format, it is important that you print off the articles for this class. I will not allow the use of laptops in class. It is too distracting to the professor and to the students around you.

Assessment Policy

There are three main sets of assignments in this course. Because all deadlines are announced well ahead of time, I will not accept late assignments. It is also very important that you turn in the problem sets, since they are the building blocks for your exams and papers. All assignments and deadlines are listed on the schedule of class meetings.

Papers: You will be assigned one short paper and two longer papers.
**Paper Blurbs:** At a number of times in the semester, you are required to turn in a short “paper blurb.” This should be a brief (no more than one page) description of the question, the theoretical approach, the evidence, and the conclusion of a paper we have read.

**Problem Sets:** These are three written problem sets, handed out during the semester. You may work in groups on the problem sets but each person must turn in their own set of answers.

**Citation and Plagiarism**

A major goal of this course is to encourage good reading, research, and citation habits. Good research requires good documentation of sources and the ability to put one’s own analysis and thoughts into a paper rather than relying on others. When in doubt as to whether you should cite something, always do it. Citations are required for ideas as well as facts, and are imperative even if you are not directly quoting authors. Make sure that you provide as specific a citation as possible; if an author discusses an idea in one section or one page, cite the specific section or page instead of the full article or book. I usually recommend that students use in-text author-date citation with full Chicago Manual of Style citations; see their Citation Quick Guide: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools/citationguide.html>. However, style is less important than the cites being present. If you use an idea or a fact without attribution, you are plagiarizing someone else’s work. Plagiarism and cheating are violations of academic integrity and thus violations of Reed’s Honor Principle. As noted in Reed’s academic conduct policy, such violations will result in disciplinary actions, including suspension or permanent dismissal from the College. Plagiarism is submitting a piece of work which in part or in whole is not entirely the student’s own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source. For examples of plagiarism and how to avoid it, see <http://www.csub.edu/ssric-trd/howto/plagiarism.htm> For more information on Reed’s policies see: <http://www.reed.edu/academic/gbook/comm pol/acad conduct.html>.

**Accommodations**

If you’d like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Learning Resources Director Libby Rapkoch, Psy.D., Dorothy Johansen House, 503-517-7921, rapkoche@reed.edu. If you have a letter from Student Services, please let me know so we can discuss those accommodations. Please try to be pro-active in dealing with the Dean of Student Services. It is hard to provide accommodations after the fact.
## Schedule of Class Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title/ Description</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO CLASS: APSA Meeting in DC</td>
<td>Work on your first paper assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Rational Actor Model: A Gentle Introduction</td>
<td>Shesple and Bonchek, Chs 1–2</td>
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| T   | Sep   | 14   | Social Choice Theory and Arrow’s Paradox Introduction to SDA | First problem set handed out. | • Shesple and Bonchek, Chs. 3-4  
• Guide to SDA: “What is a Variable” |  |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Sep 16</td>
<td>Conference Day: <em>How do voters decide when faced with more than two choices and more than two dimensions: The Wallace, Perot, and Anderson candidacies.</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|     |       | Skim:  
|     |       | • Dixit and Skeath, *Games of Strategy*, Ch. 15 in old ed, Ch 16 in 2008 ed. "Strategy and Voting" This is a good chapter to keep on hand for review.  
| T   | Sep 21 | No Class, Prof. Gronke in Lille for study abroad evaluation |
| Th  | Sep 23 | Spatial Models of Voting: Applications I  
|     |       | Applications to vote choice, legislative organizing, and budgeting.  
|     |       | Shepsle and Bonchek, pg. 82-114 only (Ch. 5). |
| Th  | Sep 23-24 | Laboratory Sessions  
|     |       | Navigating SDA  
|     |       | • Class Data Codebook  
|     |       | • Guide to SDA: “Proportions and Percentages,” “How to Create a Frequency Table,” “How to create a Cross-Tabulation Table.” |
| T   | Sep 28 | Spatial Models of Voting and Applications II.  
|     |       | *Why did some people think Nixon was a liberal?*  
|     |       | Handout: *What is a paper blurb?*  
|     |       | • Green & Shapiro, 147-159.  
<p>|     |       | First problem set due today! |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session/Exercise</th>
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| Sep 30 | In Class Laboratory Session:  
*The 2008 Presidential contest: was it about race or about the economy? How would we know?*  
Exercise sheet distributed in class  
| Oct 5 | Conference Day:  
*Can spatial modeling help us settle historical controversies?*  
Second problem set handed out  
| Oct 7 | MAKEUP: Spatial Models of Legislatures  
*The Prisoner's Dilemma & Other Examples of Strategic Action*  
- Shepsle and Bonchek, Ch. 5, 114-129  
- Shepsle and Bonchek, 197-206  
- Dixit and Nalebuff, *Thinking Strategically*. Chs. 1, 2 |
| Oct 12 | Solving the Dilemma? When Cooperation Emerges in Competitive Settings  
- Shepsle and Bonchek, Ch. 8, p. 207-219.  
- Dixit and Nalebuff. *Thinking Strategically*, Ch. 4 |
| Oct 14 | Conference Day:  
*Can the prisoner’s dilemma help us understand nuclear competition?*  
Midterm essay distributed today  
Second problem set due by noon on Friday |
<p>| Oct 19 | BREAK |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>Mancur Olson’s &quot;Logic of Collective Action&quot;</td>
<td>Shepsle and Bonchek, Ch. 9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(Olson, continued)</td>
<td><em>The Logic of Collective Action</em>. Chs. 5-6.</td>
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Green & Shapiro, Ch. 4. |                                                                                          |
Feeny, David et al. “The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later.”  
<p>| Nov 9  | T    | 9     | New Institutionalism                                                 | Third problem set handed out                                                                  | Shepsle and Bonchek, Ch. 10-12, 14                                                      |
| Nov 11 | Th   | 11    | The Puzzle of Participation: The Empirical Perspective              | Rosenstone and Hansen, Chs. 1-2                                                                |                                                                                        |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nov 16</th>
<th>The Puzzle of Political Participation II</th>
<th>Fourth memo assignment distributed.</th>
<th>• Rosenstone and Hansen, Chs. 3, 5, 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Nov 18/19</td>
<td>Computer Laboratory Sessions: Getting results out of SDA and into your paper</td>
<td>Worksheet distributed in class</td>
<td>• Guide to SDA: “More about cross tabulation tables,” “Comparing Means,” “Additional Options.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>Race and Political Participation</td>
<td>• Rosenstone and Hansen, Ch 7 • Verba and Nie, Ch 10 • Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, Ch 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>Thanksgiving!</td>
<td>Problem Set 3 Due!</td>
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<td>Th</td>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>What is Political Science? Reflections from Two Practitioners</td>
<td>• Kramer, Gerald. “Political Science as Science” • MacRae, Duncan. “The Science of Politics and its Limits” (Both from <em>Political Science: The Science of Politics</em>. 1986, Agathon.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>Final day of class, discussion of final exam</td>
<td>Final exam study sheet</td>
<td>Fourth memo due!</td>
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