

SUNY, Potsdam College
Department of Politics

Politics 316: Power and Democracy

Fall 2016
TuTh 2:00-3:40
Stowell Hall 116D

Daniel Lempert
Satterlee Hall 309B
lemperds@potsdam.edu
Office Hours: M: 3:45-4:45; (M)W: 12:45-1:45

Course Description and Objectives. We introduce and apply tools from the interdisciplinary area of study called *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* (PPE) to address selected questions of power and democracy. Very roughly speaking, PPE applies economic theories and methodologies to questions of political philosophy. In this course, the focus is on collective action: how are decisions to cooperate (or not) made? What factors influence the success of a (potentially) cooperative endeavor? What is the role of government in encouraging (or forcing) collective action? What is rational choice in social dilemmas? How do individual preferences translate into collective outcomes? By the end of the course, we will be able to apply some fundamental PPE tools, including basic formal theory, to address such questions, and to critique these applications.

Course Structure. This class will be structured as a seminar, with minimal lecturing. The role of the instructor will be to guide the class discussion. Clarificatory questions from students are particularly encouraged.

Grading. Course grades will be based on the following components:

In-class participation, 30% of final grade.

Brief (~45 min.) in-class tests (every 1-3 weeks), 30%.

Response papers, 30%.

In-class final exam, 10%.

Grading Scale. The grading scale is standard. 92-100: 4.0; 90-92: 3.7; 88-90: 3.3, etc.

Extra Credit. There may be opportunity for extra credit, worth 2% of your final grade. I will give details in class, and post information on Moodle.

Late Paper Policy. Response papers are due in hard copy at the beginning of class; no credit for late response papers.

Attendance, Participation, and Quizzes. Class attendance is required, and is (a necessary but not sufficient) part of the participation grade. Coming to class prepared--having read and thought about the readings--is crucial for the ability to contribute intelligently to class discussion. When discussing the readings, remain respectful of opposing viewpoints, and refrain from personal attacks. Regular contribution to class discussion is very important, but remember to focus on quality and not just quantity. Unless necessary for taking notes or another class-related function, please do not use your computer or any other electronic device in class. Bring the book (or other reading) for each session to class.

Final Exam and Test Policy. I will not give make-up tests, except for medical absences documented by a doctor's note, or absences for religious holidays. I will drop the lowest test grade, so one absence from a test will not itself impact the overall grade. Failure to take the final exam at the scheduled time will result in a 20%

reduction of the exam grade. Once an exam or test starts, students may not leave the room until their exam is turned in.

Assistance. I want to give you any help with the course that you need. My office hours are listed at the beginning of the syllabus; you can always stop by at these times. Feel free to send me an e-mail when you have a question or concern; my e-mail address is listed also. My office phone number is 267-2716. I will often be in my office, even outside of office hours; you can stop by, although I cannot guarantee that I will always be free. If you'd like to meet outside of office hours, it is safest to email, or call, to set up an appointment. If you notice that you are struggling with any aspect of the course, it may be a good idea to meet with me as soon as possible, so that we can discuss ways of overcoming the struggles before there is a serious impact on your grade.

Academic Honesty. Please review the Honor Code:

<http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode/index.cfm>. I expect all of the work you do in this course to be your own. Explicitly, one of the things that this means is that unless directly authorized by me in writing, "working together" on assignments is not allowed, and will be considered plagiarism. I will tolerate absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation—some details [here](#)). Any case of cheating, plagiarism, or other academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, where it will be handled according to college policy. The default penalty for plagiarism is the 0 on the plagiarized assignment or 1.0 grade reduction in the course for a first offense (whichever reduction is greater), and a 0 in the class for any subsequent offense.

Accommodations/Disability. I rely on Accommodative Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you are a student with a disability who will require accommodations in this course, please meet with Accommodative Services in Sisson Hall Room 111 for assistance in developing a plan for accommodations. If you are already working with Accommodative Services, please set up a time to meet with me, or come by during office hours, to discuss accommodations. For more information, visit the Accommodative Services website at <http://potsdam.edu/support/oas>.

Textbooks

Required:

Gaus, *On Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* 1st ed. Wadsworth. (abbreviated "G").

R. Hardin, *Collective Action*, 1982. Johns Hopkins/RFF. (abbreviated "H").

Schedule of Readings and Topics. Readings are to be read before the session below which they are listed. All articles listed will be available on Moodle for you to download and print. Please check your email &/or Moodle (and attend class!) for changes to this schedule; it is more likely than usual that I will make changes to the schedule listed here.

Week 1, Tues, 8/30.

Thursday, 9/1. Introduction and Instrumental Rationality.

Gaus, Introduction and Chapter 1.1.

Week 2. Tuesday, 9/6. Consumption Rationality and Homo Economicus.

G, Chapter 1.2. and 1.3.

Thursday, 9/8. Utility Theory: Preferences and Ordinal Utility Theory.

G, Ch. 2.1 and 2.2.

Week 3. Tuesday, 9/13. Utility Theory: Cardinal Utility Theory; Relationship to Instrumental Rationality.

G, Ch. 2.3-2.4.

Thursday, 9/15. Utility Theory: Doubts from Psychology.

G, Ch 2.5.

Week 4. Tuesday, 9/20. Efficiency and Rationality.

G, Ch 3.1.

Thursday, 9/22. Externalities and Public Goods.

G, Ch. 3.2.

Week 5. Tuesday, 9/27. Game Theory: Strategic Rationality and Zero-sum Games.

G, Ch. 4.1

Thursday, 9/29. Game Theory: The PD.

G, Ch 4.2

Week 6. Tuesday 10/4. Game Theory: Other Simple Games; Repeated Games.

G, Ch. 4.3 and 4.4 (section on Repeated Games only). The rest of 4.4 (on Evolutionary Games) is optional.

Thursday, 10/6. Very Brief Intro to Social Choice Theory; May's Theorem.

G, Ch 5.1 and 5.2. The rest of Chapter 5 (5.3 and 5.4) is optional; it is interesting and challenging, but we probably will not have time to cover it.

No class 10/11(Tu).

Week 7. Thursday, 10/13. Public Choice I: Spatial Model; Rationality of Voting.

G, Ch. 6.1 and 6.2

Week 8. Tuesday, 10/18. Majoritarian Inefficiencies and Constitutional Political Economy.

G, Ch. 6.3 and 6.4 and "Concluding Remarks: Two Economic Approaches."

Thursday, 10/20. The Back of the Invisible Hand.

Hardin, Ch. 1.

Week 9. Tuesday, 10/25. Collective Action and the PD.

H, Ch. 2.

Thursday, 10/27. Group Size.

H, Ch. 3.

Week 10. Tuesday 11/1. Types of Collective Action Problems.

H, Ch. 4.

Thursday, 11/3. Asymmetries in Collective Action.

H, Ch. 5.

Week 11. Tuesday, 11/8. Contractarian Provisions.

H, Ch. 6.

Thursday, 11/10. Extra-rational Motivations.

H, Ch. 7.

Week 12. Tuesday, 11/15. Dynamic Analysis of Collective Action.

H, Ch. 8.

Thursday, 11/17. Rationality in the PD.

H, Ch. 9.

Week 13. Tuesday, 11/22. Contract by Convention.

H, Ch. 10.

No class 11/24(Th).

Week 14. Tuesday, 11/29. Enforcement of Conventions.

H, Ch. 11.

Thursday, 12/1. Limits to Contract by Convention.

H, Ch. 12.

Week, 15. Tuesday 12/6. Contract by Convention in Social Theory and in Politics.

H, Chs. 13 and 14.

Thursday, 12/8. Review and Catch-up.

In class final exam:

Monday, Dec. 12, 10:15 am - 12:15 pm