PSCI 107
Introduction to Positive Political Theory
Spring 2025
Syllabus

People
Instructor

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TAs

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Class Meetings
We meet **in-person** in Dewey Hall Room 1101 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30-1:45pm.

Attendance at class meetings is optional. Class meetings will be neither recorded nor broadcast.

What is this course about?
Politics is extraordinarily complicated because political outcomes are never attributable solely to the actions of any one person. Instead, explaining political events requires us to account for the distinct beliefs and preferences of multiple persons, and then trace how the actions of those multiple persons combine to determine single outcomes. Positive Political Theory is a set of tools used by political scientists to model processes that are at work in a wide variety of political contexts. Students in this course gain the familiarity they need with these tools to thrive in advanced courses in political science, and to deepen their understanding of the politics they observe and participate in their lives outside classroom.

How should I plan my time and effort to succeed in this course?
If you're already enrolled in the course, go to the course site on Blackboard. Watch the videos called "how to get started" on the course homepage.

If you're *not* enrolled in the course and you want to watch that videos to learn more about the course, just email the instructor at stuart.jordan@rochester.edu and ask!

How does grading work?

Students in the course are graded on homework assignments called "checks of understanding" (COUs) and on in-class exams. Every COU and exam question is worth a certain number of points. The points you earn on the checks-of-understanding and the exam question determine your course letter grade as follows:

- First, we take the total points you earned on all COUs assigned in the course, divided by the total points available on all COUs assigned in the course *minus 75*. (Subtracting 75 points from the denominator allows students to miss some COUs due to illness or other circumstances without penalty.) This number is your **COU average**.
- Second, for each of the course's four exams (3 module exams, 1 final exam), we take the total points you earned on the exam and divide that by the total points available on the exam. We then take the average of these four numbers. That number is your **exam average.** (Note that this means that the four exams in the course each count equally toward your grade.)
- Third, we compute the average of your **COU average** and **exam average**. The resulting number is your **overall course average.**

The resulting overall course average is a number between 0 and 1. You earn a letter grade for the course according to where your overall course average falls on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Your Overall Course Average
A	Greater than or equal to 0.9625
A-	Less than 0.9625, greater than or equal to 0.875
B+	Less than 0.875, greater than or equal to 0.7875
B	Less than 0.7875, greater than or equal to 0.7125
B-	Less than 0.7125, greater than or equal to 0.625
C+	Less than 0.625, greater than or equal to 0.5375
C	Less than 0.5375, greater than or equal to 0.4625
C-	Less than 0.425, greater than or equal to 0.375
D+	Less than 0.375, greater than or equal to 0.2875
D	Less than 0.2875, greater than or equal to 0.2125
D-	Less than 0.2125, greater than or equal to 0.125
E	Less than 0.125

When Are the Exams? When are Homeworks Due?

See the schedule on the course blackboard page. In general, there are COUs due almost every Friday of the semester at 8pm.

As you consider whether this course is right for you, keep in mind that no assignment will be accepted late, and that alternative exam times will not be offered, except for religious holidays, when required by an accommodation arranged through the Office of Disability Services, or in the event of documented and extraordinary events beyond the student's control.

Academic Honesty

All the requirements of the AS&E Academic Honesty Policy apply to this course. In addition, the course has a set of very specific rules about *how* you complete the graded work for the course. Following these rules ensures that your performance in the course reflects your own grasp of the material, rather than someone else's. Suspected violations of these rules, or of any provision of the AS&E Academic Honesty Policy, will be reported as required AS&E's policy, and could lead to severe sanctions. So before you do *any* work in this course, make sure you know the rules. Read them in the Academic Honesty content area on the course Blackboard site.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall; www.rochester.edu/college/disability.

Credit Hour Policy Statement

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 3 academic hours per week. The course also includes 9 academic hours of independent out-of-class assignments.