

# PA 30: Comparative Analysis of Wealth, Policy, and Power

Darin Christensen

2024-03-07

PUB AFF 6341

darinc@luskin.ucla.edu

(310) 825-7196

## 1 Course Information

- Lecture: MW 12:30-1:45 pm, FRANZ 1178
- Course Website: [bruinlearn.ucla.edu/courses/186855](https://bruinlearn.ucla.edu/courses/186855)
- Teaching Team:
  - Sections C & D (W): Chase Privett
  - Sections E & F (R): Evangeline Chapman

chaseprivett4@gmail.com

echapman@g.ucla.edu

## 2 Course Overview

Around the World, communities confront common social problems, such as how to provide public goods, coordinate investments, or limit corruption. In this course, we explore the strategic interactions that give rise to these problems, what can be done to address them, and how different polities have tried (and sometimes failed) to mount an effective response. Applications will include climate change, the anti-vaccination movement, protest and repression, war and the formation of states, corruption, and human and drug trafficking.

### 3 Learning Objectives

By the end of the quarter, you should:

1. Use the tools of social science to explain certain social problems;
2. Enumerate approaches for addressing each class of problems;
3. Apply this knowledge to specific policy challenges confronting countries and communities around the World; and
4. Demonstrate a familiarity with core concepts from political science and micro-economics.

### 4 Assessment

#### Lecture Quizzes (10%)

Most lectures will be paired with a short, graded quiz. **The quiz will close no sooner than seven days after the lecture date.** For example, if the lecture was delivered on April 1, then the associated quiz would not close until at least April 8. We will drop your two lowest quiz grades. This is intended to permit flexibility, should you be unable to take a quiz in the assigned week.

The quizzes serve two purposes: (1) quizzes check comprehension and provide you a regular opportunity to flag concepts that you do not understand; and (2) quizzes provide an incentive to keep up with the course material, so you do not need to “cram” new material prior to exams.

#### Midterm Exam (20%)

A midterm exam will be administered on **05/08**. The midterm and final exam will emphasize material covered in lecture but may also draw from the required readings.

## **Final Exam (30%)**

A cumulative final exam will take place on **06/12 at 11:30 am**. This time is set by the registrar.

## **Policy Memo (15%)**

A concise, clearly organized explanation of a policy/programmatic challenge and proposed solutions. **Due 05/05**. Format your paper as a Microsoft Word Document with 1" margins, 12 point Times New Roman, and double spacing. Turnitin automatically screens submissions for plagiarism.

## **Short Video (15%)**

An evocative short (~5 minute) video that relates course concepts to a contemporary policy issue of your choosing. **Due 06/07**.

We will provide details about the policy memo and short video assignments in separate handouts.

## **Section Participation (10%)**

TAs will convene discussion sections; section times and locations can be found on the course website.

Your participation in section is required. You may miss one section without loss of credit. If you miss an additional section, your grade will be docked *unless* you submit a 1-page commentary (see formatting instructions above) synthesizing and/or critically engaging the readings for that week. **This must be submitted to your TA within one week of the section that you missed.**

## **5 Course Policies**

### **Statement of Affirmation**

I intend to make this classroom a space that affirms all identities and perspectives. Regardless of background, all students have a right to an equitable education. I encourage all members to embrace and learn from the diversity in this classroom, school, and university. I want to highlight that discrimination, harassment, or forms of hateful conduct will not be tolerated in our learning environment. If you have any recommendations about how to make our environment more inclusive, please let me know.

### **Note-taking**

**Computers, tablets, and phones may not be used during class.** This does not apply to students with a relevant accommodation through CAE. You can contact your TA to request an exception to this policy.

### **Office Hours**

Each member of the teaching team will hold drop-in office hours. The schedule and location for those office hours will be posted to the course website. We are also available for one-on-one meetings; please email to schedule a time.

### **Extensions**

Late work will not be accepted without permission. You should contact your TA at least 24 hours before any due date to request an extension and provide cause. Makeup exams are generally not permitted.

## **Re-grades**

If you feel that your grade on an assignment does not reflect the quality of your work, you may appeal through the following procedure:

- Write a short (one-page) memo that explains, in as much detail as possible, why you should receive a different grade.
- Send that memo and your graded assignment to your TA *within 1 week of the assignment being returned* and schedule a meeting to discuss.
- If you and the TA who graded the assignment cannot reach an agreement, the assignment will be re-graded by another member of the teaching team.
- This second grade will be the final grade assigned, and it can be lower than your original grade.

## **Academic Accommodations**

Academic Accommodations. Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the [Center for Accessible Education](#) (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. Students should contact the CAE by Week 2 as notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit <http://www.cae.ucla.edu>.

## **Academic Integrity**

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. I encourage you to review the [University's policies regarding academic honesty](#).

Specific rules for this course:

- You may collaborate on the **problem set**. However, you must write every line of text or code that appears in the assignment you submit. In short, never copy and paste another student's work, even if you worked together.
- Written work must be properly cited. Please review [UCLA's definition of plagiarism](#). You may not re-use material that was submitted in a different class without instructor permission.
- You may use generative AI to proofread assignments. You are ultimately responsible for the content you submit: if you submit work that does not cite valid sources (i.e., plagiarizes) or is factually incorrect, you will be held responsible.
- All **exams** will be "closed book." You may only consult the TA or Professor during exams.

## Religious Observances

If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with your TA before the end of Week 2 to discuss accommodations.

## 6 Student Resources

### Mental Health

There are resources on campus for students to help with study habits, anxiety, stress, and depression. Please check out the [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\) center at UCLA](#).<sup>1</sup> In addition to counseling and other psychological and mental health services, they provide additional resources such as readings on dealing with stress and anxiety, group counseling sessions, mindfulness trainings, and other behavioral services. CAPS services are often covered by UC SHIP.

<sup>1</sup> Crisis counseling is also available 24 hours/day at (310) 825-0768.

## **Title IX Resources**

UCLA prohibits gender discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced any of these, there are a variety of campus resources to assist you, including a confidential hotline where you can talk to someone 24/7: (310) 825-0768. International students have access to the same services at the Title IX office as non-international students.

Please note that faculty and TAs are responsible employees, which means faculty, TAs, and other UC employees are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Coordinator – a non-confidential resource – should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or gender discrimination.

**Confidential Resources:** You can make an appointment with a [CARE Advocate](#) or call their 24/7 hotline: (888) 200-6665. CARE offers free and confidential services for students, staff and faculty impacted by sexual assault, relationship violence and stalking. CAPS also offers confidential crisis counseling and 24/7 support. You can also receive confidential off-campus emergency medical services, advocacy, and counseling at the Rape Treatment Center UCLA Medical Center Santa Monica. Their 24/7 hotline is (424) 259-7208.

**Non-Confidential Reporting:** You can report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Office, 2255 Murphy Hall, [titleix@conet.ucla.edu](mailto:titleix@conet.ucla.edu), (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. Please note that any appointment you make with a Title IX counselor is NOT confidential.

## **Immigration**

The [Bruin Resource Center's \(BRC\) Undocumented Student Program](#) supports undocumented students and students who are part of a mixed-status family.

Even if you are not undocumented, you may be able to get legal help for a family member. The USP office provides immigration legal services to students and their family members through a partnership with the [UC Undocumented Legal Services Center](#).

## 7 Course Schedule

Links to materials are provided on the course website. I may update the readings during the quarter, so treat this schedule as provisional.

### **C1: What is a “good” policy?**

Bueno de Mesquita. “Normative Frameworks.” Chapter 1 from *Political Economy for Public Policy*.

### **C2: How do we predict a policy’s impact?**

#### **Causal Inference:**

Henne, Paul. “Correlation and Causation.”

Gertler et al. “Causal Inference and Counterfactuals.” Chapter 3 from *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. World Bank Group, September 2016.

#### **Game Theory:**

Complexity Labs. “Game Theory Overview.”

Christesen, Darn and Garfias, Francisco. “Political Economy.”

Dixit, Avinash and Nalebuff, Barry. “Introduction” and “Ten Tales of Strategy.” Chapters from *Thinking Strategically: The*



*Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*. W.W. Norton, 1993.

### **C3: What are social dilemmas?**

Complexity Labs. "Pareto Optimality."

"Social Interactions and Economic Outcomes." Chapter from *Economy, Society and Public Policy*, through Section 2.5.

### **C4: Externalities: Theory**

Complexity Labs. "Social Dilemma."

Bueno de Mesquita. "Externalities." Chapter 4 from *Political Economy for Public Policy*, Sections 4.1-4.4 (stop before 4.5 "The Theory of the Second Best").

### **C5: Externalities: Application – Pollution**

Ostrom, Elinor. "Tragedy of the Commons." *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 2008.

Wireless Philosophy. "Tragedy of the Commons."

Mildenberger, Matto. "The Tragedy of the *Tragedy of the Commons*." *Scientific American*, 2019.

Williams, Wyatt. "How Your Cup of Coffee Is Clearing the Jungle." *New York Times Magazine*, August 2021.

**(Optional)** Hardin, Garret. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, 1968.

## **C6: Externalities: Application – Collective Action**

“Social Interactions and Economic Outcomes.” Chapter from *Economy, Society and Public Policy*, Sections 2.6-2.8.

Wireless Philosophy. “Collective Action Problems.”

Schaffer, Amanda. “Fear, Misinformation, and Measles Spread in Brooklyn.” *Wired*, June 2019.

## **C7: Coordination Problems: Theory**

Bueno de Mesquita. “Coordination Problems.” Chapter 5 from *Political Economy for Public Policy*.

## **C8: Coordination Problems: Application – Combating Abuse**

Traister, Rebecca. “Why the Harvey Weinstein Sexual-Harrassment Allegations Didn’t Come Out Until Now.” *New York*, October, 2017.

Keefe, Patrick Radden. “Jordan Thoma’s Army of Whistle-blowers.” *New Yorker*, January 2022.

## **C9: Commitment Problems: Theory**

Bueno de Mesquita. “Commitment Problems.” Chapter 6 from *Political Economy for Public Policy*.

Farrell, Henry. “Why the hidden internet can’t be a libertarian paradise.” *Aeon*, February 2015.

## **C10: Commitment Problems: Application – Establishing Order**

Olson, Mancur. "Dictatorship, democracy, and development." *American Political Science Review*, 1993.

Gambetta, Diego. "The Market" Chapter 1 from *The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection*. Harvard University Press, 1993.

Callimachi, Rukmini. "The ISIS Files." *The New York Times*, April 2018.

## **POLICY MEMO DUE 05/05**

### **C11: Commitment Problems: Application – Civil Conflict**

Walter, Barbara F. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization*, 1997.

Caesar, Ed. "The Ship that Became a Bomb." *New Yorker*, October 2021.

**(Optional) Political Reform:** Acemoglu, Daron and Robinson, James. "The Vicious Circle" Chapter 12 from *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. Penguin Random House, 2013. Only required section: "You Can't Take the Train to Bo Anymore."

### **C12: MIDTERM (05/08)**

#### **C13: Agency Problems: Theory**

Marginal Revolution University. "Asymmetric Information and Used Cars." January 2015.

Marginal Revolution University. "Asymmetric Information and Health Insurance." September 2015.

Marginal Revolution University. "Moral Hazard." September 2015.

Marginal Revolution University. "Solutions to Moral Hazard." September 2015.

#### **C14: Agency Problems: Application – Corruption**

Choosing Public Officials: Besley, Timothy. "Political Selection." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2005.

Corruption: Svensson, Jakob. "Eight Questions about Corruption." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, September 2005.

#### **Does corruption even matter for economic development?**

(Short Blog Post) Blattman, Christopher. "Corruption and Development: Not what you think?" November 2012.

(Short Blog Post) Stephenson, Matthew. "Yes, Corruption Is Bad for Development. No, Corruption Is Not a Western Obsession." April 2014.

#### **C15: Strategic Adjustment: Theory**

Bueno de Mesquita. "Strategic Adjustment." Chapter 7 from *Political Economy for Public Policy*.

Cunff, Anne-Laure. "The Cobra Effect." *Ness Labs*.

#### **C16: Strategic Adjustment: Applications – Evasion**

Garson, Philippa. "Balloons and sausages – understanding the global drugs trade." *IRIN*, May 2014.

Lopez, German. "The biggest problem with the war on drugs, explained in one video – with dragons." *Vox*, March 2015.

Teng, Jing Xuan. "Wordplay, Blank Signs and Music: How China is Protesting 'COVID zero.'" *The Japan Times*, November 2022.

(Refresh) Doleac, Jennifer L. “‘Ban the Box’ does more harm than good.” *Real Clear Markets*, 2016.

### **C17: Dangers of Social Engineering**

Scott, James C. “Introduction,” and “Chapter 3.” *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, February 1999.

Cole, Teju. “The White-Savior Industrial Complex.” *The Atlantic*, March 2012.

Martin, Courtney. “The Reductive Seduction of Other People’s Problems.” January 2016.

### **C18: Final Review**

**Short Video DUE 06/07**

**FINAL EXAM (06/12 at 11:30 am)**