

Course Syllabus

Public Choice

POLS TBA

Location TBA

Time TBA

Instructor: Alexander William Salter

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Office: Texas Tech Plaza 308J

Office Hours: TBA

Required Texts:

This course will contain a multitude of readings from several sources. You are not required to purchase any text in particular. However, it is *strongly recommended* that if you plan on writing a dissertation that engages the topics covered in this course, you purchase the collected works of James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, published by Liberty Fund.

For all readings, I will try to list the original publication date/version. Reading a later version is perfectly acceptable.

Course Description:

This course investigates the foundations and applications of *public choice economics*, surveying the work of scholars in the traditions of the Bloomington, Chicago, Rochester, and Virginia Schools. We will explore how applying the economic way of thinking to politics, or collective action, sheds light on the costs and benefits of various political institutions. Most, but not all, of our time will be spent discussing the foundational contributions of scholars whose research constituted these schools, which are still regularly cited in the literature.

As a graduate course, class sessions will primarily be discussion based. The goal is not 'knowledge transfer' from lecturers to students but rather 'joint inquiry.' By the end of the semester you should be equipped, largely through practice, to *contribute* to the literature on these issues rather than being a mere consumer of that literature. Together we will explore the extent to which these ideas may be useful inputs into our own work.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the economic way of thinking to political phenomena at an advanced level
- Relate the concepts discussed in class to the current literature in journals such as *Public Choice* and *Constitutional Political Economy*
- Produce original research in at least one sub-field of public choice economics (Ph.D. students only)

Grading:

Grades will be determined 20% by participation, and 80% by written assignments, including original research.

Participation:

Each week you will submit three questions on Blackboard related to different parts of the required reading. Questions should be substantive (25-100 words each including setup). They will be due 5:00 pm on the day before class meets. Each set of questions will be graded based on two criteria: evidence that you have done the reading and thoughtfulness. Good questions will be circulated at the beginning of class to stimulate discussion. I will also assign grades for your participation in classroom discussions at arbitrary intervals.

Writing:

The writing component of the class is designed with the goal of generating academic research or policy analysis. It is subdivided into 3 components:

Short Papers: You will turn in three short papers in the first half of the semester. Each of these should be 1,000 - 1,200 words. Papers are due at the beginning of the class period on February 11, February 25, and March 10. Each of these is worth 10% of your final grade. Papers handed in after class on the due date will not be accepted. If you cannot attend class you may email them to me.

The idea of the short papers is to learn how to generate new, publishable research. So only a small portion of any given assignment should consist of literature review or summaries of readings. *No block quotes.* I want to see your original idea written up as you would the introduction to a full-blown paper on your topic. Your paper should look like, read like, and 'feel' like an academic journal article. Obviously, since you have only a few weeks to write each paper and its length is seriously truncated, you will not actually carry out what you describe. You will, however, develop your idea, *write an abstract* for your idea, properly motivate it, describe how you would carry it out, and include a list of references you would draw on were you to develop the paper further.

The topics addressed in this class are quite broad, so there is lots of room to figure out something original to do. Do not feel constrained by the particular topics we are discussing at that point in the class. Since these are due in the first half of class, if there is a topic that we will not get to until later you will have to do that reading ahead of time.

Long Paper and Referee Report: You will also, at the end of the course, turn in a long paper. This may be, but does not have to be, an extension of a short paper. You should complete a rough draft of your term paper by [DATE]. The rough draft should be at least 4,000 words long; it will not necessarily be an entire paper but the literature review and structure of the argument should be present in polished form. This version of the paper will not be graded, but you will lose 20 points off of your term paper grade for every day that it is late.

Members of the class will then read and provide feedback on each other's rough drafts in the form of referee reports, as if the paper were submitted to an academic journal. Referee reports will be due one week after rough drafts are due, on [DATE] (one week after your rough drafts) and are 10% of your writing grade. Your goal is to provide thoughtful feedback and criticism, providing helpful comments for ideas that should be developed further and critiques of arguments that should be changed or abandoned.

You will be given the referee report as well as my thoughts on your rough draft, and have until [DATE] to turn in a final draft taking account of the feedback you have received. Your final grade will depend both on the absolute quality of the work and the improvement from one draft to the next. It is worth 40% of your final grade.

For Ph.D. students, your paper should look like an academic article. This is intended to be a starting point for original research, not another term paper. *Your essay will be graded based on my evaluation of the paper's likelihood to receive a 'revise and resubmit' at an academic journal.*

M.A. students may write either an academic article or a policy piece of the sort that would be published by a think tank applying the concepts we discuss in class to a particular policy issue.

Readings and Course Schedule:

Week 1—foundations of political economy

Buchanan, J. M. 1954. Individual Choice in Voting and the Market. *Journal of Political Economy*, 62(4), pp. 334-343

Buchanan, J. M. 1964. What Should Economists Do? *Southern Economic Journal*, 30(3), pp. 213-222

Buchanan, J. M. 1969. *Cost and Choice: An Inquiry in Economic Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Buchanan, J. M. 1987. The Constitution of Economic Policy. *American Economic Review*, 77(3), pp. 243-250

Week 2—roots of collective action

Buchanan, J. M. 1975. *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Week 3—constitutions

Buchanan, J. M. and Tullock, G. 1962. *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 1-8

Brennan, G. and Buchanan, J. M. 1985. *The Reason of Rules: Constitutional Political Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Week 4—the logic of politics

Buchanan and Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, Chapters 9-20

Tullock, G. 2005. *The Economics of Politics*. Selected Works of Gordon Tullock, vol. 4. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund

Week 5—bureaucracy

Niskanen, W. A. 1968. The Peculiar Economics of Bureaucracy. *American Economic Review*, 58(2), pp. 293-305

Tullock, G. 2005. *Bureaucracy*. Selected Works of Gordon Tullock, vol. 6. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund

Week 6—rent seeking

Tullock, G. 2005. *The Rent-Seeking Society*. Selected Works of Gordon Tullock, vol. 5. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund

Week 7—redistribution

Tullock, G. 2005. *The Economics and Politics of Wealth Redistribution*. Selected Works of Gordon Tullock, vol. 7. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund

Week 8—towards a constitution for ‘good governance’

Buchanan, J. M. and Congleton, R. D. 1998. *Politics by Principle, Not Interest: Towards Nondiscriminatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 9—political extremes

Hendrickson, J. and Salter, A. W. 2016. *A Theory of Why the Ruthless Revolt*. Working paper.

Tullock, G. 2005. *The Social Dilemma: Of Autocracy, Revolution, Coup d’Etat, and War*. Selected Works of Gordon Tullock, vol. 8. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.

Week 10—federalism and polycentricity.

Buchanan, J. M. 2001. *Federalism, Liberty, and the Law*. Collected Works of James Buchanan, vol. 18. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund

Ostrom, E. 2010. Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems. *American Economic Review*, 100(3), pp. 641-672

Salter, A. W. 2015. *Post-Cameralist Governance: Towards a Robust Political Economy of Bureaucracy*. Working paper.

Tiebout, C. 1956. A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures. *Journal of Political Economy*, 64(5), 416-424

Week 11—the efficiency of politics?

Becker, G. 1983. A Theory of Competition Among Pressure Groups for Political Influence. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 98(3), pp. 371-400.

Caplan, B. and Stringham, E. 2005. Mises, Bastiat, Public Opinion, and Public Choice. *Review of Political Economy*, 17(1), pp. 79-105

Stigler, G. 1971. The Theory of Economic Regulation. *The Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science*, 2(1), pp. 3-21

Wittman, D. 1989. Why Democracies Produce Efficient Results. *Journal of Political Economy*, 97(6), pp. 1395-1424

Week 12—coalitions and interest groups

Olson, M. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Riker, W. 1962. *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Week 13—anarchy!

Boettke, P. 2005. Anarchism as a Progressive Research Agenda. In E. Stringham (ed.), *Anarchy, State, and Public Choice*. New York and London: Edward Elgar

Friedman, D. 2015. *The Machinery of Freedom: Guide to a Radical Capitalism*. 3rd edition. Independent publisher.

Leeson, P. T. An-arrgh-chy: The Law and Economics of Pirate Organization. *Journal of Political Economy*, 115(6), pp. 1049-1094

Powell, B. and Stringham, E. 2009. Public Choice and the Economic Analysis of Anarchy: A Survey. *Public Choice*, 140, pp. 503-538

Skarbek, D. 2016. Covenants Without the Sword? Comparing Prison Self-Governance Globally. *American Political Science Review*, forthcoming

Week 14—The rise of the nation-state

Besley, T. and Persson, T. 2013. *Pillars of Prosperity: The Political Economics of Development Clusters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Salter, A. W. 2015. Rights to the Realm: Reconsidering Western Political Development. *American Political Science Review*, 109(4), pp. 725-734

Young, A. T. 2015. Barbarian Settlers, Roman Aristocrats, and the Foundation of Divided Governance in the West. Working paper.

Time permitting—what is the ‘deep state’?

Burnham, J. 1943. *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom*. Henry Regnery.

Jouvenel, B. d. 1963. *The Pure Theory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Martin, A. 2010. Emergent Politics and the Power of Ideas. *Studies in Emergent Order*, 3, pp. 212-245

Wagner, R. E. 2016. *Politics as a Peculiar Business: Insights from a Theory of Entangled Political Economy*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar