

Nick Wilson
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ECON 410 C01

Public Choice Syllabus

Course Focus:

This is a course in public choice, also known as political economy, economics of politics, and rational choice theory. It introduces students to basic concepts and debates in public choice, including the logic of collective action, the Median Voter Model, information, bargaining, competition, and constitutions. The focus of the class will be the lectures and class discussions. empirical public opinion research, ideology, voter irrationality, behavioral political economy, dictatorship, and other theories of government.

Course Material:

Most of the course material will be handed out in class.

Optional reading:

- Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*
- Gordon Tullock, *The Social Dilemma*
- Robert Cooter, *The Strategic Constitution*
- Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*
- Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky, *Democracy and Decision*
- Bryan Caplan, *The Myth of the Rational Voter*
- Scott Althaus, *Collective Preferences in Democratic Politics*
- David Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom* (2nd edition)

Tentative Schedule:

My proposed schedule for the class is as follows. If it proves too ambitious, I will try to *simply say less about each topic* rather than cut the topics for the final weeks.

- Political economy, utility function, the goals of government and people
- Constraints and efficiency: Separation of powers, competition, oversight, Constitutions, Bureaucracy, Voting, & Tiebout
- Gov. and human social organization: dictatorship, democratic, federalism, republic, anarchy, and other.
- People & rationality: rulers, executives, politicians, bureaucrats, & voters
- Relationships, information & influences: politics, rational ignorance, information and bargaining

Grading and Exams:

There will be one midterm and a final exam. The exams 35%; daily quizzes 30%; discussion board and other assignments 35%.

If you wish to dispute a grade you must let me know after class and submit a typed request making explicit reference to the problem(s) along with the original test within two class periods (one week) of the day I hand back the graded exams. I will then review your arguments and decide if a mistake was made.

Office Hours

The best way to contact me is to talk to me after class. The class runs 4 days a week so no other office hours will be fixed, but you can contact me via my email at nwilso3@gmu.edu to schedule an appointment.

Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. I am glad to make accommodations for students with disabilities. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Academic Integrity

It is expected that students adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows: "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work." More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at <http://oai.gmu.edu>