

# Introduction to Social Sciences

Fall 2023

Instructor: Dr. Matias Giannoni

## Contact Information

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## Overview and Goals

This course is the second half of the course on Introduction to Social Sciences. We will cover classical and contemporary topics that are central to the agendas explored by political scientists. We will discuss fundamental issues like rationality and public choice, the origins and role of the state, the foundations of contemporary political economy, regime types, democracy, and representation.

The course aims to equip students with the skills to critically approach, analyze, and conduct research that is both pioneering and grounded in empirical evidence, particularly in the central topics of political science.

Our sessions will convene twice a week, with the initial portion dedicated to a lecture format. During this phase, I will introduce key themes, debates from the literature, and present some of the lingering questions and critical issues that the field of scholarship is yet to resolve. The latter half of each class will evolve into a seminar-style discussion, where active student participation is strongly encouraged.

## Prerequisites

*Willingness to work hard on unfamiliar materials and carefully read all the texts each week.*

## Course Requirements

Grades will be based on:

- Online Forum Participation (10% of final grade).
- Final homework assignment (55% of final grade)
- Two in-class exams (35% of the final grade)
  - Monday, September 30
  - Monday, October 28

The in-class quizzes will consist of analytical problems and assess understanding and comfort with the readings from the previous weeks. They will consist of multiple choice and true or false items.

Each week, we will watch a movie related to that week's topics. Students have to pick only **one movie** (any of the five we will watch) and write a two-page essay relating the movie to the bibliography discussed in class, to be submitted before the end of the course.

## Notes on Academic Integrity

Please respect and follow the rules on academic integrity.

In particular, the following is a (partial) list of the acts we will consider academically dishonest:

- Obtaining or consulting course materials from previous years
- Sharing course materials with people outside of the class
- Copying and pasting someone else's answers, even if you collaborated with the person in a legitimate way
- Using any form of machine learning or statistical natural language processing algorithms (commonly referred as AI tools) to draft answers

## Course Website

The readings will be posted on Canvas in the course website.

# Course Schedule and Reading Assignments<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Rationality & Public Choice (October 30)

- Methodological Individualism
- Public Goods
- Voting Models & Collective Action
- Redistribution

### *Required Readings:*

1. Meirowitz, A., & McCarty, N. (Eds.). (2007). The Theory of Choice. In *Political Game Theory: An Introduction* (pp. 6–26). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813122.002>
2. Banerjee, A., Iyer, L., & Somanathan, R. (n.d.). Public Action for Public Goods
3. Roemer, J. E. (1998). Why the poor do not expropriate the rich: An old argument in new garb. *Journal of Public Economics*, 70(3), 399–424. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2727\(98\)00042-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2727(98)00042-5)
4. Iversen, T., & Goplerud, M. (2018). Redistribution Without a Median Voter: Models of Multidimensional Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21(1), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-031016-011009>

## 2 Institutions (November 6)

- Origins of Institutions
- Critical Junctures and Path Dependency
- Institutions and Development

### *Required Readings:*

1. North, D. C., & Weingast, B. R. (1989). Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England. *The Journal of Economic History*, 49(4), 803–832. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2122739>
2. Hall, P. A., Taylor, R. C. R., & Taylor, R. C. (1996). Political science and the three new institutionalisms. *Political Studies*, 44(5), 936–957. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00343.x>
3. Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development. *The American Political Science Review*, 87(3), 567–576. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938736>

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<sup>1</sup>The readings are enumerated in the order in which they will be discussed during the week.

4. Pierson, P. (2000). Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics. *The American Political Science Review*, 94(2), 251–267. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011>
5. Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism. *World Politics*, 59(3), 341–369. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40060162>

### 3 States & Markets (November 13)

- Origins of the State
- Origins of Markets
- Varieties of Capitalism
- Capitalism and Democracy

#### *Required Readings:*

1. Tilly, C. (2017). War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*. Routledge
2. Bates, R. H. (2017). The Challenge of State Building in Africa. *The development dilemma: Security, prosperity, and a return to history*. Princeton university press
3. Herbst, J. (2014, December 21). States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control - Second Edition. *States and Power in Africa*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400852321>
4. Polanyi, K. (n.d.). *The Great Transformation*
5. Hall, P. A., Soskice, D., Hall, P. A., & Soskice, D. (Eds.). (2001, August 30). An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism. In *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247757.003.0001>
6. Mainwaring, S., & Simison, E. (2022, August 25). Economic Crises, Military Rebellions, and Democratic Survival: Argentina, 1983–2021. In S. Mainwaring & T. Masoud (Eds.), *Democracy in Hard Places* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197598757.003.0007>

### 4 Political Regimes, Democracy & Representation (November 20 - 27)

- Representation
- Accountability
- Presidentialism, Parliamentarism and Semi-Presidentialism
- Veto Players

1. Mansbridge, J. (2003). Rethinking Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 97(4), 515–528. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000856>
2. Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016b, April 19). Chapter Five. Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Droughts, Floods, and Shark Attacks. *Democracy for Realists* (pp. 116–145). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400882731-007>
3. Achen, C. H., & Bartels, L. M. (2016a, April 19). Chapter Eleven. Groups and Power: Toward a Realist Theory of Democracy. *Democracy for Realists* (pp. 297–328). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400882731-013>
4. Stokes, S. (2018). Accountability for Realists. *Critical Review*, 30(1-2), 130–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913811.2018.1473111>
5. Elgie, R. (2011). Presidentialism, Parliamentarism and Semi-Presidentialism: Bringing Parties Back In. *Government and Opposition*, 46(3), 392–409. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2011.01345.x>
6. Tsebelis, G. (1995). Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism and Multipartyism. *British Journal of Political Science*, 25(3), 289–325. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/194257>