G53:3300: Applications of Game Theoretic Models to American Politics

Spring 2004

Professor Rebecca Morton

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Office Hours: 8:30-10 am Fridays or by appointment
Class Meeting Time: 10-noon Fridays

Course Prerequisites: At least one of the following courses (either taken prior or concurrently): G53.1110 or G53.2105 or G53.2106. Students also should have completed G53.1150.

Course Description: This class focuses on how game theoretic models have and can be used to address substantive issues in American politics. Students will be expected to have some exposure to the use of game theory in political science as well as regression analysis. The class will focus on how to bridge from the game theoretical work in political science to understanding the empirical world of American politics. We will read and discuss a number of game theoretic works, which are inspired or related to the environment of real world American politics. However, much of the work we will read has not been examined empirically in a systematic fashion. Where empirical analysis related to the work exists, we will discuss and evaluate that work. Where empirical analysis does not exist, we will explore how that analysis might be conducted fruitfully. Most of the class will emphasize game theoretic models in the area of electoral politics since this work is less well represented in the American politics core course and other courses at NYU and an area with opportunities for empirical evaluation (an area where the theory and the existing empirical work is often much less connected than elsewhere in American Politics). Furthermore, because of the widespread use of the elections in choosing governmental officials and sometimes directly making policy in American Politics, understanding the American electoral process is essential to understanding American Politics.

Assignments: Your grade will be based on three factors:

First, 40% of your grade will be based on your class participation, which will include both discussions and a couple of brief presentations of the articles assigned to the class.

Second, 30% of your grade will be based on a research paper that is due at the end of the semester (you will be expected to give a brief presentation to the class on your paper at the end of the semester). In the research paper you will take a game theoretic model that is inspired by or related to the environment of American
politics (in most cases a model that has been devised previously, however, you may create your own model – if you have lots of time!) and conduct a preliminary empirical analysis of that model.

The remaining 30% of your grade will be based on a number of other short assignments, including homework problems, research proposals, and “referee reports” which will be explained in more detail in class.

**Texts and Readings:** The following text is required (the rest of the course will comprise of readings listed below, a course pack will be available for the required readings):


**Tentative Class Schedule**

**Friday, January 23rd**

**Introduction to the Course**

Required Reading: Morton, Methods and Models, entire (particular emphasis should be paid to chapter 4).

**Friday, January 30th**

**Game Theoretic Models of Voter Turnout – Foundations** (required readings are starred)


**Friday, February 6th**

**Game Theoretic Models of Voter Turnout – the Swing Voter’s Curse, Random Voters, & the Poisson Approach** (required readings are starred)


Friday, February 13\textsuperscript{th}

Game Theoretic Models of Voter Turnout – the Group Approach (required readings are starred)


Friday, February 20\textsuperscript{th}

More on Groups and Voting


Friday, February 27\textsuperscript{th}

A Sampling of Empirical Evidence on Game Theoretic Models of Turnout and Some Applications to Substantive Issues (required readings are starred)


Friday, March 5th
Moving Beyond Turnout to a First Cut of Understanding Candidates in Plurality Rule Elections (required readings are starred)

Friday, March 12th – (Public Choice Meetings are this weekend so this class may need to be rescheduled for a different day)
Voters and Candidates in Primaries and Sequential Elections (required readings are starred)

Friday, March 19th Spring Break No Class

Friday, March 26th
Voters and Candidates in Primaries and Sequential Elections Empirics (required readings are starred)
Friday, April 2nd
Voters, Candidates, and Parties (required readings are starred)

Friday, April 9th – (Good Friday so this class may need to be rescheduled for a different day)
Interest Groups & Money in Elections (required readings are starred)

Friday, April 16th – Midwest Political Science Association Meetings (to be rescheduled for a different day)
More on Information and the Media in Elections (required readings are starred)
Baron, David, working paper.

**Friday, April 23**

**Shared But Limited Powers and American Elections (required readings are starred)**

**Friday, April 30**

**Presentation of Student Papers**