

Pos 496Z Great Ideas in Political Science

Peter Breiner

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to some of the more significant ideas that have shaped political science. It will also introduce you to some of the fundamental methodological problems of studying politics. The theme I have chosen for the course is the relation between *ordinary civic actors and professional political actors, or put more generally, the relation between institutionalized politics and non-institutional or extra-institutional politics*. Among the questions we will ask are the following:

1. Are only professional politicians capable of making competent and responsible decisions or do ordinary citizens have an equal capacity? How do these two kinds of actors interact?
2. Under what circumstances do ordinary people take politics into their own hands and under what circumstances do they leave politics to professional politicians and established political parties?
3. Why have political scientists been often inclined to view the political behavior of ordinary citizens as motivated by crowd psychology, apathy, or momentary passions? Why do other political scientists claim it is rational for citizens not to involve themselves in politics? Why might some political scientists think both views are wrong?
4. Should we study daily resistances to power, protests, and rebellions, in the same way as we would study voting, parties, interest groups, professional politicians, and political leaders?
5. Can active civic engagement be institutionalized and if so, under what conditions?
6. In what sense are the political beliefs of citizens are they shaped by ideologies, and to what extent are they shaped by interests? Why do people often vote against their interests?

In answering these questions we will discover *that different answers are intertwined with the different methods* we use in the study of politics. Indeed, we will discover often times that the methodological approach we take to understanding both institutional politics (party competition, struggles among political leaders, voting, and legislating) and extra-institutional politics (protests, local resistance, revolutions and civic engagement) will lead to widely varying accounts both of their political meaning and of their efficacy. In effect *different methodological approaches will tell us different “stories” about what is politically going on*—and this is so whether we study voting, the conflict among political parties, or the meaning of a protest movement and its demands.

In this course, we are going to encounter a number of different kinds of approaches to the study of politics and often we will notice that they provide different stories for what appears to be the same political phenomenon. Here are some of the approaches we will discover: 1) *the interpretive approach* in which we seek to understand how political actors understand themselves; 2) *the quantitative approach* in which we aggregate different events or opinions to see if they correlate with certain political variables; 3) *the rational choice approach* in which we model political actors as if they were rational economic agents each trying to maximize their interests given limited knowledge; 3) *the historical sociological approach* which tries to lay out the long range developmental trends through which political structures and political agents

emerge and the way these trends enable and constrain political action; 4) *the political theory approach* that seeks to understand politics as a realm in which fundamental political principles are fought over, realized, or undermined; 5) *the political ideological approach* in which political initiatives and political conflicts are viewed as struggles among political ideologies—rough systems of concepts that help mobilize people and give direction to parties, movements, and actors. Even as you engage with the fundamental tension in this course between institutional and extra-institutional politics, I would hope you would also recognize that the different methodologies political scientists employ will lead to different accounts of this tension.

Required Books

Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures* (Hackett)

Albert Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements* (Harvard Press)

Mancur Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Harvard University Press)

Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (Princeton University Press)

Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton)

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin/Viking)

Readings on Blackboard

Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (chapters 20-23).

Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (selections).

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs* (selection on interest group politics and the political entrepreneur).

Martin Gilens, Ben Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens” forthcoming in *Perspectives in Politics* Fall 2014.

Charles Tilly “Speaking Your Mind Without Elections, Surveys, or Social Movements” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47: 461-478, 1983.

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, chs. 1, 5.

E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd” in *Past and Present* 50, Feb.

1971. Taylor Branch, *The Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (selection on the Montgomery Bus Boycott).

Lawrence Ezrow, Timoth Helwig, “Reponding to Voters or Responding to Markets: Political Parties and Public Opinion in an Era of Globalization” *International Studies Quarterly* (recommended).

August 27, **Introduction to Course.**

Part I: Institutional Politics

A. Models of Politics

Professional Politics and Political Leadership

September 1, Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” in *The Vocation Lectures* (focus on pp. 32-76)

September 3, **No class.**

September 8 Finish Discussing Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” focusing on qualities necessary for a vocational politician and Weber’s concept of political responsibility.

.Party Competition, Elitism, and Political Leadership

September 10, Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, chs. 20-21

("The Setting of the Problem," "The Classical Theory of Democracy,") (Blackboard)
September 15, chapters 22-23 ("Another Theory of Democracy," "The Inference")
(Blackboard).

Pluralism, Political Leadership, and the Political Entrepreneur

September 17, Robert Dahl, *Who Governs*, pp. 1-12, 200-220 (Blackboard)

September 22, *Who Governs*, pp. 223-228, 305-325 (Blackboard).

September 24, Dahl's self-criticism: Robert Dahl, "Pluralism Revisited" *Comparative Politics* 10, 2 (1978). (Blackboard)

Recommended: Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, "What is Democracy," pp. 35-44 (may read with Sept 24 assignment)

Friday, October 2 First Paper due on Weber, Schumpeter and Dahl and professional politics. Hard copy in Hu0B16 by 3 pm and e-mail me attached copy. Topics will be handed out in advance.

B. Approaches to Institutional Politics

Voting and Elections: why voters vote against their interests or do they?

September 29, Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* pp. 1-95
(Blackboard)

October 1, Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, pp. 97-141 "The Development of Ideologies," "The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies"
(Blackboard)

October 6, Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 238-271 "The Returns from Information and their Diminution," "The Causes and Effects of Rational Abstention" (Blackboard)

October 8 Criticisms of rational choice model: Brian Barry, *Sociologists, Economist & Democracy* ch. 5 (a criticism of Downs) (Blackboard)

October 13, Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chs 1-4.

October 15 Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chs. 10. Read either ch 6 ("Homer Gets a Tax Break") or 9 ("Inequality and Political Representation").

October 20, Bartels updated? Finish up Bartels and read: Martin Gilens, Ben Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens" forthcoming in *Perspectives in Politics* Fall 2014 (Blackboard).

Recommended: For a European perspective on same problem.

Lawrence Ezrow, Timothy Helwig, "Responding to Voters or Responding to Markets: Political Parties and Public Opinion in an Era of Globalization" *International Studies Quarterly* (Blackboard)

Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void* (Verso)

Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time*

Part II: Extra-Institutional Politics—How do Ordinary People Deal with Power and Domination?

The Debate over Collective Movements:

October 22, Charles Tilly “Speaking your Mind Without Elections, Surveys, or Social Movements” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47: 461-478, 1983. (Blackboard)

October 27, Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, chs. 1 (“Contentious Politics and Social Movements”), 5 (“Acting Contentiously”) (Blackboard)

October 29, Mancur Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action*, chs. 1-2
November 3, Mancur Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action*, ch. 6

November 5 and November 10, Albert Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements* (entire)
Monday, November 2, Second Paper Due (8 pages) on Downs vs. Bartels and Gilson/Page on inequality in voting and representation and whether or not voters vote against own interests. Hand in hard copy in Hu0B16 by 3pm and e-mail me attached copy.

Historical and Sociological Studies of Crowds and Protest: Repertoires old and modern.

November 12, E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd” in *Past and Present* 50, Feb. 1971 (Blackboard)

November 17, Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: The King Years*, selection on the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Blackboard)
Possible additional reading on modern protests and resistances.

Recommended, James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, chapter 7 “Beyond the War of Words,” (Blackboard).

Part III: “Institutionalizing” Civic Engagement: Culture and Political Participation

November 19, Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 3-82.

November 24, Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp.83-185.

November 26, No class-Thanksgiving.

November 30, Third Paper Due On How to Study Social Movement and Contentious Politics in Hu B16 and attached 8+ pages.

Part IV: The Meaning of Revolution: Constituting Political Liberty?

December 1, Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, chapters 1-2 (recommended ch. 3).

December 3, Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, chapter 6.

December 8, Catching up and Summing Up: Putnam vs. Hannah Arendt

Thursday, December 17, take home final due. e-mail me attached copy.

Requirements

1. First, each person will be asked to give a 15 minute lecture/presentation at least once on some problem raised by the reading of that day. I will suggest the problem and leave it to you to work out a solution. You may volunteer in advance, or volunteer as we go along.
2. Second, there will be three assigned papers, all based on the reading and a take home final. I will hand out the topics for the papers in class though you may reshape them as long as you consult with me. Papers should be approximately 8-10 pages long double-spaced. You may rewrite the first three papers with grades averaged in, though I will be biased toward the revised paper. Rewrites need to be handed in no more than one week after the papers are returned. Each paper plus the final will count for 20% of the grade with 20% of the grade based on your participation in the seminar—this includes discussion and presentations.

Office Hours:

I am available Tu Th 2:45-3:45 in HuB16 and Wednesdays in my downtown office, Milne 220 by appointment. I also will be happy to meet with you the hour before our class meets if you alert me in advance. If these times don't work, I am happy to arrange a different meeting time.

Phone and E-Mail:

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Some Additional Reading

On Chief Executives as Political Entrepreneurs and Leaders

Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*

On Voting and the Rationality of Voters

Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, chs. 1, 9.

On Rational Choice Theory and its limits

William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*

Kenneth Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*

Donald Green, Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice*

Jon Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens*

Jon Elster, *Sour Groups*

Albert Hirschman, "Against Parsimony: Three Easy Ways of Complicating Some Categories of Economic Discourse", *Economics and Philosophy*, 1: 7–22. Reprinted in A. Hirschman, *Rival Views of Market Society*

On Studying Mass Movements and Politics

Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*

Charles Tilly, *Mobilization and Revolution*

Charles Tilly, Lesley J Wood, *Social Movements 1768-2012*

Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances*

Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*
Jack Goldstone ed, *States, Parties, and Social Movements*
James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*
E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*
Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy*
George Rude, *The Crowd in History*

On Civic Engagement and its Decline

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*