Political Economy (Econ 2670)

In this course, we will take a formal look at various environments in which a group of individuals (committee, society, congress etc) takes a binding decision through some institutional mechanism (consensus, elections, legislative bargaining etc). Starting from a more abstract analysis of elections, we shall later get into particular and more applied analysis of real world political institutions like the media, political parties, legislative process etc. For most part, the course will use concepts of non-cooperative game theory.

Classes will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays at Posvar 4940 from 1:30 pm till 2:45 pm. There will be no exams, but there will be written and oral assignments. There are three kinds of assignments. Every week starting from week 3, you need to select a paper covered in class and write a critical report on it. The report will be due Monday of next week. I will give you guidelines for how to write a critical report. You will also have to make two 30 minute presentations on papers that you can choose in consultation with me. These presentations will start from week 8. There will be two presentations a week, and the same student cannot present twice in the same week. Finally, you will have to write an original research proposal or a literature review on a specific topic selected in consultation with me. The subject matter of the research proposal or the literature review must be related to the material discussed during the course. I will provide specific guidelines regarding the proposal in class. The proposal/review is due on April 21st, 2014. Critical reports will constitute 33.33% of the grade, the oral presentations 33.33% and the final project 33.34%.

So far as the actual coverage of material is concerned, it is somewhat fluid. There will be four or five sections: Spatial political competition (weeks 1 through 3), voting and information (weeks 4 through 7), Voting motivations (week 8) legislative bargaining (week 9 and 10) and media and campaigns for weeks 11 and 12. In the remaining weeks, we will discuss open problems for research.

The main references will be of two types – textbook chapters and survey articles for older material and original research articles for more current work. Here is an indicative list of material that I intend to cover in the course.
Political Competition (Weeks 1 – 3)


Voting, participation and Information: Weeks 4 - 7

Information Aggregation

10. Laurent Bouton and Micael Castanheira, 2012, One Person, Many Votes: Divided Majority and Information Aggregation in Elections, Econometrica
Abstention and Participation “paradox”


Information Acquisition


Voting Motivations (Week 8)

Strategic Candidates, campaigns and media (Week 9 and 10)


Accountability (Week 11)


Legislative Bargaining (Week 12 and 13)