

Fachbereich 03 Gesellschaftswissenschaften
Institut für Politikwissenschaft
Professur für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft
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Office Hours by appointment: Tuesday 11am-12noon

Seminar:
Social choice and interest aggregation

Course Outline
(version: 16 April 2024)

Summer Term 2024
Thursdays, 10:15-11:45
Seminar building - SH 4.105
Modules: PW-MA-2b/3b/4b, PW-MA-2a/3a/4a, CD-MA-D2, CD-MA-B
First session on 18 April 2024

Democracy follows a simple logic: Citizens express their preferences by voting, and what a majority of voters want is implemented. Social Choice Theory shows that what a majority of voters want depends on what voting method is used. Social Choice Theory even challenges the idea that a majority will can be determined by voting at all. This casts severe doubt on whether and how democracies can represent their citizens.

Learning objectives

Provided you read the assigned literature and participated in classes actively, you will

- Command basic knowledge of how Social Choice Theory understand and models collective decision-making,
- Understand the Social Choice Theory's challenge of democracy and potential mechanisms modern political systems rely on to counter these challenges,
- Improve your academic writing and reading skills.

Expectations

You should be interested in rational theories of Political Science and collective decision making. To successfully pass this course, you should have an interest in how political decisions are taken. Social Choice Theory is a subfield of Game Theory and often uses mathematical notation. The mathematical skills required are basic and everybody who studies at a university has them. However, you should be willing to engage with mathematical notation.

Literature

We will mostly read research articles. Details can be found below and in the seminar's OLAT course.

Enrollment

Classes start on 18 April 2024. Students can enroll via the central enrollment systems at the Fachbereich 03 according to its rules. If you have questions concerning the enrollment procedure, please contact the Studiendekanat.

Requirements

Participants can receive a participation certificate (3 CP) as well as a marked record (Modulabschlussprüfung). A participation certificate requires (1) steady attendance and a (2) presentation. A marked record requires an additional exam which is graded with "passed" (4,0) or better.

In class, we will discuss the assigned literature. To receive a participation certificate (3 CP), you must (1) not have missed class more than twice, (2) read and engaged with the assigned literatures, and (3) give a presentation on an assigned reading (roughly 15mins) in class. The presentation should present the assigned reading and link it to the readings that all participants read. I expect you to use slides (e.g., Powerpoint) for your presentation.

For a marked record (5CP, Modulabschlussprüfung) you also need to submit a term paper that is graded as passed (4,0) or better. Your term paper should not exceed 20 pages and has to be submitted no later than 31 August 2024 5pm by email to Lehrer@soz.uni-frankfurt.de. Additional guidelines for the term paper will be communicated during classes.

Please indicate until 25 April 3pm if you want to take this course. If you wish to receive a participation certificate or a marked record for this seminar, please indicate at least three sessions for which you are willing give a presentation at <https://terminplaner6.dfn.de/p/44e31e954815bc691b7101d287a5bb81-688539>. I will inform you about the presentation schedule in the following days.

If you study in any program that allows for an electronic registration for this seminar's exams (e.g., participation certificate or marked record), you need to register for your examination online and in advance. Please note the rules the corresponding Prüfungsamt sets. I cannot officially acknowledge your work otherwise.

Schedule

Session	Date	Topic
1	18 Apr 24	Introduction and Organization
2	25 Apr 24	Basics: Preferences, Voting, Strategic Voting
3	2 May 24	Condorcet Jury Theorem, Wisdom of Crowds
	9 May 24	Public Holiday
4	16 May 24	Voting Rules (aka Electoral Systems)
5	23 May 24	Unidimensional Spatial Theory, Median Voter Theorem
	30 May 24	Public Holiday
6	6 Jun 24	Multidimensional Spatial Theory, Chaos Theorems
7	13 Jun 24	How to evade the chaos: Veto Players (Reading Week)
8	20 Jun 24	How to evade the chaos: Application VPs
9	27 Jun 24	Arrow's Impossibility Theorem
	4 Jul 24	International Conference
10	11 Jul 24	"Applied" Social Choice Theory
11	18 Jul 24	Revision and Final Term Paper

Course Outline

Mandatory reading for all participants is marked with an *.

Readings for presentations are denoted by a +.

Session 1 (18 April 2024): Introduction and Organization

Session 2 (25 April 2024): Preferences, (Strategic) Voting, Paradox of Voting

*Shepsle, K. A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. W. W. Norton. Chapter 2.

*Blais, André. "Rational choice and the calculus of voting." *Handbook of Social Choice and Voting*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015. 54-66.

Session 3 (2 May 2024): Wisdom of Crowds and Condorcet's Jury Theorem

Surowski Wisdom of Crowds

+Dietrich, Franz, and Kai Spiekermann. "Jury theorems." *The Routledge handbook of social epistemology*. Routledge, 2019. 386-396.

Session 4 (16 May 2024): Spatial Theory (Unidimensional), Median Voter Theorem

*Adams, James, et al. "The spatial voting model." *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*. SAGE Publications (2020): 205-223.

+Grofman, Bernard. "Downs and two-party convergence." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 7 (2004): 25-46.

Session 5 (23 May 2024): Voting Rules (aka Electoral Systems)

*Shepsle, K. A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. Vereinigtes Königreich: W.W. Norton. Kapitel 7.

+Boix, Carles. "Setting the rules of the game: the choice of electoral systems in advanced democracies." *American political science review* 93.3 (1999): 609-624.

Session 6 (6 June 2024): Spatial Theory (Multidimensional), Chaos Theorems

*Plümper, Thomas, and Christian W. Martin. "Multi-party competition: A computational model with abstention and memory." *Electoral Studies* 27.3 (2008): 424-441.

+Aldrich, J. H. (2012). *Why Parties? A Second Look*. USA: University of Chicago Press. Pages 27-40.

Session 7 (13 June 2024): Reading Week: How to evade the Chaos

*Aldrich, J. H. (2012). *Why Parties? A Second Look*. USA: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.

Session 8 (20 June 2024): How to evade the chaos: Application VPs

*Tsebelis, G. (2011). *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton University Press.
Chapter 1

+Tsebelis, G. (2011). *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton University Press.
Chapter 2

Session 9 (27 June 2024): Arrow's Impossibility Theorem

+*Duddy, Conal, and Ashley Piggins. "Arrow's Theorem." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 2020.

Session 10 (11 July 2024): "Applied" Social Choice Theory

*Murr, Andreas E. "The wisdom of crowds: Applying Condorcet's jury theorem to forecasting US presidential elections." *International Journal of Forecasting* 31.3 (2015): 916-929.

+Lehrer, Roni, Sebastian Juhl, and Thomas Gschwend. 2019. "The Wisdom of Crowds Design for Sensitive Survey Questions." *Electoral Studies* 57:99-109.

Session 11 (18 July 2024): Summary and Final Term Paper