

Political Behavior and Institutions

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1. Description

When do countries succeed or fail to devise effective policy responses to large-scale challenges such as economic crises, debt problems, climate change, pandemics, or conflict? We answer this question by conceptualizing policy responses as the result of political behavior and institutions. Key topics include the analysis and formation of policy preferences, social choice and voting systems, and short-term policymaking vs. future-oriented reforms. Applications include electoral politics, economic policy, and climate action. Students will also complete a case study that poses a specific economic policy challenge for which participants serve as consultants offering policy advice to political leaders.

2. Prerequisites

Students should have taken a first course in political science, comparative politics, international economics, political economy, public economics, international law, or public law, and should have basic research design and quantitative methods skills.

3. Requirements

Enrollment and General Policy: This course requires enrollment on a credit basis. The value of this course depends on preparation and participation. Therefore, students must complete the mandatory readings before coming to class. They should expect to be asked questions that refer to and build on the readings.

Surveys: Students will take several online surveys and quizzes to enhance engagement and improve learning. Participation is required.

Presentations: Each student (or group of students) presents one article/s marked with an asterisk in the reading list. The presentation should be 15 minutes and should:

- inform the audience about the article's key motivation and contribution
- briefly explain the theoretical argument and the main predictions
- summarize the research design
- highlight the key finding(s)
- identify ways in which one could improve the article
- offer two discussion questions
- identify one other presentation/reading to which your presentation/reading is related and explain how.

Formatting rules for all written work: Times New Roman, 12pt, single spacing, 2cm margins (top, bottom, left, right), full justification, page numbers, Harvard citation system (<https://www.mendeley.com/guides/harvard-citation-guide>).

Case Study: The case study is due one week before the case study presentations. Send one copy of your report per group to the instructor via email. Confirm that this you are submitting your own work. Students should be prepared to present a brief summary of their case study (max. three slides) in class and to answer which parts of the assignment they found particularly easy and which they found challenging.

Formatting rules for all written work: Times New Roman, 12pt, single spacing, 1in margins (top, bottom, left, right), Harvard citation system.

Course evaluation

To encourage students to take the evaluation survey for this class, each student will receive

- 1% extra credit on their final grade if 80% of all enrolled students participate in the survey
- 2% extra credit on their final grade if 90% of all enrolled students participate in the survey
- 3% extra credit on their final grade if 100% of all enrolled students participate in the survey.

Final grade and grade components: The final grade is computed as the average of the following:

- Paper presentation (50%)
- Case study report (50%)
- Participation: up to 10% extra credit
- Course evaluation survey: up to 3% extra credit

Grade	Point Total
1,0	95-100
1,3	90-94
1,7	85-89
2,0	80-84
2,3	75-79
2,7	70-74
3,0	65-69
3,3	60-64
3,7	55-59
4,0	50-54
5,0	< 50

4. Time and Room

Room: S103, IBW Building, Herbert-Levin-Str. 2

Dates:

- April 9, 10-11.30 (IPOL Kick off at 2pm)
- April 16
- April 30
- May 7
- May 14
- May 28
- June 11

5. Aims of the Course

The specific aims of this course are as follows:

- to familiarize students with key topics in political behavior, comparative politics, and political economy
- to provide students with knowledge about economic policy and climate issues and how these relate to the study of political behavior and institutions from a political science perspective

- to provide an intellectual basis for studying phenomena from different viewpoints
- to improve students' analytical and methods skills.

6. Key Skills

The course seeks to develop or enhance the following key skills:

- Communication: writing clearly and to the point, writing to deadlines, presenting ideas and arguments orally
- Working with others: making/challenging contributions, listening to others, exchanging interpretations
- Improving learning and performance: discriminating reading, essay preparation, accepting and responding to criticism, developing own opinions
- Information technology: word processing, library searches, use of the internet
- Problem-solving: conceptualization of issues, identification and evaluation of research designs, analysis and synthesis of evidence and argumentation, evaluation of the credibility of evidence, assessing the validity of conclusions.

7. Textbooks

Meirowitz, Adam and Nolan McCarty. 2010. *Political Game Theory: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shepsle, Kenneth and Mark S. Boncheck. 2010. *Analyzing Politics. Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Watson, Joel. 2013. *Strategy: An Introduction to Game Theory*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

8. Reading List and Schedule

		Topic and Readings * Mandatory readings and readings for student presentations
1)	April 9 10.00-11.30	<u>Introduction</u>
2)	April 9	<u>Foundations</u> *Alós-Ferrer, Carlos and Āura-Georg Granić. 2012. Two Field Experiments on Approval Voting in Germany, in: Social Choice and Welfare 39: 171-205. *Hardin, Garrett. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons, in: Nature 162 (3859): 1243-1248.
3)	April 16	<u>Retrospective Voting</u> *Stokes, Leah C. 2016. Electoral Backlash against Climate Policy: A Natural Experiment on Retrospective Voting and Local Resistance to Public Policy, in: American Journal of Political Science 60 (4): 958-974. Hazlett, Chad and Matteo Mildemberger. 2020. Wildfire exposure increases pro-environment voting within Democratic but not Republican areas, in: American Political Science Review (forthcoming). * Kramer, Gerald H. 1983. The Ecological Fallacy Revisited Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting, in: American Political Science Review 77 (10): 92-111. Linn, Suzanna, Nagler, Jonathan, and Marco A. Morales. 2010. Economics, Elections, and Voting Behavior, in: Leighley, Jan E. (ed.): The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior (online edition), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235476.003.0020 .
4)	April 16	<u>Intertemporal Policymaking and Long-Term Policy Impacts</u> * Bechtel, Michael M., Mannino, M. 2023: Ready When the Big One Comes? Natural Disasters and Mass Support for Preparedness Investment, in: Political Behavior 45: 1045-1070. Bechtel, Michael M. and Jens Hainmueller. 2011. How Lasting Is Voter Gratitude? An Analysis of the Short- and Long-Term Electoral Returns to Beneficial Policy, in: American Journal of Political Science 55 (4): 852-868. Homola, Jonathan, , Pereira, Miguel M. and Margit Tavits. 2020, Legacies of the Third Reich: Concentration Camps and Out-Group Intolerance, in: American Political Science Review 114 (2): 573-590. Jacobs, Alan M. 2016. Policy Making for the Long Term in Advanced Democracies, in: Annual Review of Political Science 19: 433-454. Obradovich, Nick, Dustin Tingley, and Iyad Rahwana. 2018. Effects of Environmental Stressors on Daily Governance, in: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 115 (35): 8710-8715.
5)	April 30	<u>Leadership and Fairness</u> Difffenbaugh, Noah S. and Mashall Burke. 2019. Global Warming Has Increased Global Economic Inequality, in: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 116 (20): 9808-9813.

		<p>*Klinsky, Sonja, Dowlatabadi, Hadi, and Timothy McDaniels. 2012. Comparing Public Rationales for Justice Trade-offs in Mitigation and Adaptation Climate Policy Dilemmas, in: <i>Global Environmental Change</i> 22: 862-876.</p> <p>*Martinez-Alvarez, Cesar B., Hazlett, Chad, and Michael Ross. 2022. Political Leadership has Limited Impact on Fossil Fuel Taxes and Subsidies, in: <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i> 119 (47): e2208024119.</p>
6)	April 30	<p><u>Redistribution Across Actors and Time</u></p> <p>Bechtel, Michael M., Scheve, Kenneth F. and Elisabeth van Lieshout. 2020. Constant Carbon Pricing Increases Support for Climate Action Compared to Ramping Up Costs Over Time, in: <i>Nature Climate Change</i> 10: 1004-1009.</p> <p>*Malhotra, Neil, Benoit Monin, and Michael Tomz. 2019. Does Private Regulation Preempt Public Regulation?, in: <i>American Political Science Review</i> 113 (1): 19-37.</p> <p>*Makov, Tamar, George E. Newman, and Gal Zauberman. 2020. Inconsistent Allocations of Harm Versus Benefits May Exacerbate Environmental Inequality, in: <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i> 117 (16): 8820-8824.</p>
7)	May 7	<p><u>Economic Crises</u></p> <p>Arias, Eric and David Stasavage. 2019. How Large Are the Political Costs of Fiscal Austerity?, in: <i>Journal of Politics</i> 81 (4): 1167-1550.</p> <p>Alt, James, David Dreyer Lassen, and Joachim Wehner. 2014. It Isn't Just about Greece: Domestic Politics, Transparency and Fiscal Gimmickry in Europe. <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 44 (4): 707-716.</p> <p>Bansak, Kirk, Michael Bechtel, and Yotam Margalit. 2021. Why Austerity? The Mass Politics of a Contested Policy, in: <i>American Political Science Review</i> 115 (2): 486-505.</p> <p>*Barnes, Lucy and Timothy Hicks. 2018. Making Austerity Popular: The Media and Mass Attitudes toward Fiscal Policy, in: <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 62 (2): 340-354.</p> <p>Bechtel, Michael M., Jens Hainmueller, and Yotam Margalit. 2014. Preferences for International Redistribution. The Divide Over the Eurozone Bailouts, in: <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 58 (4): 835-856.</p> <p>*Born, Benjamin, Müller, Gernot, and Johannes Pfeiffer. 2020. Does Austerity Pay Off?, in: <i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i> 102 (2): 323-338.</p> <p>Rüdiger, Wolfgang and Georgios Karyotis. 2013. Who Protests in Greece? Mass Opposition to Austerity. <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 44 (3): 487-513.</p> <p>Hübscher, Evelyne and Thomas Sattler. 2017. Fiscal Consolidation under Electoral Risk, in: <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> 57(1): 151-168.</p>
8)	May 7	<p><u>Designing Domestic Climate Policy</u></p> <p>*Aldy, Joseph E./Krupnick, Alan J./Newell, Richard G./Parry, Ian W. H./Pizer, William A. 2010. Designing Climate Mitigation Policy, in: <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i> 48 (4): 903-934.</p> <p>Bergquist, Parrish and Christopher Warshaw. 2018. Does Global Warming Increase Public Concern about Climate Change?, in: <i>Journal of Politics</i> 81 (2): 686-691.</p>

		<p>Egan, Patrick J. and Megan Mullin. 2012. Turning Personal Experience into Political Attitudes: The Effect of Local Weather on American’s Perceptions about Global Warming, in: <i>Journal of Politics</i> 74 (3): 796-809.</p> <p>*Gaikwad, Nikar, Federica Genovese, and Dustin Tingley. 2022. “Creating Climate Coalitions: Mass Preferences for Compensating Vulnerability in the World’s Two Largest Democracies“, in: <i>American Political Science Review</i> 116 (4): 1165-1183.</p>
9)	May 14	<p><u>Designing Global Climate Institutions</u></p> <p>Armstrong et al. 2022: “Exceeding 1.5°C global warming could trigger multiple climate tipping points“, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abn7950.</p> <p>*Aklin, Michael and Matteo Mildenberger. 2020. Prisoners of the wrong dilemma: Why distributive conflict, not collective action, characterizes the politics of climate change, in: <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> 20 (4): 4-27.</p> <p>*Bechtel, Michael M., Scheve, Kenneth F. and Elisabeth van Lieshout. 2022. Improving Public Support for Climate Action Through Multilateralism, in: <i>Nature Communications</i> 13: 6441.</p> <p>Bechtel, Michael M. and Kenneth F. Scheve. 2013. Mass Support for Global Climate Agreements Depends on Institutional Design, in: <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences</i> 110 (34): 13763-13768.</p> <p>Kennard, Amanda and Keith Schnakenberg. 2023. Global Climate Policy and Collective Action: A Comment, in: <i>Global Environmental Politics</i> (forthcoming).</p> <p>Keohane, Robert O. and David Victor. 2016. Cooperation and Discord in Global Climate Policy, in: <i>Nature Climate Change</i> 6: 570-575.</p> <p>Tingley, Dustin and Mike Tomz. 2014. Conditional Cooperation and Climate Change, in: <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 74 (3): 344-368.</p> <p>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): “Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policy Makers”</p>
10)	May 14	<u>Grexit Case Study Clinic</u>
11)	May 28	<u>Grexit Case Study Presentations</u>
12)	May 28	<u>Case Study Debriefing</u>
13)	June 11	<u>Review</u>
14)	June 11	<u>Feedback and Course Evaluation</u>

9. Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication of data and records, and other types of dishonesty and misconduct constitute breaches of academic integrity. Violations such as cheating on an exam result in failing the class.

10. Instructor Short Bio

[Michael Bechtel](#) (1978) is Professor of Political Economy at the University of Cologne and Director of the Institute for Political Science and European Affairs. His research explores how countries can address global economic and environmental policy problems. Current projects analyze mass support for international climate cooperation, the politics of natural disasters, and policy responses to economic crises. Much of his scholarly work uses original survey data, experimental designs, and causal inference techniques. Bechtel’s articles have appeared in journals such as *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *Journal of Politics*, *International Organization*, *Nature Climate*

Change, and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. His research has been featured in media outlets in the United States and Europe and in [animated movies](#).