

**University of Pennsylvania
Political Science Department
Spring 2003
Fridays, 2-5, McNeil 582**

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**Political Science 475-401
Philosophy, Politics and Economics 475-401
SOCIAL CHOICE AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY**

The purpose of the seminar will be to explore two radically different images of democratic politics that have emerged from social choice theory, the formal study of how individual preferences aggregate to make collective decisions. If political choice occurs across one dimension (such as the traditional left-right ideological spectrum), the theory yields a majority choice at the position favored by the median voter, which, under certain circumstances, will also be a winning, equilibrium strategy in elections and other decisions made by voting. This result has powerful practical, normative, and scientific implications. It advises politicians to adopt centrist programs, endorses such policies as democratically desirable, predicts that policies in the vicinity of the median will remain stable unless and until voters' preferences shift, and explains political change by looking to forces—typically exogenous to politics—that influence median preferences (e.g., demographics, economics, culture, ideas). On the other hand, if political choices are shaped by multiple, cross-cutting issue dimensions, then majority voting will rarely produce a stable equilibrium. Politicians can win by manipulating issues opportunistically and sometimes radically. The will of the people becomes a debatable and perhaps empty notion. Political outcomes, unless constrained by institutions, are likely to be unstable, whether or not underlying preferences change; and political explanation depends on close attention to historical sequence and conjunction and to inherently political causes, such as the skill and strategy of leaders.

This course is intended primarily as a capstone senior seminar for majors in either Political Science or Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. It will also be suitable for senior majors in related programs, such as Economics or Philosophy. In addition, graduate students in Political Science are welcome. Other interested students should confer with the instructor before enrolling. Although there is a huge formal literature on social choice theory, the seminar is about its political and philosophical implications and applications, rather than the formal analysis per se. Willingness to work through occasional moderately technical expositions will be necessary, but there are no mathematical prerequisites.

Materials

The following three paperback books have been ordered and should be available for you to purchase at the Penn Bookstore, 36th and Walnut Sts.:

Paul E. Johnson, *Social Choice: Theory and Research*, Sage, 1998

William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Yale University Press, 1986

William H. Riker, *Liberalism against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*, Waveland, 1982

A fourth book was ordered but is reported out of print: Gerald S. Strom, *The Logic of Lawmaking*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

In addition, two more paperbacks have been ordered late (but I expect in time for actual use) as recommended purchases:

Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale, 1994

Iain McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics*, Oxford, 2001

Both are also on reserve in Rosengarten.

A coursepack containing required readings from sources other than the first three books above will be available for purchase from the Campus Copy Center, 3907 Walnut St. However, for many sessions, you will have a choice of readings (varying, for example, in technical difficulty), and the syllabus also includes numerous optional readings. You will not find such options and alternatives in the coursepack, but instead must resort to the Rosengarten Reserve Library, the Van Pelt stacks or Current Periodicals Room, or (for some journals) on-line sources. I will provide a list of books reserved for your use in Rosengarten.

Requirements

During the semester, each student will write **two seminar papers**. Each paper will be on a topic relevant to the readings for a particular session, and must be distributed to all members of the class in time for everyone to read before that meeting. I suggest possible topics for each session on the syllabus below, but you may also devise your own topic; if possible, clear it with me before writing. At the first class meeting, we'll divvy up the sessions, set deadlines, and arrange logistics for distributing the papers. Seminar papers may be distributed to the class as single-spaced email attachments. In this format, they should normally be 3 to 5 pages long. So that I can suggest improvements in your writing, please also give me by class time a hard copy in double-spaced format.

In addition, you will have the choice of writing either a **term paper** or taking a **final exam**. The term paper, which should be at least 15 pages double-spaced, may be an extended essay or a research paper. In writing it, you may (but are not required to) continue with a topic you first explored

in a seminar paper. These papers will be due by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 7. Graduate students must write the term paper, but undergraduates will have the option of taking instead a final exam covering the entire semester. The Registrar has tentatively scheduled our exam for Monday, May 5, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Because this course is intended to be a true seminar, **class participation** by all members will be a crucial part of the learning experience. You are expected to attend all sessions, to arrive well prepared—having read your fellow students’ seminar papers as well as required readings, and to contribute actively to discussions. You will receive a grade reflecting the frequency and quality of your participation.

In calculating semester grades, class participation and seminar papers will be weighted once each. The term paper or final exam will be weighted twice. Because attendance is required, absences will be noted, and your participation grade will be reduced by one full grade (e.g., from an A- to a B-) for each absence, except any due to an incapacitating illness or a family emergency, which must be documented.

Reading Assignments

Readings marked by an asterisk (*) are optional. I encourage you to look over these items and to read those that interest you. Writers of seminar papers should read relevant optional selections as much as possible. Other readings are required; however, if two or more readings are connected by ‘**or**’, they are alternatives. Read at least one of them.

The availability of readings is indicated as follows:

T = in a course text that you can buy at the Bookstore

C = included in the coursepack that you can buy at Campus Copy

R = reserved in Rosengarten

You’ll have to seek out other selections in the Van Pelt stacks, on-line, or elsewhere.

SYLLABUS

Despite the number of optional and alternative items, what follows is only a small fraction of a huge literature. If you know of, or come across items that are especially relevant to the concerns of this course, please call them to my attention.

Please note that references from book chapters may not be included in the coursepack. In such cases, you might want read from your coursepack in the library, with the book itself handy. I

recommend such a practice not only for checking references, but also for getting an overall idea of a book and for browsing in it.

Jan. 17: Introductory Meeting

Jan. 24: Historical Background and Basic Concepts

T Johnson, *Social Choice*, Preface and ch. 1 (pp. ix - 8).

C, R Iain McLean and Arnold B. Urken, eds., *Classics of Social Choice*, University of Michigan Press, 1995, ch. 1, the editors' introduction (pp. 1-63). I also encourage you to browse in the other chapters by the original authors, especially chs. 7 and 8 by Condorcet (particularly pp. 122-43).

T Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 1

*Duncan Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections*, Kluwer, 1987 (orig. 1958), Part II

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Write a biographical report on the Marquis de Condorcet. What were the historical events that stimulated his research into the theory of voting? What was his fate? If you can, discuss his development of the three ideas for which he is best known in political science—the Condorcet criterion for majority rule, the Condorcet voting cycle, and the Condorcet jury theorem.
2. Write a biographical report on the late William Riker. Discuss his impact on political science and the changes in his intellectual positions over his lifetime.
3. Critically appraise Riker's conceptions of liberal and populist interpretations of democracy.

Jan. 31: Arrow's Theorem

T Johnson, ch. 3 (pp. 12-30); **or** (**T**) Riker, *Liberalism*, ch. 5 (pp. 115-36)—* chs. 3 and 4; **or** (**R**) Norman Frohlich and Joe A. Oppenheimer, *Modern Political Economy*, Prentice-Hall, 1978, ch. 1; **or** Kenneth A. Shepsle and Mark S. Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics*, Norton, 1997, chs. 3 and 4. There are also numerous more technical expositions and critiques of the Arrow theorem, but if you find the presentations listed here too elementary (or if you have absorbed them), I suggest you proceed to the original source:

* **R** Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 2nd ed., John Wiley, 1963 (first edition, 1951). I especially recommend Arrow's reply to his critics on pp. 103-20.

*Charles R. Plott, "Axiomatic Social Choice Theory: An Overview and Interpretation," ch. 12 in (R) Brian Barry and Russell Hardin, eds., *Rational Man and Irrational Society?*, Sage, 1982; also in *American Journal of Political Science* 20:3, 1976, pp. 511-27.

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Survey the literature on Arrow's theorem in *political science* before 1980.
2. Think through, discuss, and critique one or more of Arrow's criteria for a social welfare function, as applied to democratic decisions. I particularly recommend attention to condition U (unrestricted domain), condition I (independence of irrelevant alternatives), or transitivity itself.

Feb. 7: Black's Median Voter Theorem

T Johnson, ch. 5 (pp. 49-59) plus refer back to ch. 4 as necessary to understand basic concepts, especially unidimensional and multidimensional spatial models and single-peakedness; or (R) Gerald S. Strom, *The Logic of Lawmaking*, chs. 1 and 2; or Shepsle and Bonchek, pp. 82-91.

* R Black, *Theory of Committees and Elections*, esp. chs IV and VII.

*Duncan Black and R. A. Newing, *Committee Decisions with Complementary Valuation*, Hodge, 1951

C, R Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper and Row, 1957, ch. VIII (but also look at pp. 54-69)

C G. Bingham Powell and Georg S. Vanberg, "Election Laws, Disproportionality and Median Correspondence: Implications for Two Visions of Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science*, 30:3, July 2000, pp. 383-411; or (R) Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*, Yale University Press, 2000, Part III.

T, R Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale University Press, 1994, ch. 7

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. What is the relation (if any) between unidimensionality and single-peaked preferences?
2. Some politicians (e.g., Bill Clinton, Tony Blair) are frequently said to have "moved to the center" in the fashion predicted and prescribed by Black and Downs. Examining the policies of one such

politician in some detail, discuss what the “move to the center” actually meant. Can it be adequately understood with an unidimensional conception of issues?

3. Survey and discuss examples of economists’ using the median voter’s preference as a normative standard.

4. Assuming a unidimensional issue space, critically appraise the median voter test as a normative standard for evaluating political decisions and/or institutions in a democracy.

Feb. 14: Manipulation of Voting Systems, Strategic Voting, and Vote Trading

C Richard G. Niemi and William H. Riker, “The Choice of Voting Systems,” *Scientific American*, 234:6, June 1976, pp. 21-7; **or** Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics*, ch. 7; **or (T)** Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 2

R Strom, *Logic of Lawmaking*, ch. 3;

C Allan Gibbard, “Manipulation of Voting Schemes: A General Result,” pp. 355-66 in (R) Barry and Hardin, eds., *Rational Man and Irrational Society?* (Originally from *Econometrica*, 41, 1973, pp. 587-94)

C, R Frohlich and Oppenheimer, *Modern Political Economy*, pp. 123-40

C William H. Riker and Steven J. Brams, “The Paradox of Vote Trading,” *American Political Science Review*, 67:4, December 1973, pp. 1235-47

*Thomas Schwartz, “Collective Choice, Separation of Issues, and Vote Trading,” *American Political Science Review*, 71:3, September 1977, pp. 999-1010

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. What does it mean to say that all voting systems are manipulable? Are they all equally manipulable? Working out examples, consider the types of manipulation to which different systems are vulnerable.

2. Show how various types of strategic voting and manipulation of voting rules can prevent the election of a Condorcet winner (or, in a spatial context, median-voter choice).

3. What is the relation between vote trading, voting cycles, and multiple issue dimensions? Does vote trading improve or harm collective well-being?

Feb. 21: The Chaos Theorems: Disequilibrium in Multidimensional Politics

T Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 7

T Johnson, pp. 60-80; **or** (R) Strom, *Logic of Lawmaking*, ch. 4; **or** Scott L. Feld and Bernard Grofman, "Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for a Majority Winner in n-Dimensional Spatial Voting Games: An Intuitive Geometric Approach," *American Journal of Political Science*, 31, 1987, pp. 709-28

T Johnson, pp. 93-6 **or** (R) Strom, ch. 7 (both on the uncovered set)

C Nicholas R. Miller, Bernard Grofman, and Scott L. Feld, "The Geometry of Majority Rule," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1:4, October 1989, pp. 379-406

*Richard D. McKelvey, "General Conditions for Global Intransitivities in Formal Voting Models," *Econometrica*, 47:5, September 1979, pp. 1085-1112

*Nicholas R. Miller, "A New Solution Set for Tournaments and Majority Voting," *American Journal of Political Science*, 24:1, February 1980, pp. 68-96

*Richard D. McKelvey, "Covering, Dominance, and Institution-Free Properties of Social Choice," *American Journal of Political Science*, 30, May 1986, pp. 283-314

*Gary W. Cox, "The Uncovered Set and the Core," *American Journal of Political Science*, 31:2, May 1987, pp. 408-22

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. What is the current status of the "chaos" theorems among specialists in the formal theory of social choice?
2. Spell out what the "chaos" results mean in terms of practical political decisions.
3. What is the "uncovered set"? Is it the answer to predictions of "chaos" in multidimensional politics?

Feb. 28: Riker's Challenges to Democratic Theory and Political Science

T Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 10

C Peter C. Ordeshook, Douglas Rae, and William Riker, symposium in the *American Political Science Review*, 74, June 1980, pp. 447-58; *preceded by an article by Riker that can be read as a supplement to his chapter above. This symposium, including Riker's article, also appears in (R) Peter C. Ordeshook and Kenneth A. Shepsle, eds., *Political Equilibrium*, Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982, Part I.

C Nicholas R. Miller, "Pluralism and Social Choice," *American Political Science Review* 77, 1983, pp. 734-47

C Albert Weale, "Review Article: Social Choice Versus Populism? An Interpretation of Riker's Political Theory," *British Journal of Political Science*, 14, 1984, pp. 369-85

T, R Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale University Press, 1994, ch.6

*William H. Riker and Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutional Regulation of Legislative Choice: The Political Consequences of Judicial Deference to Legislatures," *Virginia Law Review*, 74, 1988, pp. 373-401

*Jules Coleman and John Ferejohn, "Democracy and Social Choice," *Ethics*, 97, October 1986, pp. 6-25

*John Dryzek and Christian List, "Social Choice Theory and Deliberative Democracy: A Reconciliation," *British Journal of Political Science*, 33:1, January 2003, pp. 1-23

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Discuss and evaluate Miller's argument. Does he show that "instability" as defined in social choice theory is not a problem?
2. *If* politics typically lacks a stable equilibrium outcome, what does that entail for your view of politics and/or political science? In what ways do you find the prospect attractive or unattractive?

Mar. 7: Structure-Induced Equilibrium

T Johnson pp. 80-93 or (R) Strom, ch. 6

C Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, "Structure-induced Equilibrium and Legislative Choice," *Public Choice*, 37, 1981, pp. 503-19

C William H. Riker, "The Justification of Bicameralism," *International Political Science Review*, 13, 1992, pp. 101-16

*Andrew Caplin and Barry Nalebuff, "On 64%-Majority Rule," *Econometrica*, 56:4, July 1988, pp. 787-814; and "Aggregation and Social Choice: A Mean Voter Theorem," *Econometrica*, 59:1, January 1991, pp. 1-23

*James Douglas, "How Actual Governments Cope with the Paradoxes of Social Choice: Some Anglo-American Comparisons," *Comparative Politics*, 17, October 1984, pp. 67-84

*Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*, University of Chicago Press, 1998

*Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, Yale University Press, 1999

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Structural sources of equilibrium generally give an advantage to the status quo. Consider whether this is justifiable in terms of democratic theory and practice.
2. Evaluate supermajority decision rules, not only as a source of stability but from a more general democratic perspective.
3. Does the social choice analysis of instability provide a strong justification for the U.S. constitutional system in comparison with, say, Westminster institutions?

Mar. 14: Spring Break—No Class

Mar. 21: Heresthetic

C Riker, "Political Theory and the Art of Heresthetics," in Ada W. Finifter, ed., *Political Science the State of the Discipline*, American Political Science Assn., 1993, pp. 47-67

T Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 8

T Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Preface, ch. 1, and Conclusion, plus at least one of the following chapters: 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10

C Jack H. Nagel, "Populism, Heresthetics and Political Stability: Richard Seddon and the Art of Majority Rule," *British Journal of Political Science*, 23, 1993, pp. 139-74.

C Iain McLean, "Review Article: William H. Riker and the Invention of Heresthetic(s)," *British Journal of Political Science*, 32:3, July 2002, pp. 535-58

*Riker, "The Heresthetics of Constitution-Making: The Presidency in 1787, with Comments on Determinism and Rational Choice," *American Political Science Review*, 78, March 1984, pp. 1-16

* R Strom, ch. 5

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Analyze the use of "wedge issues" in recent American politics. Has it been an example of heresthetic manipulation?
2. Develop a conceptual analysis of "heresthetic." Does it necessarily depend on the existence of multiple issue dimensions? What is the relation between heresthetic and rhetoric?
3. Analyze (further than I did) Richard Seddon's heresthetic devices from the viewpoint of majority rule.

Mar. 28: Historical Applications: Race in the United States

T Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, ch. 9

T Review the cases in Riker's *Art of Political Manipulation* that have to do with race.

C, R Barry R. Weingast, "Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy," in Robert H. Bates *et al.*, *Analytic Narratives*, Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 148-93.

C Gerry Mackie, "Is Democracy Impossible? Riker's Mistaken Accounts of Antebellum Politics," manuscript, Australian National University, 2001

*Edward Carmines and James Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1989

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Evaluate Gerry Mackie's refutation of Riker's analysis of political events and strategies leading up to the Civil War.

2. Analyze the role of race in U.S. politics during the second half of the twentieth century. Is a Rikerian explanation applicable?

Apr. 4: Historical Applications: British Politics

T, R Iain McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair*, Oxford University Press, 2001; chs. 1, 3, and 4 (you may want to skim over ch. 2 to fill in blanks)

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Iain McLean presents several cases of herestheticians who failed—Joseph Chamberlain, Enoch Powell, and Lloyd George. Take one or more of these cases, and explain the failure. Does your analysis point to any general lessons about heresthetic?

2. What contribution, if any, does the analysis of heresthetic offer to understanding any of the following: Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair. (Choose one or more.)

Apr. 11: Historical Applications: Establishing and Dismantling Welfare States

C, R Leif Lewin, *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, ch. 1 (selectively), ch. 5 (pp. 123-39 for background and pp. 140-58 for analysis), and ch. 7

C Jack H. Nagel, “Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy: The Politics of Market Liberalization in New Zealand,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 28:2, April 1998, pp. 223-67

*Bernard Grofman, ed., *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*, University of Michigan Press, 2002

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Compare the effects of referendums in Sweden (Lewin) and New Zealand during the Seddon era (Nagel).

2. Choose an example (besides those in the readings) where important choices were made in the development or curtailment of welfare-state policies—e.g., establishment of the National Health Service in Britain, the Reagan Revolution in the U.S., or the ending of “welfare as we know it” under Clinton. Can the politics that led to that action be best understood in majoritarian terms, or as a result of multidimensional indeterminacy and minority influence?

Apr. 18: Estimating the Dimensionality of Politics: Roll Calls and Elite Surveys

C Keith R. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, "Spatial Realignment and the Mapping of Issues in U.S. History: The Evidence from Roll Call Voting," in William H. Riker, ed., *Agenda Formation*, University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp. 13-39

* R Poole and Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll-Call Voting*, Oxford University Press, 1997

*Kenneth Koford, "Dimensions in Congressional Voting," *American Political Science Review*, 83: , 1989, pp. 949-62; also controversy between Koford and Poole and Rosenthal in *APSR*, 85: , 1991, pp. 955-75

C John Huber and Ronald Inglehart, "Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies," *Party Politics*, 1, 1995, pp. XX

*Francis G. Castles and Peter Mair. "Left-Right Political Scales: Some 'Expert' Judgments," *European Journal of Political Research*, 12, 1984, pp.

*Thomas Brechtel and Andre Kaiser, "Party System and Coalition Formation in Post-Reform New Zealand," *Political Science*, 51:1, July 1999, pp. 3-26; plus Jack H. Nagel, "Assessing the Dimensionality of Politics: A Comment on Brechtel and Kaiser," pp. 27-31

Suggested Paper Topics (for this week or next):

1. Take one of the methods for estimating political dimensionality. Explain how it works and what findings it typically yields. Is there a bias in the method toward unidimensionality?

Apr. 25: Estimating the Dimensionality of Politics: Manifesto Analyses and Opinion Surveys

C Ian Budge, "Issues, Dimensions, and Agenda Change in Postwar Democracies: Longterm Trends in Party Election Programs and Newspaper Reports in 23 Democracies," in Riker, ed., *Agenda Formation*, pp. 41-79

*Ian Budge et al., *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945-1998*, Oxford University Press, 2001

R Byron E. Shafer and William J. M. Claggett, *The Two Majorities: The Issue Context of Modern American Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, chs. 2 and 3; or Jack Vowles, et al.

CHOOSE A VOWLES BOOK

Suggested Paper Topics:

1. Both manifesto analysis and survey research readily yield multiple issue dimensions, but analysts typically reduce them to just one or two. Why? What are the gains and losses of this practice?

May 5: Final Examination, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

May 7: Term Papers Due, 4:00 p.m.