Political Economy 440.656  
(Fall 2016)

Ahmed Saber Mahmud                                                        Office hours: After the class or by appointment  
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Thursday 6:00 - 8:45 PM                                                   Blackboard site available

Objective: This course examines how political and economic forces interact to influence the character of domestic economic policies. The course examines the role of various political institutions such as the structure of elections, the political party system, the legislative process, the powers of the executive, and lobbying. It then assesses how these institutions impact monetary, fiscal, and regulatory policy. An exploration of how the performance of these policies in turn influences the outcome of the political process concludes the course.

Textbooks: The required textbooks for the course:
“Political Economics” by Persson and Tabellini (PE in abbreviation)

Buy AP if you plan to buy only one. The other recommended books are:  
“The Art of Political Manipulation” by William H. Riker  
“Liberalism against Populism” by William H. Riker

Exams: There will be one midterm and one final. None of the exams will be cumulative. However, material from the previous exam will be useful for the latter. You will be graded not only based on the answers to the questions on the exam but also on how you derived them. This will allow me to give partial credits when possible. Your grade will be based on:  
50% Midterm exam  
50% Final exam

Grades will be mostly based on exams. Class participation is encouraged throughout the course. HWs will be assigned but will not be graded and solutions to the HWs will be handed out and discussed in the next class.

Disabilities: Students with any documented physical or learning disabilities in need of special accommodation should let me know in advance – so that arrangements can be made.

Course Outline

Introduction: We introduce tools of analysis:  
- Rational Choice Methodology  
- Game Theory

AP Chapter 2 and lecture note.

Social Choice:  
- Condorcet Paradox  
- Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem  
- Single-Peaked Preferences
Policy Convergence:
- One-dimensional Case
- Multi-Dimensional Case
- Example from Public Good Provision

Policy Divergence and Strategic Voting:
- Citizen-Candidate Model
- Several Examples from History
- How policies can be manipulated

Analyzing Primary Election:
Lecture note and Chapter 4 from “Analyzing Elections” by Rebecca Morton

Why Does State Exist?
- Cooperation and Conflict
- The Origin of Centralized Source of violence
- When States Fail – an Example

Political Regimes
- Social Origin of Political Regimes
- Economic Origins of Political Regimes


Political Economy of Public Debt

Majority vs Minority Preferences
Lecture note and Timothy Besley and Stephen Coate “Issue Unbundling via Citizen’s Initiatives”.

Political Economy of Development
- Colonial Origin
- Botswana as an example