GOVERNMENT 2158
Political Institutions and Economic Policy

Spring 2017

Jeffry Frieden and Kenneth Shepsle, Instructors

This seminar explores the role of political institutions in the formation, implementation, and regulation of economic policy. We examine research traditions in the positive theory of political institutions, and in comparative and international political economy, and apply them to several substantive issue areas.

Starting February 27, each week several students will work together to organize the discussion. The discussion leaders will circulate a one-page memorandum highlighting (i.e. with bullet points) some of the principal analytical points of the week’s topic and setting out some possible research questions related to the week’s topic.

Requirements of the course are seminar participation and an original research paper related to the general approach of the course, due May 3. The topic must be approved by the instructors in advance, by April 3. Your paper should have a theoretically grounded argument (not necessarily formalized). It may also include empirics. A purely empirical paper is not acceptable. Those taking an Incomplete are required to turn in a research design outlining the research question, the potential argument, and (if relevant) the empirical strategy, by May 3.

All readings are available on the course website:

Instructor coordinates are as follows:

Jeff Frieden
CGIS K 211
617.496.2386
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-11:30 AM and 2-3:30 PM.
Sign up for office hours at http://tinyurl.com/FriedenOHtool

Ken Shepsle
CGIS K 312
617.495.4928
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Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3 PM
January 23   Organization and Introduction

January 30   Theory: Special Interests and Agency


Recommended background:

February 6   Theory: Spatial Models, Collective Action and Bargaining


February 13  Theories of Institutions


February 20  NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS’ DAY HOLIDAY

February 27  Institutional Origins


March 6  Institutional Effects


Melissa Dell, “The Persistent Effects of Peru’s mining mita,” *Econometrica* 78, No. 6 (November, 2010), 1863–1903


March 13   SPRING BREAK

March 20  Institutional Change


March 27  Origins, Practice, and Change: A Case Study of Franchise Expansion


April 3  Trade Policy I: Theory and History

Jeffrey G. Williamson. Winners and Losers over Two Centuries of Globalization. WIDER Annual Lecture 6, 2002


April 10  CLASS POSTPONED
April 17        Trade Policy II: Approaches and Applications


Paola Conconi, Giovanni Facchini, and Maurizio Zanardi, “Policymakers’ Horizon and Trade Reforms” *Journal of International Economics* 94 (2014), 102 -118


April 24        Banking and Finance I: Sovereign debt and central banking


