

Seminar on Bureaucratic Politics
Politics G53.3301.002
Spring 2010
Professor Sanford Gordon

I. Introduction

This course provides a theoretical and empirical introduction to some contemporary literature on bureaucratic politics. The first part of the semester deals with theoretical preliminaries, including spatial models of delegation, models of moral hazard, and adverse selection, and strategic redundancy. The second part deals with empirical applications, largely in the domestic context. The third part is empirical with subject matter drawn from the literature on comparative politics and development.

II. Contact and meeting Information

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III. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

Participation: 20%

Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course.

Presentations: 10%

In addition to normal participatory duties, each student will spend several of our meetings providing a public good as “defender” of a particular text or perspective, which will include a 10-15 minute presentation at the beginning of the class.

Thought papers: 20%

Each student will write a paper *no longer than one single-spaced page* each week he/she is not presenting. The paper should be e-mailed by close of business (5pm) on the day before class so that we can incorporate its insights into class discussion. The paper may critically examine a particular feature of a single reading, or draw comparisons among multiple readings for that week. At the end of the semester, we will drop the lowest short paper score. (This has the practical effect of permitting you to miss writing one paper.)

Research paper: 50%

A final research paper will count for 50% of the grade. Details will be discussed in class. You should be thinking about your paper and discussing the topic with us by early to mid-October.

Note that if your research interest lies primarily in topics covered toward the end of the class, you should be prepared to read ahead.

IV. Weekly Schedule

Week 1. Introductions

Week 2. Overarching Considerations

- Dixit, Incentives and Organizations in the Public Sector: An Interpretive Review
- Acemoglu et. al., Incentives in Markets, Firms, and Governments
- Tirole, The Internal Organization of Government" Oxford Economic Papers 1994.

Week 3. Spatial Models

- Bendor and Meirowitz, "Spatial Models of Delegation" (APSR 2004)
- Huber and Shipan, Deliberate Discretion, chs. 4,6,7
- Epstein and O'Halloran, "Administrative Procedures, Information, and Agency Discretion" (AJPS 1994)

Week 4. Topics in Moral Hazard

- Holmstrom and Milgrom 1991: Multitask Principal Agent Analyses.
- Prendergast, Limits of Bureaucratic Efficiency
- Heckman, Heinrich, and Smith, "Performance of Performance Standards"
- Leaver, "Bureaucratic Minimal Squawk Behavior"

Week 5. Topics in Adverse Selection and Bureaucratic Preferences

- Gailmard, Sean, and John Patty. "Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise."
- Canice Prendergast, "Motivation and Bias of Bureaucrats." AER 2007
- Nixon, David. "Separation of Powers and Appointee Ideology" JLEO 20: 438-57
- Clinton and Lewis, "Expert Opinion, Agency Characteristics, and Agency Preferences." Political Analysis 2008.

Week 6. Redundancy and Multiple Agents

- Holmstrom. 1982. Moral Hazard in Teams. Bell Journal of Economics (skim)
- Heimann, C.F. Larry. 1993. "Understanding the Challenger Disaster." APSR
- Ting, Michael. 2003. "A Strategic Theory of Bureaucratic Redundancy." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(2): 274-292.
- Ting, Michael. 2002. "A Theory of Jurisdictional Assignments in Bureaucracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2): 364-378

Week 7. Bureaucracy, Private Interests, and Rent-Seeking

- Gordon and Hafer, "Flexing Muscle: Corporate Political Expenditures as Signals to the Bureaucracy." APSR 2005
- Carpenter, Daniel P. "Protection without Capture." APSR 2004
- Moe, Terry M. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure."

- Laffont and Tirole, "The Politics of Government Decision Making: A Theory of Regulatory Capture." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 1991.

Week 8. Discuss Term Paper Topics

Week 9. Spring Break

Week 10. Empirical Studies of Politicization

- Lewis, David. *Politics of Presidential Appointments*
- Gordon, Sanford. "Assessing Partisan Bias in Federal Public Corruption Prosecutions." *APSR* 2009
- Gordon, Sanford. "Executive Control Versus Bureaucratic Insulation." Manuscript.

Week 11. Bureaucratic Capacity in Comparative Perspective

- Bernard Silberman, *Cages of Reason*

Week 12. The Growth of Bureaucracy in Great Britain

- John Brewer, *Sinews of Power*

Week 13. Centralization: The Ottoman Example

- Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*

Week 14. Bureaucracy and Development

- Rauch and Evans, "Bureaucratic Structure and Bureaucratic Performance in Less-Developed Countries." *JPubEcon* 75: 49-71
- Huber and McCarty, "Bureaucratic Capacity, Delegation, and Political Reform." *APSR* 98: 481-494
- Iyer and Mani, "Traveling Agents: Political Change and Bureaucratic Turnover in India." Working paper.

Week 15. Discuss Term papers.