



Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU) International Summer Semester (ISS) 2017
"New Experience, New Engagement"

Rational Choice Theory on Democracy

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SHORT COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rational Choice Theory covers a large number of subjects. In this course we focus on the different views of classic authors of the approach, like Kenneth Arrow, William Riker, Anthony Downs, Mancur Olson, toward democracy. We present the classics and we discuss the merits of the views that democracy failed because it cannot deliver a Condorcet winner, and it cannot establish a social maximum, and it is not rational to vote in an election and so on. We discuss the (normative) views of the classic authors.

READING MATERIALS

The literature contains chapters of the book (forthcoming 2017)

Huib Pellikaan, Rational Choice Theory on Democracy

All literature (15 chapters, 280 pages) will be available for free on ISS website and students find them on the web and they can download the book for free to read.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The course is an introduction to the classics of Rational Choice Theory.

SKKU regulations require students to attend at least 80% of all classes.

Before the course starts all literature will available for free on ISS website.

The power point sheets used during the course will be available on the website

The exercise will also be available on the website. There are 28 exercises (14 x 2) in total.

Each student must have a sufficient for 20 exercises in order to pass the course. This means that the retake is built in the course.

Grading

Reading Presentation (exercises)	80%
Class Participation	20%
Total	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

– WEEK I –

Tuesday (27 June)

Rational Choice Theory has analysed the working of democracy and it has introduced a number of axioms and theorems about the (im)possibility of reaching a majority decision and scholars like William Riker has concluded that democracy failed. Others have concluded that the majority rule cannot provide a legitimate majority winner. In the course we will discuss these claims in some detail.

- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 1 Rational Choice Theory on Democracy: An Overview*
- No assignments

Wednesday (28 June)

- The starting point of an actor of being rational is having a transitive ordering, which means that he has single-peaked preferences. Duncan Black has formulated the conditions of single-peakedness.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 2 Single-peaked preferences*
- Assignments: Exercises

Thursday (29 June)

- The condition of single-peakedness of Black is a requirement for having a majority winner (a so-called Condorcet winner). In this lecture we discuss the possibility of having a majority winner if not all members of the committee have single-peaked preferences.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 3 A Majority winner*
- Assignments: Exercises

Friday (30 June)

- The spatial model of politics of scholars like Schofield and Sened, is the question no longer the concerns about a majority winner, but with the forming of coalitions
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 4 Spatial models of politics*
- Assignments: Exercises
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– WEEK II –

Monday (3 July)

- The spatial model of politics uses the concepts ‘the core’ and ‘the heart’ for explaining coalition formation as discussed in the last meeting. Now we apply the same concepts of the ‘the core’ and ‘the heart’ for analysing a party system change.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 5 Party System Change*
- Assignments: Exercises

Tuesday (4 July)

- Concepts of the ‘the core’ and ‘the heart’ are useful tools for analysing spatial models of politics. These models are mostly two-dimensional space. Now we are going investigate the possibility of three-dimensional political spaces.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 6 Three-dimensional political spaces*
- Assignments: Exercises

Wednesday (5 July)

- The General Possibility Theorem of Kenneth Arrow is a classic analysis in the Rational Choice Theory, which has become known as the Impossibility Theorem.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 7 The Impossibility Theorem*
- Assignments: Exercises

Thursday (6 July)

- The aim of political decision-making is according to Arrow “to maximize the social utility or social welfare subject to whatever technological or resources constraints are relevant”. We discuss this aim in some detail.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 8 The Social Maximum*
- Assignments: Exercises

Friday (7 July)

- Mancur Olson is not concerned with reaching the social maximum in the democratic process. He introduced the theory behind the free-rider behaviour and his thesis is the foundation of the rationality of voter turnout.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 9 Logic of Collective Action*
- Assignments: Exercises

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- **WEEK III** -

Monday (10 July)

- The electoral competition of parties is illustrated by parties on some dimension of political orientation, such as the left-right scale. The origin of the linear left-right scale is the theory of Harold Hotelling who also introduces the general tendency toward the median position.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 10 The one-dimensional political scale*
- Assignments: Exercises

Tuesday (11 July)

- Anthony Downs has become famous with his left-right dimension for explaining the electoral competition in a party system. An important element in his theory is the assumption that every voter has single-peaked preferences.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 11 An Economic Theory of Democracy*
- Assignments: Exercises

Wednesday (12 July)

- The modern version of Downs’ model incorporates other issues than economic issues and scholars call the new left-right model a ‘super issue’.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 12 The Left-Right dimension as a Super issue*
- Assignments: Exercises

Thursday (13 July)

- By including a number of issues in the model the question of (non-)separability of issues arises and the spatial model becomes two-dimensional
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 13 A Spatial Model*
- Assignments: Exercises

Friday (14 July)

- Spatial models are mostly two-dimensional graphs in which the positions of parties are plotted in the diagram. The question arises whether we can include the notion of extremism into the model?
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 14 Extreme party positions*
- Assignments: Exercises
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- – WEEK IV –

Monday (17 July)

- Rational Choice Theory is an approach that develops formal models for explaining political behaviour. Application of the approach has created pathologies (Green and Shapiro). In order to avoid such pathologies we need empirical work that combines rational choice theory with common sense.
- Preparatory reading: *Chapter 15 Formal model and empirical research*
- Assignments: Exercises