Description

This course is about collective decision-making, both on the micro level (how people aggregate information or preferences through voting) and on the big picture level (how societies choose institutions to live under). We first overview some classical results from social choice, and find limitations of the cooperative approach. We then look at models of strategic behavior in collective decision-making, voting over binary agendas, and models of legislative bargaining. The next big topic is elections, where we plan to talk about all aspects – decisions whether and how to vote, whether to run, and how to campaign. The last big topic is institutions. We will talk about revolutions and coup d’états, how countries democratize, when and why. Ultimately, we will study models of forward-looking behavior in collective decision-making and dynamics of institutions.

Students are expected to participate in classroom, present a paper from the reading list, and write a research proposal on a related topic, or a critical review of several related papers. There is no textbook, though the material we will cover in the first two-three classes is largely covered in Austen-Smith and Banks “Positive Political Theory (I, II)”.

The tentative reading list for each of the ten classes is below.


**Lecture 2. Strategic behavior in voting. Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem. Binary agendas.**


**Lecture 3. Legislative bargaining.**


**Lecture 4. Classical models of electoral competition. Political parties.**


Lecture 5. Participation in elections. Candidate entry and voter turnout.


**Lecture 6. Information aggregation in voting and communication.**


**Lecture 7. Formal models of political campaigns.**


Egorov, G. Single-issue campaigns and multidimensional politics, *NBER WP 21265*. 


**Lecture 8. Democracies and dictatorships. Extending franchise, revolutions, and coup d’états.**


Lecture 10. Dynamics of Institutions.


