

Math 1007-14: Mathematics and Politics

Spring 2026

Lectures:	TR 4:45 – 6:00 PM	MPA 309
Textbook:	The Mathematics of Politics, Second Edition by E. Arthur Robinson and Daniel H. Ullman	
ISBN:	9781498798907	
Course Webpage:	https://jaydaigle.net/politics/	Discord: https://discord.gg/wwnzPsGB
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Course content

You probably associate math with numbers—addition, multiplication, equations, solving for x . And all that stuff is math; but math isn’t just that stuff. At its most general, math is about identifying the assumptions we are making and describing them completely and explicitly. It’s about testing those assumptions, and studying what would change if they were different. And it’s about choosing new and better assumptions to let us use all the information we care about, as simply as we can.

In this course we’ll learn about some specific concrete mathematical ideas that explain how political systems work. How does the way we tabulate votes affect who wins elections? Is there a fair way to allocate political power? What sort of negotiation strategies are more likely to be successful? And yes, there will be some numbers here.

But we’ll also take a step back and see how thinking like a mathematician can help you understand how, and why, people do politics. We’ll learn to identify the hidden assumptions that underlie political arguments and beliefs. We’ll practice articulating the assumptions we’re making, and understanding what we really care about. And we’ll see how flexibility with those assumptions can help us better understand the world and our fellow citizens.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, although you may have to do a bit of high school algebra at some point.

Textbook

The official textbook for Math 1007 is *The Mathematics of Politics, Second Edition* by E. Arthur Robinson and Daniel H. Ullman. It should be available free online through the library website, and you can buy a hard copy for under \$50 if you wish. I will be expecting you to read sections of the textbook and assigning problems out of it.

Technological requirements; recordings

I have set up a Discord server at <https://discord.gg/wwnzPsGB> to facilitate low-key discussions of class material. This is totally optional, but you can go there to talk about the class with each other or with me; I'll be keeping an eye on it most of the time and it's usually the easiest and fastest way to get in touch with me.

Lecture schedule

The list below gives a tentative outline of what is planned and when. The course is divided into three main topics. The placement of specific ideas within these topics may shift around as the course progresses.

Voting			
January 13	Mathematical Reasoning	January 15	Voting Systems
January 20	Two-Candidate Elections	January 22	Criteria for Voting Systems
January 27	Multi-Candidate Criteria, Quiz	January 29	Theorems on Voting System Criteria
February 3	Evaluating Voting Systems I	February 5	Evaluating Voting Systems II
February 10	Arrow's Impossibility Theorem, Quiz	February 12	Midterm 1

Apportionment			
February 17	The Problem of Apportionment	February 19	Hamilton's Method
February 24	Jefferson's Method	February 26	Divisor Methods, Quiz
March 3	Divisor Methods II	March 5	Evaluating Apportionment Methods
March 10	No Class; Spring Break	March 12	No Class; Spring Break
March 17	Apportionment and Impossibility	March 19	The Best Methods, Quiz
March 24	Midterm 2		

Conflict and Game Theory			
March 31	Strategies and Saddle Points	March 26	Zero-Sum Games
April 7	Mixed Strategies, Quiz	April 2	Probability and Randomness
April 14	Solving 2×2 games	April 9	Nash Equilibria
April 21	Important Games, Quiz	April 16	Conflict and Cooperation
		April 23	Class Choice

Communication

I use male pronouns. You can call me “Professor Daigle”, “Dr. Daigle”, or just “Jay”. I will, however, be sad if you call me “Mr. Daigle”.

If you have never e-mailed a college professor before, this blog post provides a short, helpful guide to best practices: <http://tinyurl.com/h5w5nyo>.

Expected amount of work

There are 2.5 hours of class time each week. In addition, we expect a typical student to spend a minimum of 6 hours each week on independent work (primarily, homework assignments). Of course, you should spend as much time as you need to succeed in 1007, and this may be more than 6 hours per week.

Assessments

Written Homework

There will be written homework due most Tuesdays on Blackboard. This work is central to succeeding in this course. Mathematical reasoning is a skill that needs practice to develop. This homework will give you practice at thinking about the political structures we're studying so that you can follow our reasoning about them, and also at making solid mathematical arguments.

Doing the homework in a timely manner is very important, because the course continually builds on previous skills and knowledge, and if you have not practiced earlier skills you will struggle to understand later ones. While homework is due on Tuesdays, you should at least make an attempt before Thursday's class, and should try to complete it well before each Tuesday's class.

Each week homework will be due at 4:45 PM, at the beginning of class. There will be a grace period until 8 PM. **We will not accept homework submitted later than the end of the grace period** without prior arrangement or a serious medical excuse. Please make sure your homework is fully and completely submitted through Blackboard on time.

If you have a need for an extension please clear it with me **before the assignment is due**. But doing the work when assigned is important to learning the material and staying on pace with the course, so you will probably not benefit from taking unnecessary extensions.

Your two worst homework scores will be dropped from your final average.

Quizzes

There will be six quizzes in class. These will be short (15-20 minute) quizzes to make sure you're caught up with the basic ideas of each unit. The lowest of your six scores will be dropped.

Quizzes missed due to an excused absence can be made up in my regularly scheduled office hours within one week of the quiz date.

Tests and Final

There will be tests on February 12 and March 24, and a comprehensive final as scheduled by the registrar.

Midterms cannot be rescheduled. If you miss a midterm for an acceptable medical or family reason, your final exam will replace the missed midterm and be worth 40% of your course grade.

Computation of final grades

- Homework: 25% (drop two lowest)
- Quizzes: 4% each (20% total after dropping lowest)
- Tests: 15% each (30% total)
- Final Exam: 25%

Minimum scores for each letter grade are as follows: A, 94%; A−, 90%; B+, 87%; B, 84%; B−, 80%; C+, 77%; C, 74%; C−, 70%; D+, 67%; D, 64%; D−, 60%.

No extra credit will be available under any circumstances.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Code

Academic integrity is an essential part of the educational process, and all members of the GW community take these matters very seriously. As the instructor of record for this course, my role is to provide clear expectations and uphold them in all assessments. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and otherwise violate the Code of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about whether particular academic practices or resources are permitted, you should ask me for clarification. If you are reported for an academic integrity violation, you should contact Conflict Education and Student Accountability (CESA) to learn more about your rights and options in the process. Consequences can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the University and may include a transcript notation. For more information, refer to the CESA website at students.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity or contact CESA by email cesa@gwu.edu or phone 202-994-6757.

University policy on observance of religious holidays

Students must notify faculty during the first week of the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, or as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls within the first three weeks of class, the student must inform faculty in the first week of the semester. For details and policy, see provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines.

Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

Academic Support

Academic Commons

Academic Commons is the central location for academic support resources for GW students. To schedule a peer tutoring session for a variety of courses visit go.gwu.edu/tutoring. Visit academiccommons.gwu.edu for study skills tips, finding help with research, and connecting with other campus resources. For questions email academiccommons@gwu.edu.

GW Writing Center

GW Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online at gwu.mywconline.

Support for students in and outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS) 202-994-8250

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Student Health Center 202-994-5300, 24/7

The Student Health Center (SHC) offers medical, counseling/psychological, and psychiatric services to GW students. More information about the SHC is available at healthcenter.gwu.edu. Students experiencing a medical or mental health emergency on campus should contact GW Emergency Services at 202-994-6111, or off campus at 911.

GW Campus Emergency Information

GW Emergency Services: 202-994-6111

For situation-specific instructions, refer to GW's Emergency Procedures guide.

GW Alert

GW Alert is an emergency notification system that sends alerts to the GW community. GW requests students, faculty, and staff maintain current contact information by logging on to alert.gwu.edu. Alerts are sent via email, text, social media, and other means, including the Guardian app. The Guardian app is a safety app that allows you to communicate quickly with GW Emergency Services, 911, and other resources. Learn more at safety.gwu.edu.

Protective Actions

GW prescribes four protective actions that can be issued by university officials depending on the type of emergency. All GW community members are expected to follow directions according to the specified protective action. The protective actions are Shelter, Evacuate, Secure, and Lockdown (details below). Learn more at safety.gwu.edu/gw-standard-emergency-statuses.

Shelter

- Protection from a specific hazard
- The hazard could be a tornado, earthquake, hazardous material spill, or other environmental emergency.
- Specific safety guidance will be shared on a case-by-case basis.

Action:

- Follow safety guidance for the hazard.

Evacuate

- Need to move people from one location to another.
- Students and staff should be prepared to follow specific instructions given by first responders and University officials.

Action:

- Evacuate to a designated location.
- Leave belongings behind.
- Follow additional instructions from first responders.

Secure

- Threat or hazard outside of buildings or around campus.
- Increased security, secured building perimeter, increased situational awareness, and restricted access to entry doors.

Action:

- Go inside and stay inside.
- Activities inside may continue.

Lockdown

- Threat or hazard with the potential to impact individuals inside buildings.
- Room-based protocol that requires locking interior doors, turning off lights, and staying out of sight of corridor window.

Action:

- Locks, lights, out of sight
- Consider Run, Hide, Fight

- Classroom emergency lockdown buttons All classrooms have been equipped with classroom emergency lockdown buttons. If the button is pushed, GWorld Card access to the room will be disabled, and GW Dispatch will be alerted. The door must be manually closed if it is not closed when the button is pushed. Anyone in the classroom will be able to exit, but no one will be able to get in.