Politics of Everyday Life
Political Science 491
Spring, 2015
Instructor: Mikhail Myagkov, 931 PLC
Office Hours 9-11am & 5-6pm Tuesdays
14:00-1650

General Description
We often think that the term "politics" refers mostly to the processes by which collective decisions are made – in particular, by governments. On the other hand this word (politics) can be used more generally to refer to the processes by which we all try to influence each other’s behavior in the normal course of everyday life. This course puts together readings from game theory, evolutionary psychology, decision research and a variety of other disciplines that all, in some way, address such "everyday politics". Some of the materials are analytic – that is, they provide "tools" by which one can address a wide range of specific instances. Other materials are psychological or cognitive – that is, they address attributes of humans as they engage in one another aspect of "everyday politics". Finally, a part of this class will be devoted to learning about laboratory experiments design. Students will have an opportunity to design their own laboratory experiment to study a problem of their choice.

Requirements
There will be two midterm in class exams each worth 30% of the grade during the 4th and 9th week of the class. A week before the exam, I will circulate a list of study questions; at the time of the exam, I will select three questions and you should write on two. There will be four randomly scheduled in class multiple choice type quizzes each worth 5% of the grade. Finally, each student will be required to be a part of a group that design a laboratory experiment in decision making. Students will be split into six groups. Each group will have to defend (and possibly run) their own experiment (20% of the grade).

Practical Topics (tools):
Theory of Games; Experimental Design

Theoretical Topics:
1. Cooperation and (Self)Commitment
Readings: John Elster, "Rational Choice" and "Myopia and Foresight" from the Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences

2. Deception and Choosing Partners
Readings: Robert Trives, "Deceit and self-deception" from the Social Evolution
Cosmides and Tooby, "Cognitive adaptations for social exchange" from *The Adapted Mind, pp163-184*

Orbell and Dawes, "Social Welfare, Cooperator’s Advantage, and the Option of Not Playing the Game" from *the American Sociological Review*

3. **The Inner I: Theory of Mind**
   Readings: Nicholas Humphrey, "The Inner Eye"

4. **Conflict, Power, Agenda Setting and Trust**
   Readings: William H. Riker, "The Art of Political Manipulation"
   Diego Gambetta, "Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations"

5. **Risk, Risky Decisions, Gains and Losses**
   Readings: Myagkov and Plott, "Testing the Prospect Theory: Concave vs. Convex preferences" from *the American Economic Review*
   Kahnemann and Tversky, to be announce later.

6. **Bargaining and Negotiation**
   Readings: John Elster, "Bargaining" from the Chapter 14 of the "Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences"
   Charles Lave and James March, "An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences" from the Chapter 5.5 of the "External Exchange"

7. **Sex, Gender and All That**
   Readings: Matthew Mulford, John Orbell and al. "Physical Attractiveness, Opportunity and Success in Everyday Exchange"
   John Orbell and Robert Dawes, "Trust, Social Categories and Individuals" from the "Motivation and Emotion"

8. **Micro Choices and Macro Outcomes**
   Readings: John Orbell, Langshe Zeng and Matthew Mulford, "Individual Experience and Fragmentation of Societies"
   Gerry Mackie, "Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account"

9. **Designing Laboratory Experiments**
   Readings: Masanao Toda, "Man Robot and Society; Models and Speculations"