Presentation. In democracies, decisions are taken collectively, either directly or through delegation. The role of political institutions is to aggregate potentially divergent opinions and preferences into a common decision. This course is an introduction to the economic approach of collective decision making, both from the normative point of view of the theory of social choice, and from the positive point of view of game theory. We present some of the major results on the working of political institutions, and then consider their impact on several important policy dimensions (taxation, redistribution, the size of the government etc.), and on the comparative study of different political systems.

Assignments and Grade. The grade for this course is based on the oral presentation of an article in the list of recommended readings below. You can also come up with your choice of article. To help you with the class presentations, you can read these “Notes on presenting a paper” written by Matt Jackson, and available on his website.

Syllabus. The class meets every wednesday from 2-5pm. For Eduardo’s lectures (EPR), you will find slides on the course website. Jean-François teaches on the board. The lectures are organized as follows.

-Lecture 1: Jury Theorems (JFL) – October 3.

-Lecture 2: Voting and majority rule (JFL) – October 10.

-Lecture 3: Political Competition 1 (EPR) – October 17.


-Lecture 7: Student presentations – November 14.

-Lecture 8: Student presentations – November 21.
Textbooks. There is no mandatory textbook for this course. The following books are a good complementary reading, but they are by no means necessary.


Papers for Presentations. This is a list of paper that you can pick from for your presentation. You are not limited to this list, but you should discuss your choices with one of us. The papers are grouped by themes.

1. Bargaining and Logrolling


2. Voting and Information


3. Deliberation Before Voting


4. Political Campaigns


5. Nondemocratic Political Economy


6. Rational Behavior under Uncertainty and Utilitarianism


7. Vote Buying and Lobbying


8. Apportionment


9. Experiments


