I. What is Empirical Political Theory?

II. Four Alternative Axiomatic Foundations for Empirical Political Theory
   A. Political Realism
   B. Political Sociology
   C. Marxian (Structural) Political Economy
   D. Positive Political Economy

III. Some Conceptual Tools for Building Empirical Theories
   A. Analysis of Strategic Interaction
   B. Bargaining, Signaling, and Credible Commitments
   C. Social Dilemmas
   D. Principal-Agent Models
   E. Transaction Costs and Relational Contracting

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Readings. All assigned readings are available on a closed web-site. The web-site address will be provided in class.

Participation. Please come prepared to contribute to each week’s discussion. If you do not volunteer, I will call on you, so please come prepared to discuss all of the readings.

Writing Assignment. You should complete a ten-page sketch of the theoretical development for an empirical research proposal. This assignment is described in a separate document. The complete sketch is due on the Friday of finals week.

Week 1. What is Empirical Political Theory?

In your reading for week 1, look for the following: inductive vs. deductive theory; structure of a scientific theory (axioms; deductive rigor; hypotheses); falsifiability; scientific paradigms, normal science, anomalies and paradigm shift; research programmes, auxiliary hypotheses and progressive problem shift.
Week 2. Political Realism

Conflict and cooperation

Origins of the modern state and democracy

Political institutions

In your reading for week 2, look for the following: definitions of power; the pursuit-of-power postulate; security dilemma (“diffidence”); anarchy and war; contractual basis of government; Leviathan as a legal person; the survival (re-election) postulate; balancing vs. bandwagoning; dangers of faction; tyranny of the majority; federalism; checks and balances; federalism as a bargain.

Week 3. Political Sociology

Conflict and cooperation

Origins of the modern state and democracy
Max Weber. 1918. “Politics as a Vocation.”

Political institutions
In your reading for week 3, look for the following: definitions of culture; normative bases of politics; subsistence ethic; social capital, civic community, and social trust; mores; traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal legitimacy; functional differentiation in institutions; politics as a vocation; civic vs. praetorian politics; institutionalization.

Week 4. Marxian (Structural) Political Economy

Conflict and cooperation

Origins of the modern state and democracy

In your reading for week 4, look for the following: base and superstructure; means of production and the mode of production and exchange; historical epochs (primitive communism, slave-owning societies, feudalism, capitalism, socialism/communism); classes; class consciousness and false consciousness; class bases of democracy, fascism, and communism; cultural division of labor; world-empire vs. world-economy.

Week 5. Positive Political Economy
Adam Smith. 1776. An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Book I, Chapter 1 (“Of the Division of Labour”), particularly ¶¶1-4, 10-11, and Book IV, Chapter 2 (“Of Restraints upon the Importation from Foreign Countries of such Goods as can be produced at Home”), particularly ¶¶1-15.

Conflict and cooperation
Origins of the modern state and democracy

Institutions
Read one of the following three articles:

In your reading for week 5, look for the following: utility and utilitarianism; felicific or utility calculus; propensity to truck, barter, and exchange; division of labor; invisible hand; trust based on expectations of others’ interests; wealth- or revenue-maximizing rulers; rulers as discriminating monopolists; property rights and economic efficiency.

Week 6. The Analysis of Strategic Interaction

Elements of a game

The Nash equilibrium and dominance

In your reading for week 6, do not attempt to master fine details of game theory, but seek to understand the logic or world view that informs this approach. You will have much more exposure to game theory in PS 204C. Nevertheless, be on the outlook for the following: definition of “a game”; completeness and transitivity in preferences; rules of a game (players, actions, payoffs); zero-sum games, variable-sum games, and games of pure coordination; cooperative games (with binding commitments) vs. non-cooperative games; order of play (game tree); information; expected utility; and equilibria (dominant-strategy equilibrium, iterated-dominance equilibrium, Nash equilibrium).
Week 7. Bargaining, Signaling, and Credible Commitments

Read one of the following two articles:

In your reading for week 7, look for the following: bargaining as a particular type of game; explicit vs. tacit bargaining; bargaining by words and by deeds; bargaining over ends and over means; threats and promises; cheap talk and credible commitments; asymmetrical information.

Week 8. Social Dilemmas

*Aggregating individual preferences: Condorcet’s paradox and McKelvey’s chaos theorem*

*Collective action and public goods*

*Coordination*
Read one of the following three articles:
In your reading for week 8, look for the following: Condorcet’s paradox, voter’s paradox, cycling in voting, and social-choice instability; Arrow’s impossibility theorem, agenda control, and institutions; collective action; definition of a “public good”; prisoner’s dilemma, free-rider, and sucker’s payoff; Axelrod’s “tit-for-tat” strategy; iterative games; selective incentives; tragedy of the commons; externalities; property rights; battle of the sexes or battle of the two cultures; focal points as conspicuous or prominent solutions; stag hunt or assurance games; and games of chicken.

Week 9. Principal-Agent Models

In your reading for week 9, look for the following: delegation, principal and agent, accountability, agency losses, asymmetrical information (hidden action, moral hazard, shirking), screening and averse selection, signals, incomplete contracts, monitoring and sanctioning, fire alarms and police patrols, multiple principals and multiple agents.

Week 10. Transaction Costs and Relational Contracting

In your reading for week 10, look for the following: Coase theorem; transaction costs; governance costs; asset specificity (site specificity, physical-asset specificity, human-asset specificity); and vulnerability to opportunism.