

Academic Year 2017/2018

30480 Topics in Politics I: Laboratory Experiments in the Social Sciences

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Office: Via Roentgen 1, 5th Floor, Room C2-05

Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30-12:00 (but check the course website for updates)

Course Website: <http://blackboard.unibocconi.it>

Course Overview. This course provides an overview of controlled laboratory experiments in the social sciences, with a strong emphasis on applications in political science. Covered topics will include public good provision, bargaining, voting and political participation, elections and candidate competition, individual decision making and neuroeconomics. We will discuss the methodological foundations of laboratory experiments, and explore the interplay between the theoretical predictions and the behavior observed in the laboratory. Students will participate in laboratory experiments in the classroom and will be asked to present a research paper at the frontier of the discipline.

Course Requirements. I expect students to attend class and to participate to the classroom experiments. The main component of the grade (80%) will be a 30-minutes presentation on a paper (or a set of related papers) on one of the topics of the course. The presentations will take place during the last week of class and you are encouraged to form groups of 2 or 3 students for this task. I expect the presentation to be well motivated around the literature I will discuss in the frontal lectures. You should make sure to spell out the research question, describe the experimental design and the experimental results in detail, highlight some strengths and some weaknesses of the paper, and suggest some directions for future research on the topic. The remainder of the grade will be determined by class participation (20%).

Course Material. This course will use interactive games and *experiment-based learning*. You will experience first-hand the laboratory experiments and decision-making environments we will discuss in class with an innovative online platform called MobLab (www.moblab.com). You are not required to buy any textbook for this course but you are required to get a license to use MobLab. You find the instructions on the course website, in the 'Course Contents' section. I will upload on the course website the slides used in class plus the main paper I will discuss in each of the frontal lecture.

Topics. The 10 lectures before your presentations will be devoted to the following topics:

- L1: Introduction to Laboratory Experiments and Laboratory Methodology
- L2 & L3: The Logic of Collective Action/Voluntary Provision of Public Goods
- L4 & L5: Bargaining: Dictator Game, Ultimatum Game, Alternating-Offer Bargaining
- L6: Elections I: Voting and Political Participation
- L7: Elections II: Candidate Competition
- L8: Individual Decision Making I: Bayesian Updating
- L9: Individual Decision Making II: Choice under Uncertainty
- L10: Neuroeconomics