Game theory for political scientists


Descriptores_Es: Ciencia política; Metodología; Teoría de juegos

Game theoretic models are increasingly common in all areas of political science. Consequently all political scientists should be familiar with the basic logic of game theoretic explanation. Students who see game theory as a complement to their primary focus rather than a method they intend to pursue in their future research will receive an appropriate survey in this seminar. The second goal is to provide the necessary background for students who wish to use rational choice methods in their own research. For this purpose, this course is a preparation for taking classes such as Economics 751 and Game theory--and formal models in general--also offer us the tools for explaining phenomena with more parsimonious conditions, thereby reducing our propensity to rely on ad hoc explanations for events that occur across countries and over time. Finally, both approaches allow us to spell out the logic of our arguments, and can potentially help us make sense of political events that are counter-intuitive, or of phenomena that seems to be the result of irrational actors. Therefore, this course will offer the tools for dissecting game theoretic models--and formal models in general--in political science articles, and also the skills to construct this kind of models in their own research.