

**Common Property Resources**  
**POLI 341**  
**Spring 1999**

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**<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~rkw/pls341.html>**

Office Hrs: M 10:30-11:30, T 11-12, W 10:30-11:30

Common Property Resources (CPR's) are an endemic social dilemma. Texas Gulf Coast shrimpers experience the problem of overfishing, Nepalese farmers face the problem of water use for dry farming, students face the problem of internet usage. CPR's are simple to characterize: they involve public goods that can be privately consumed and once consumed, they disappear. While it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the public good is preserved, everyone has an incentive to overuse that good.

Why is this a political science class? The usual solution for handling CPR's involves simply imposing a governmental mechanism. Typically this means a top-down solution for the problem, regardless of the fit to the specific problem. In recent years many political scientists have argued that this is an ill-conceived public policy solution. Local institutional arrangements often craft much better mechanisms to resolve local CPR's. This class teaches some of the tools available for understanding and analyzing a host of local social and political problems.

During the course you will be touching on a number of different reading. You will learn something about Institutional Analysis and Design; you will learn a little game theory; you will learn about laboratory experimental methods; you will even learn a little about primates. Please approach the material with an open, but skeptical mind.

*Textbooks.*

The following textbooks are available in the bookstore. In addition, several articles, available in the journals, will be read. These are noted in the syllabus.

- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons : The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dixit, Avinash K., and Nalebuff, Barry J 1993. *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics and Everyday Life*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- De Waal, Frans. 1996. *Good Natured : The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* . Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Ellickson, Robert C. 1994. *Order Without Law : How Neighbors Settle Disputes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

You will need a computer account (of course you have one). You will need to keep in touch with others via e-mail. You will need access to the Web -- much of the class material and periodic memos will be posted at the site given above. In addition, much of the information you need will be on the net.

*Laboratory Experiments.*

Much of the research that has been conducted in this area has either involved intensive case studies or laboratory experimental methods. Rather than requiring you to go into the field to conduct your own case study, you will be introduced to laboratory experimental methods. The introduction will be “up close and personal.” During the semester you will be required to replicate **two** experiments that have been conducted to study public goods, common property resources or other forms of social dilemmas. More information will be provided during the semester.

*Grading:*

Grades will be based on the following: two examinations (20% each), two laboratory experiment replications (20% each), and class participation (20%). You are expected to keep up-to-date with *all* reading assignments and to be prepared to discuss the readings during class. Expect to be called on in class to discuss the readings. The Honor Code is in effect for all class assignments.

*Course Outline (Readings in my box are marked with a \*).*

Note: Readings are subject to change. Keep current with the syllabus.

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan. 20	Introduction	
Jan. 25	Problems of the Commons	Ostrom, Chapter 1 *Garrett Hardin. 1968. “Tragedy of the Commons” <i>Science</i> , 162:1243-1248.
Jan. 27	Structure of Goods	*Ostrom, V. and E. Ostrom. 1977. "Public Goods and Public Choices," Pp. 7-49 in <i>Alternatives for Delivering Public Services: Toward Improved Performance</i> . (E. S. Savas, ed.) Westview Press.
Feb. 1	Game Theory Basics I	Dixit & Nalebuff, Chapters 1-2
Feb. 3	Institutional Features	Ostrom, Chapter 2. *Huberman, Bernardo A., and Rajan M. Lukose 1997. "Social Dilemmas and Internet Congestion." <i>Science</i> 277(5325):535-537.
Feb. 8	Experimental Design I	*Isaac, R. M., J. M. Walker and S. H. Thomas. 1984. "Divergent Evidence on Free Riding: An Experimental Examination of Possible Explanations." <i>Public Choice</i> . 43:113-149.
Feb. 10	Experimental Design II	*Wilson, Rick K. and Jane Sell. 1997. “‘Liar, Liar ...’ Cheap Talk and Reputation in Repeated Public Goods Settings.” <i>Journal of Conflict Resolution</i> 41 (5): 695-717
Feb. 15	Institutional Features	*Libecap, Gary D. 1994. "The Conditions for

		Successful Collective Action." <i>Journal of Theoretical Politics</i> 4(4):563-592. * Ostrom, Elinor (1987) "An Agenda for the Study of Institutions." <i>Public Choice</i> 48:3-25. *Isaac, R. Mark, and James M. Walker 1988. "Group Size Effects in Public Goods Provision: The Voluntary Contributions Mechanism." <i>The Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> 103:180-199.
Feb. 17	CPR/Commons Organization	Ostrom, Chapter 3 Ellickson, Chapters 1-2
Feb. 22	Game Theory Basics II	Dixit & Nalebuff, Chapter 3
Feb. 24	Prisoners' Dilemma	Dixit & Nalebuff, Chapter 4
March 1	Institutions and Resolution	Ellickson, Chapters 3-4 * Ostrom, Elinor, James M. Walker, and Roy Gardner 1992. "Covenants With and Without A Sword: Self-Governance Is Possible." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 86(2):404-417.
March 3	<b>Exam 1</b>	
March 8	Mid Term Break	
March 10	Mid Term Break	
March 15	Strategy and Credibility	Dixit & Nalebuff, Chapters 5-6
March 17	More Cows	Ellickson, Chapters 5-6
March 22	Unpredictability	Dixit and Nalebuff, Chapter 7
March 24	Analyzing Institutional Change I	Ostrom, Chapter 4
March 29	Analyzing Institutional Change II	
March 31	<b>Presentations of Experiment I</b>	
April 5	Norms I	Ellickson, Chapters 7-8 de Waal, Chapter 1
April 7	Norms II	Ellickson, Chapters 9-10 de Waal, Chapter 2
April 12	Norms III	Ellickson, Chapters 11-12 de Waal, Chapter 3

April 14	Reciprocity	Ellickson, Chapters 13-14 de Waal, Chapters 4-5
April 19	Lessons	Ellickson, Chapters 15-16 de Waal, Chapter 6
April 21	Institutional Failures	Ostrom, Chapter 5
April 26	Framework for Analysis	Ostrom, Chapter 6
April 28	<b>Presentations of Experiment II</b>	