Political Science 501, Baumgartner
Short paper topics/discussion points
Week 8: Game Theoretical Approaches

Readings: Gates and Humes

Gates and Humes provide an overview of game theoretic approaches in political science and provide three detailed examples of the use and value of the approach in American politics, comparative politics, and international relations. Along the way they introduce, define, and discuss a range of important concepts including these:

- Decisions v. games

- Explicit v. implicit models and assumptions

- Dominant strategies

- Nash equilibrium

- Matrix form v. extensive form games

- Subgame perfect equilibrium

- Bayesean equilibrium

- Reputation effects

- Incomplete information

- 2-Person v. N-Person games v. Decisions

- One-shot v. iterated games

The authors argue that many political scientists mis-use games because they do not know enough beyond rudimentary game theory and that more complex games could be used to cope with a great variety of complex political realities, including incomplete information, reputation effects, bluffing, etc.

Come to class prepared to define and illustrate all the terms above. Also pick one of these topics and write a paper relating the topic or concept to the detailed treatment of it in the three examples Gates and Humes provide.

1. Progressive Ambition in American politics
2. Trade Wars
3. Democratic transitions