INSTRUCTOR GUIDE · 70–75 MINUTES

# What Counts?

A simulation about budgets, ballots, and how people learn what is worth asking for.



**Created by Yoav Duman**

2–5 minutes of digital setup · Introductory comparative politics and U.S. government · Works independently or in class

Start with $12,000 at a fictional commuter college. Students commit to a priority and a pilot, work through a campus planner, then cast a real vote inside the model. They discover who had the authority to settle the decision and why a feasible choice never came up for a vote. They change one rule, run the same ranks again, and examine how a routine can change what students learn to ask for.

### The learning goal

Given a budget trace, intake ledger and real evidence, students will distinguish control over a decision, control over the choices that reach it, and possible influence over the interests people bring to it. They will explain what would let us test each claim in another institution.

## Opening connection

Your comparative-politics opening uses the pie to ask who gets how much of a limited resource and which values decide the cut. Here the money stays fixed. Before anyone cuts, the college has defined what can go on the agenda and what kind of student it recognizes. Ask students whose time, voice and knowledge they are allocating alongside the money.

RUNNING THE CLASS

# One decision across 70–75 minutes

Independent. Share the Possible States game and your course submission directions. Students can choose GPT coaching or use the complete built-in route online or in the downloaded game. Ask for the PDF or text report.

Facilitated. Tables of three to five each occupy one student seat. Use the same Nia and Eli ranks. Mark table choices as shared. Explanations and the exit case are individual. The packet also has a solo route using a coin flip, a staged check page and fixed tallies.

| Time | Work | Student packet |
|---|---|---|
| 0–6 | Check the assignment. Choose a priority and pilot. Explain your first choice. | pp. 1–2 |
| 6–12 | Give each student one welcome. Record an action and the next priority. | p. 3 |
| 12–23 | Use real A or B. Rank the pilots. Vote and trace the tally. | pp. 4–5 |
| 23–32 | Count and interpret Other before revealing the answer. Read Record C. | p. 6 then p. 11 |
| 32–44 | Replay one changed rule. Write, then check a changed count and try a fresh case. | pp. 7, 11–12 |
| 44–55 | Compare both welcomes. Write, then check a changed fact and try a fresh case. | pp. 8, 11, 13–14 |
| 55–69 | Choose real case E, F or G. Write an individual memo and complete its case check. | pp. 9–10, 15 |
| 69–75 | Assemble and review the report or gather paper responses. Submit through your course. | Use the keys on p. 14 |

Students complete six explanations and two new-case responses. At replay, preferences and transfer, they verify one fact and a consequence before moving on. In either coaching mode, students can retain a draft that already fits the prompt. A concise, evidence-linked explanation can earn full credit.

Point back to a record when someone needs a hint. Let students retry with the same standard and keep the earlier attempt. Hints and access tools carry no deduction. Applied and Stretch use the same writing rubric. Save optional report revisions for later.

FACILITATOR KEY

# The rules and their results

| Seat | Role in the first decision | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Nia, committee chair | Binding vote | Daytime / AI / Evening |
| Eli, evening student representative | Binding vote | Evening / AI / Daytime |
| Sam, student witness | Advisory statement | Evening / Daytime / AI |
| Student committee seat | Binding vote | Student or table supplies this |

Read each rank from left to right. The first pilot on the announced ballot gets that seat's vote. The largest tally wins. On any tie, use Nia's ranking among the tied pilots. Sam can speak at public comment. Sam's preference is visible and counted separately in the optional franchise comparison.

## Archive check

The Other inbox has 23 comments. The first 14 are unique and valid. E15 through E19 add five valid requests. E04 and E11 repeat earlier requests, and X01 and X02 concern other services. Add 19 to the three already coded, E20–E22. None overlaps. There are 22 eligible Evening requests in this archive. That is a count of expressed requests through this intake system.

| Rule | Published or verified counts | Hearing | Minutes each |
|---|---|---|---|
| Original | Daytime 24 · AI 18 · Evening 3 | Daytime and AI | 6 |
| Count verified Other | Daytime 24 · AI 18 · Evening 22 | Daytime and Evening | 6 |
| Add a third slot | Daytime 24 · AI 18 · Evening 3 | All three | 4 |

| Filed rank | Original winner | If counts change | If slot added |
|---|---|---|---|
| Daytime / AI / Evening | Daytime 2–1 | Daytime 2–1 | Daytime 2–1 |
| Evening / AI / Daytime | AI 2–1 | Evening 2–1 | Evening 2–1 |
| AI / Evening / Daytime | AI 2–1 | Evening 2–1 | Daytime on 1–1–1 tie rule |

If Sam's statement is made binding on the original AI 2–1 path, Sam adds a vote to Daytime. Nia's tie rule settles a 2–2 tie for Daytime. On the original Daytime 2–1 path the extra vote makes it 3–1. Run the hearing and franchise changes independently to see two sources of power.

Model assumption. Keeping rankings fixed isolates the mechanical effect of a rule. A real hearing might change priorities through argument, information, or coalition-building. The model does not estimate the effect of a real policy.

DISCUSSION · AFTER A WRITTEN FIRST EXPLANATION

# Who shaped what?

Use the published vote, the two intake records and the attached planner action in this order. Invite students to disagree about what counts as better support while demanding a trace for each account.

| Ask first | Listen for |
|---|---|
| Whose move could settle an actual disagreement? | Daytime and AI were available. A binding seat can be pivotal. Sam's statement might persuade, and the optional recount shows the separate effect of binding authority. |
| Who could block a choice even with an honest count? | The hearing rule and an intake form define what becomes a recognized request. The preset fields are cheap to total. Groups without a field have to use a second channel. |
| What does the college want Sam to become? | A self-managing student who adapts, or a member who helps set support hours. The choice becomes a record, comes back in advising, and has a route to public recognition. |
| What might Sam come to want after doing this repeatedly? | Maybe better tools for self-management, maybe influence over hours. Acting in role, getting a cue and actually changing a priority can produce the same single action. |
| What could make a change last or limit it? | A funded option supplies a button and convenient data next term. Compare expressed requests plus access among people who did not or could not use it. |

## Now name the three dimensions

**Decision power.** Who can settle an open disagreement? Trace a binding vote, veto, or other move that can decide which admitted proposal wins.

**Agenda power.** Who can shape the choices people get to decide among? The hearing list can change while the winner stays the same.

**Preference-shaping power.** Who or what repeatedly shapes what people see as valuable, realistic, or worth asking for? Separate a lasting change in goals from a reaction to new information, a short-lived cue, or strategic compliance.

**Being called into a role.** Institutions offer ways of being a recognizable student, worker, or customer and give people routines for acting that way. People can take up, adapt, or resist those roles. Repeated practice might shape their priorities over time.

One plausible rival is a late shift that makes the lab impractical. A test would compare later private choices under the same work constraints after the welcome is gone.

Scripted workarounds differ, 15/20 to 8/20. The same eight in each group choose access at both private checks. Role uptake and strategic action remain possible. D measures short-task performance.

The role mechanism is often called interpellation. The three dimensions are associated with Steven Lukes. The names can follow the reasoning.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

# Grade the explanation

Score each criterion 0–2. A score of 2 uses the identified trace and explains the mechanism. A score of 1 shows partial reasoning with a missing connection or limit. A score of 0 is absent, misstates the trace, or supplies a label alone. Pass at 8/10 or higher with at least one point in each criterion. Have students revise the criterion they miss.

| Criterion | Full-credit evidence |
|---|---|
| Decision authority | Uses the original tally and distinguishes a binding vote from an advisory statement. Explains a specific way the outcome can be settled. |
| Agenda and inequality | Identifies the form and admission rule, traces the first change, and distinguishes hearing from funding. Explains who still faces a cost or how ordinary records could reinforce the pattern. |
| Role and preferences | Identifies an offered role and a routine that reinforces it. Describes a plausible effect on a priority. Accepting, using strategically, rewriting and refusing are all possible. |
| Evidence and rival | Distinguishes a public workaround in the scripted comparison from a private priority and from real puzzle performance. Proposes an observation that could distinguish durable priority change from an everyday alternative explanation. |
| Transfer and intervention | Applies a mechanism to the chosen outside case. Names who can act, a realistic lever, a trade-off, a measured comparison and a result or rival that could change their mind. |

## Credit a supported disagreement

Example. The table kept Daytime in both votes. Evening gained an actual hearing after 19 unique requests were recovered. The clerk’s faster preset count is a plausible explanation for the original process. I would compare registration and unsuccessful attempts across schedules next quarter, since a sign-up tally omits people who never reach the service.

## Probe a polished but unsupported answer

A claim that the portal brainwashed students or that AI caused the lab to lose earns no evidence point without a trace and comparison. Ask which observation could look the same under honest administration, stable student priorities, or a practical scheduling barrier.

Use the criterion index to find the first drafts, case check traces and revised prose. Read the student's own explanation against the rubric. Award full credit for any supported choice of pilot, policy or stance, including an unchanged winner or priority.

Transfer checks. E has an 11-percentage-point drop in short notice relative to the comparison cities, conditional on the comparison. A rule giving workers more notice and a right to decline can alter employer discretion. F shows a larger gap in reported belonging and appeal than in reported skill. Ask what a matched audit of completed applications would add. Grades depend on the inference and test.

DESIGN TOURNAMENT

# Why this design won

Three independent AI design contenders ran the same reasoning brief. A separate AI simulation manager scored anonymized design summaries on Catalog Five's 0–4 scale before ranking them. The table records design judgments. It does not measure student learning.

| Catalog Five axis | No Demand Recorded | The First Screen | The Last Slot |
|---|---|---|---|
| Format fit and learning validity | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Content and rigor | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Engagement and agency | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Language | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Doability and accessibility | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Art and design | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Assignment feasibility | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 24 | 22 | 21 |

| Contender | First move and evidence produced | Harder transfer / principal risk |
|---|---|---|
| No Demand Recorded | Recommend one of three equal-price pilots. A vote and uncounted comments expose how scheduling needs enter a hearing. | Job ads and work rules. A tidy archive can make the inference about intent too easy. |
| The First Screen | Pick which jobs-app metric you trust. Prior starts and reach change which proposals can qualify. | Platform ad delivery. Different audiences could explain the rates, and the cutoff and metric had to be disentangled. |
| The Last Slot | Rank campus priorities as binding or advisory. Recount who can decide among already admitted services. | Transit fare trial. Trips, coaching and tutoring use unlike outcomes, and advisory players may have too little to do. |

The winning loop became What Counts? Route C carries the controlled rule replay. Route D makes a discrepancy in records and a rival explanation load-bearing. Route G traces whether the support and the right are usable given somebody's time, transportation or device. The Last Slot contributed a separate test of who votes. The First Screen contributed a saved routine students can act through and later inspect.

A simpler case used one reading and a fixed vote. It would have been faster to explain but students could have called every difference a vote outcome. The paired planners and one-rule replay provide different observable traces while keeping one budget conflict. The optional second patch can wait until a table finishes the core work.

Project decisions. This edition is a self-contained Class assignment with a facilitated classroom path and original cover art. Comparisons use a fictional college with real evidence cards. The visual tray, document panels, intake table and before/after ledger carry the same design. Data labels remain live text.

EVIDENCE NOTES AND FOLLOW-UP

# What each record can establish

### Record A · Help today, learning tomorrow

Bastani, Hamsa, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakcı, and Rei Mariman. 2025. “Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning: Evidence from high school mathematics.” PNAS 122(26), e2422633122. Results and Methods.

### Record B · Who has time to show up?

Fletcher, Carla, Allyson Cornett, May Helena Plumb, Anthony Schuette, Lydia Mentzer, and Bryan Ashton. 2026. Student Financial Wellness Survey: Fall 2025 Results. Trellis Strategies, pp. 5–7, 18–19.

### Record C · Who receives the forms? Who decides?

Associated Students of Green River College. 522 Financial Code, Article V, §§3–4. Washington State Legislature. RCW 28B.15.045, especially §§1–5. · Read the state law

### Record D · Same task, different welcome

Stephens, Nicole M., Stephanie A. Fryberg, Hazel Rose Markus, Camille S. Johnson, and Rebecca Covarrubias. 2012. “Unseen disadvantage: How American universities’ focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 102(6), 1178–1197. Study 3, Figure 2.

### Record E · Who controls the workweek?

Seattle Office of Labor Standards. Secure Scheduling Ordinance, 2017. Harknett, Kristen, Daniel Schneider, and Véronique Irwin. 2021. “Improving health and economic security by reducing work schedule uncertainty.” PNAS 118(42), e2107828118. Figure 1B. · Read the city’s ordinance guide

### Record F · Who can picture themselves here?

Gaucher, Danielle, Justin Friesen, and Aaron C. Kay. 2011. “Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 101(1), 109–128. Study 5 and Appendix B.

## Optional reading after play

Steven Lukes. 2005. Power: A Radical View. 2nd ed. Palgrave Macmillan. Louis Althusser. 1971. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” In Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, translated by Ben Brewster. Monthly Review Press.

Course grounding. Yoav Duman, “Introduction to Comparative Politics,” first lecture, part 1. The syllabus and individual module for this activity can add the sections on power, the pie analogy and empirical reasoning.

## Assessment design for instructors

National Research Council (2001), Knowing What Students Know, ch. 2 links the skill, the observed response and the judgment.

Shute (2008), Focus on Formative Feedback recommends short, task-specific feedback after an attempt. Guskey (2001) describes targeted help followed by a parallel check.

TEQSA (2025), Enacting Assessment Reform in a Time of Artificial Intelligence describes points where students demonstrate learning independently.

FEEDBACK AND REVISIONS

# Read the reasoning trace

Students write six explanations and two new-case responses. GPT selects one instructor-written question per saved first draft. Both modes verify three case checks locally. The final check asks students to try a fresh condition before receiving any hint on it. Students can keep a draft that fits or revise.

| Trace | How to read it |
|---|---|
| First claim and draft | Starting point on this specific task. Pay attention to the link between a rule and an outcome. |
| Guide question | An evidence pointer or a more demanding test. The report shows the path taken. Help carries no deduction. |
| Three case checks | The game checks a fact and its consequence at replay, preferences and transfer. The trace records attempts and evidence. Score the written reasoning yourself. |
| New case and defense | Applied and Stretch give students different problems. Use the same rubric for the evidence and explanation. |
| Original, revision 1, revision 2 | The original is kept. Completed revisions retain the new wording and a learner's reason for changing it. Grade the strongest supported work. |
| Estimated active time | Planning information. Timing excludes hidden and paused periods and stops after five minutes of inactivity. |

## Two examples to listen for

Night Transit. It has 14 once duplicate Q1 is counted once. It gets the hearing that Makers lost. Music still wins 2–1 because it keeps its two votes.

Library waitlist. Equal totals can hide people changing sides. The matched rows identify three newly choosing later hours in A and one in B. Week 4 was a record of visible conduct.

Distinct estimates. The core private comparison tracks the same individuals on one choice only. Both welcome arms also receive the advising routine. To estimate the added effect of repetition, compare one-time and repeated exposure under the same factual rights and comparable costs. Ask for later private evidence.

Built-in coaching works offline. Students who choose GPT share saved first drafts and related case details with OpenAI. Verification uses the case on the device in either mode.

## Optional independent transfer

Give students two minutes on their own with a fresh case. For example, three city proposals compete for two hearings based on valid signatures. Set a tie rule. When each student begins, reveal three fresh counts and one proposal's revised count. Ask who gets the second hearing now and what comparison supports the answer.

Offer an equivalent oral or brief written response using the same prompt and evidence. Score separately if you use it. Give 2 for an accurate implication and specific evidence or test, 1 for one of those, and 0 for neither. The written report still passes at 8/10 with at least one point in each criterion.

CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

# Who gets to write the rules?

Start with the Board’s renewal decision. Ask who drafted the vendor’s reporting clause, who has formal authority to adopt it, and which students the dashboard makes visible. Compare it with the voluntary log and the sample that includes nonusers.

Use the joint request to distinguish political opportunity from personal motivation. A fifth verified name changes whether the request is heard. Rules can change the payoff to acting together. Privacy and time can still matter even when signing is effective.

## Test the transfer case

In an illustrative $100 school revenue total, $90 in Title IV aid and $10 in covered VA education benefits would put the school at 90% under the old rule. Moving the covered VA amount to the federal side would put the hypothetical school at 100% under the revised rule. Hold revenue and students fixed for this accounting comparison. Then ask how recruitment might change, and what data could test that prediction.

## Compare rival explanations

Use the critical argument about concentrated influence as a hypothesis. Earlier access for vendors could shape the counting rule. Staff might also choose it because they face real cost constraints. Ask students to compare meeting access, draft language, adopted terms, cost estimates and whose evidence survives into the public decision.

Keep changes in perception and action distinct. An appeal to merit can change how people interpret a setback. Measure recognition of shared barriers and actual joint action separately.

### Record G · When public aid follows the shopper

U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2013. VA Education Benefits: Student Characteristics and Outcomes Vary across Schools. GAO-13-567, Appendix II, fig. 9. U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Handbook, 2026–27, vol. 2, ch. 4. · Read the current revenue test

### Record H · Whose preferences line up with policy?

Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” Perspectives on Politics 12(3), 564–581. Table 4.

### Record I · What if effort is the explanation?

McCoy, Shannon K., and Brenda Major. 2007. “Priming meritocracy and the psychological justification of inequality.” Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 43(3), 341–351.