The Play for Power
Principle 1: “All Political Behavior has a Purpose.”
(Lowi, Ginsberg, and Shepsle, Chapter 1)

People have goals and they strategically plan and maneuver to get what they want. This is instrumental behavior.
Redefining Politics:

Politics involves determining how benefits are to be provided and who pays the costs.
“Politics consists of influence processes involving both conflict and cooperation, and occurring both within and outside of government, that authoritatively determine for a wide range of groups who gets what, when, and how.”

(Eisenstein expanding on Laswell)
• Government affects politics through institutions, although not all politics is conducted through government.

• People attempt to influence each other through the media, political parties, religious establishments, unions, business associations, other clubs and associations, and on a personal level.
• All politics involving the government or not could be referred to as “The Play for Power.”

• People, groups, and parts of the government compete for power and influence.
• Politics is like a game and sometimes includes games within games. It is conducted at multiple levels and becomes very complex.

• Important and often means life and death, poverty or wealth, the good life versus a harder life.
Analyzing Politics

You will be using the Play of Power concepts in the following slides to analyze politics:

- Actors and their Goals
- Strategies (to influence): Authority, Persuasion, Exchange
- Tactics
- Outcomes
Principle 2: Rules and Procedures Matter, or Institutions are the Forces that Shape Politics.

Institutions help to regularize politics by providing rules, procedures, and standards. Institutions provide and mold incentives and actors’ behavior.
Actors and Goals

• As mentioned above, actors can be anyone that is in or outside the government but battling over public policy or even just the opinions of people on politics.

• All political actors have interests and goals that must be identified.
Strategies of Political Influence:

1. **Authority** – Relies on legitimacy and is backed by the threat of coercion. Used by those in government.

2. **Exchange** – Trading something for something else such as money or vote-trading. **Bargaining** is one form of exchange and may be formal or informal.

3. **Persuasion** – Logical arguments and emotional pleas.
Authority as a Strategy

- Examples include: Presidential Veto Power, Legislative Power, Court Orders, Executive Administrative Power, other authority by governmental agencies.

- However, political authorities use other strategies besides governmental authority, such as Exchange or Persuasion.
Exchange as Strategy

• Something is exchanged for influence: Vote Trading, Financial Contributions, Bargaining, Bribes, other forms of cooperation.

• Principle 3: “Cooperation through bargaining and collective action is difficult, and the difficulty mounts as the number of people grows.”
A. **Informal Bargaining** – Parties attempt to influence each other through “exchange.” Agreements coming out of this type of process are unstructured and not backed by authority.
B. **Formal Bargaining** – Parties attempt to influence each other through “exchange” but are guided by official rules or other sources of authority.
C. **Collective Action** – This occurs when the number of actors becomes too big and confused to settle problems in small groups.

For example, labor unions or business associations may band together to fight for something that is in all their interest.
Tactics

• Actors begin with Strategies to influence others but just like in a game, when needs to use various tactics to win.

• There are many tactics one could use depending on one’s circumstances. Keep an eye out for these.
Power can be gained or lost by the following tactics (inside of government or out):

1. Defining and changing the jurisdiction of political authority (including delegation).
2. Setting and changing the agenda and vetoing opposing plans.
3. Forming coalitions and alliances.
4. Changing the rules of the game.
5. Timing strategies properly.
6. Going Public
Principle 4: Political Outcomes are the Products of Individual Preferences and Institutional Procedures – or policy results when political goals meet institutions.
Uses of Persuasion as Influence:

1. Logical Arguments

2. Emotional Pleas

3. Manipulation of symbolism
Manipulation of symbolism is one form of Persuasion:

**Concepts:**
- Equality, Freedom, justice, etc.

**People:**
- Abe Lincoln, Washington, Hitler

**Objects:**
- Flag, Capitol Building, D.C., $$$
Types of Political Outcomes:

A. **Symbolic** – Some people win political battles and can claim to have been correct and right, which makes them feel better about themselves and their political views.

Do not confuse with use of Symbolism.
B. Material: Some people or groups receive tangible benefits, like lower taxes, more government benefits, political office, etc.

1. Selective benefits or costs – only certain individuals or groups are responsible for paying costs or receiving benefits.

2. Collective outcomes – affect everyone and sometimes are the result of collective action.