

Social choice and welfare: axiomatics and philosophy

Niveau : Master – Deuxième année – M2

Cursus : Master Master Economics, Data and Decision Science

Semestre : 2 (S9)

Volume horaire : 21 heures de cours (CM)

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Objectifs du cours

The lecture insists on the complementarity of both formal and philosophical aspects of social choice and welfare theories.

Philosophy of normative economics aims at questioning the theoretical, methodological and ethical foundations of the social choice and welfare theories, including the status of value judgements in positive and normative economics and the theories of justice.

Axiomatics of social choice offers an introduction to the formal models and classical results in social choice and voting theory. The course begins by examining the most well-known classes of voting rules and voting paradoxes within the Arrowian framework. It then explores what kind of information voters should be asked to provide on an electoral ballot, and analyzes how this choice influences the design and properties of the voting mechanisms that can be naturally associated with different ballot domains.

Plan de cours

I. Philosophy of Normative Economics

Depending on the year and the students' interests, the lecture will focus two or three of the following topics:

- An introduction to philosophy of economics and its methodology
- Theories of justice: libertarianism, egalitarianism, utilitarianism, welfarism
- Justice and public action: The debate on information by Amartya Sen
- The issue of the value-fact distinction in the recommendations of public policy
- Definitions of democracy and related theoretical issues
- The measurement issue in economics

II. Axiomatics of social choice

- An introduction to the axiomatic theory of social choice
- In-depth analysis of the axiomatic characterization of the Approval Voting rule.



Compétences développées

After the lecture, the student should be able to:

- Know and understand various theories of justice, discuss their arguments, disentangle their premises, hidden assumptions and conclusions
- Identify the relevance of theories of justice for welfare economics, and how to introduce their insights either formally, in the social welfare function approach, or in practice, for evaluation of public policy
- Identify and understand the main arguments from philosophy of science regarding the value-fact distinction, or the separation of tasks between politicians and economists as economist experts in real life contexts.
- Formalize electoral rules and desirable normative properties in voting methods.
- Understand the logical incompatibilities among key normative principles and their implications for real-world elections.
- Formally state and prove basic foundational axiomatic results in voting theory.



Modalités d'évaluation

- A written homework essay (10 days, 6-8 pages dissertation) based on, depending on the professional project of the student, whether academic or not, either a case-study or a paper of philosophy of economics

Bibliographie / références

- Reiss, J. The Philosophy of Economics: A Contemporary Introduction, New York (NY): Routledge 2013 (2nd edition forthcoming).
- Hausman, D., McPherson, M., Satz, D. Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy and Public policy, Cambridge: CUP, (2006-2010)2017.
- The philosophy of Economics, an Anthology, Ed. D. Hausman, Cambridge: CUP, (1984)1994.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/>>

Moreover, each chapter requires to read papers, whose references and links are provided on Moodle.