

PUMA 3910: Public Policy and Economics

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE | Spring 2025

Welcome

Welcome to Public Policy and Economics (PUBA 3910)! As we gather this season, I want to emphasize that this classroom is a space where everyone is welcome and belongs. Here, we'll support each other through our learning journey, focusing on both academic growth and our collective well-being. Let's engage with care and enthusiasm as we move forward together.

*Course description/rationale

This course offers a unique approach to economics by focusing on the practical application of economic principles to key policy fields. Unlike traditional economics courses that emphasize graphic and mathematical approaches, this course prioritizes the real-world application of concepts and theories to analyze and address contemporary social issues.

Students in this class will explore how economic insights can explain and drive social change as well as inform policy design. Through interactive discussions and debates, students will learn to evaluate economic equity, assess environmental policies, and explore the economic implications of technological innovations. Additionally, the course will cover the intricacies of U.S. housing markets and healthcare systems, equipping students with the knowledge to design effective policies in these areas.

In addition, this class will equip students with foundations and skills for learning economics. Class activities will heavily rely on students' use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools (e.g. Learn About and NotebookLM by Google), including active learning, fact-checking, debates, and critical writing.

Your learning is my primary concern in this course, so I may modify the schedule if, for instance, we discover we need to spend time on one certain topic and less on another.

Course information

Course code: PUBA 3810
Location: Pigott 306
Class times: T/Th 3:45-5:50PM
First session: April 1
Last session: June 5

Instructor information

Instructor: Chengxin Xu
Phone: 862-872-6700
Email: cxu1@seattleu.edu
Office: Casey 210-09
Online office:

Office hours

The time I have listed as "Office hours" is time for you. Office hours are a chance for you to meet with me one-on-one or in small groups to discuss the course, your learning, your plans for the future, or just to check in. Office hours can be in person or via Microsoft Teams, provided we

have the bandwidth. You can schedule an appointment using Microsoft Bookings at [insert URL].

Response times

The best way to reach me is to use my Seattle U email address: cxu1@seattleu.edu.

I will check my email regularly. You can email me at any time, but you may not receive a response outside regular business hours (9 AM to 5 PM). Generally, emails received before 3 p.m. will receive a response before I finish work for the day, and emails received after 3 p.m. will receive a response on the following business day. Business days are Monday–Friday, except for holidays. I aim to stay off email in the evenings and over weekends and holidays and encourage you to do the same so that you get some balance. If I plan to be available outside regular hours (for example, the evening before a big assignment), I will let you know.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this course (i.e. by *passing* this course), you will be able to

1. **Comprehend** key economic concepts and philosophies relevant to public policy.
2. **Apply** economic theories and evidence to engage in meaningful discussions about public policies.
3. **Critically evaluate** public policies by examining their underlying economic principles and potential impacts.
4. **Cultivate** active learning strategies to deepen and expand their understanding of economics.

Assignments and grading

*OVERVIEW OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT	RELEVANT LEARNING OUTCOMES	RELATIVE VALUE	DUE DATE
1. Debate Reflections	Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4	50%	See Canvas
2. Debate Participation	Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4	30%	See Canvas
8. Final Debate with AI	Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4	20%	See Canvas

FORMATTING AND SUBMITTING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

HOW?	WHY?
Upload to Canvas	... because it's easier and eco-friendlier than printing it out, and more reliable than emailing. Be sure to upload your assignments as an attachment – and <i>always</i> keep a copy.
Upload as a Word File	... because that's the simplest format for me to be able to access, read, and make comments using a stylus.

***ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES AND EXTENSIONS**

The assignments in this course build on one another, so the feedback process is an important part of your learning. My plan is therefore to return your assignments as soon as possible after you have submitted them. (My normal policy is to return papers within five working days; I hope to be able to keep to that this quarter.) Faster feedback means you're more likely to remember what you wrote and can more easily take the feedback on board for the next assignment.

It would greatly help the learning process if you are able to submit your assignment by the stated deadlines. If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment on time, *please communicate with me in advance*. I do understand that life happens and can sometimes get in the way. I'll do my best to be flexible; for that to happen, we need to keep in dialogue so that I know where you are in your learning and how I can best support you.

To help keep yourself on track, I strongly encourage you to plan ahead: Check the session-by-session schedule at the end of this syllabus to see when assignment briefings will be given and when assignments are due. This enables you to block out time in your calendar now so that you know when you will be working on assignments for this course. If you're wondering how much time you need to allow for completing assignments well, then I suggest you use the approach I take for my own writing: make a rough estimate of time and then multiply it by 2.5. This sounds like a lot, but I think you'll find it more realistic for managing your expectations and planning.

An agreement to receive an Incomplete (I) grade may be negotiated if your circumstances do not allow you to finish the course on time. The Incomplete Grades Policy of the university is available on the Office of the Registrar web site: <https://www.seattleu.edu/redhawk-axis/academic-policies/>

GRADING SCALE

A	100–94 [Superior]	B–	82–80	D+	69–67
A–	93–90	C+	79–77	D	66–63 [Poor]
B+	89–87	C	76–73 [Adequate]	D–	62–60
B	86–83 [Good]	C–	72–70	F	59 or less [Failing]

****ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TUTORIAL**

**** <https://www.seattleu.edu/academic-integrity/resources-for-students/>**

A NOTE ABOUT GRADES

Sometimes I receive questions and complaints when students don't get perfect scores on their work. As you think about your grade, please keep in mind:

- Through our schooling, we have been socialized to focus on grades, oftentimes overlooking what we are learning or trying to learn.

- Practice interrupting your socialization about grades and focus on the goal of learning how to receive feedback and how to use it to improve your work in your next assignment.
- Ask yourself why you expect to receive a perfect score every time (and how your social identities may inform that expectation).

How class will work

***YOUR WORKLOAD IN THIS COURSE**

For every hour in class, you can expect to devote an average of **three hours** outside of class for readings and preparation, as well as substantive assignments and participation exercises. As this is a five-credit class, you can reasonably expect an average of **5 hours** of homework each week. I have tried to ensure that the workload is evenly distributed throughout the course, but if you find you have less than the normal amount of work one week, I suggest you read ahead for future classes.

***INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**

I will regularly ask for your feedback on how the class format is working for you. Expect there to be a few changes as the quarter/semester progresses; in any changes, I will be putting your learning first.

Education research shows that your learning is greatest when you are actively involved in making sense of new concepts (“constructing knowledge”) and when you do this in community with other students. This model is technically called “social constructivism,” and is closely aligned with the Jesuit teaching tradition (Ignatian pedagogy). We will use this model throughout the course, so you can expect to

- be engaged in plenty of classroom activities to build on the preparation materials you have completed for each class
- work in small groups during class and for those groups to change on a regular basis
- ask your instructor for clarifications, rather than expecting lectures.

If you find that you haven’t managed to complete an assigned reading/podcast/video before class, you will likely find that class session frustrating, since we will build on and apply the material each time (including trouble-shooting the issues you found most perplexing), but class will not involve regurgitating the content of the material. I hope you find this an engaging and enjoyable approach to learning.

CLASSROOM NORMS

During our first class session, we will jointly create course norms (or “agreements”) to which we will all abide so that we have the most productive and positive remote learning environment. In face-to-face classes, regular examples have included that we agree to:

- Start and end on time
- Come to class prepared
- Participate actively in discussion
- Show one another courtesy, including when we disagree.

***ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS**

Numerous research studies have shown that when students actively ask and answer questions, they take greater interest in the material, they clarify shared misconceptions, and they retain

more information. Studies also show that missing classes – and therefore missing the opportunity to process ideas together with your peers – negatively affects your grades, even without an attendance grade. (Get in touch if you'd like to find out more about this.)

I would like to see all of you find ways to participate actively in class (in small- and large-group settings. I will not take formal daily attendance, but I'll get in touch with you if I notice you are regularly absent or if you appear to be inattentive in class, just to be sure you are ok and to find out what would best help you learn.

If you are sick, please stay home and rest so that you can recover more quickly and can be fully present in class when you are better. (See notes below on what to do if you miss a class.)

***IF YOU MISS A CLASS**

If you expect to be absent or to be late to a class, please e-mail me beforehand (or as soon as possible). I will pass on your apologies to the group at the start of class.

If you do miss a class, you need to obtain notes from one of your peers to catch up. (You might want to pair up with a classmate at the start of the quarter/semester so that you know who to turn to first.) If, after going over those notes and checking the readings for the class, you still have questions, please arrange to meet me during office hours to discuss. Remember to have those notes and your targeted questions ready so that we can use the time to focus on your learning.

ZOOM CLASS RECORDING

Zoom meetings of this course may be recorded upon students' requests. Any recordings will only be available to students registered for this class. Recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments.

****Academic resources to support your learning**

My goal is to create a learning environment in which you can be successful and feel supported. I will work hard to create and improve the learning environment throughout the quarter/semester based on my own observations of the course and your feedback on what would help you learn more. In return, I ask and encourage you to make the most of this learning opportunity.

I encourage you to explore the services below and to work on the assumption that you'll always be developing some new strategies that will help you become a more flexible learner. I am keen to support you in that growth, and plan to build in opportunities for us all to share new strategies with one another either in scheduled class time or via Canvas.

****LIBRARY AND LEARNING COMMONS**

**** <https://library.seattleu.edu>**

WRITING CENTER

The Seattle University Writing Center supports SU students from all levels of writing expertise, voices, experiences, and writing practices to achieve their writing goals. We seek to provide an accessible, anti-oppressive, and collaborative space for learning and growth through one-on-one peer consultations. The peer consultants are also students who engage in intensive study and hands-on practice to provide thoughtful feedback and to share writing strategies.

Consultations are available at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming, organizing, and developing rough draft to revising and editing in later drafts. The Writing Center offers appointments in various modalities: in-person and online, synchronous, and asynchronous.

Please visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/> to learn more about the Writing Center. You can schedule an appointment and select an available modality through <https://seattleu.mywconline.com/>

LEARNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Learning Assistance Programs (LAP) provides peer tutoring, facilitated study groups, language conversation groups and learning strategy development through scheduled workshops and individual consultation sessions with a learning specialist. We offer these in various modalities (in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous), depending on university policy and LAP staff availability. Please visit our website <https://www.seattleu.edu/learning-assistance/> or e-mail us at learningassistance@seattleu.edu for the most updated information about accessing services.

RESEARCH SERVICES

Research help is available to students at any stage in the research process. Students can schedule an in-person or virtual consultation with our team of Research Services Librarians and Student Peer Research Consultants (SPRCs) to get help finding and assessing sources, learn database search skills, and develop research topics.

To learn more about our services, chat online with a Librarian, or to book an in-person or virtual Consultation, check out our Ask a Librarian page (<https://library.seattleu.edu/ask/>).

MATH LAB

The Math Lab offers one-on-one tutoring to students enrolled in lower division mathematics courses. Please visit our website at <https://www.seattleu.edu/scieng/math/student-resources/math-lab/> for more information.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER (ELLC)

The English Language Learning Center (ELLC) offers free tutoring for all SU students who are multilingual speakers and for whom English is not their first/primary language. Experienced ELLC tutors can help you improve your English language skills and better understand American culture. We can help with any type of assignment: written essays, online discussions, oral presentations, interview practice, etc. For the schedule or to book a session please visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/ellc/ellc-tutoring/>

TECHNOLOGY AFFORDABILITY LENDING FROM THE LIBRARY

Is your technology giving you trouble with a remote or hybrid class? The library lends a variety of Chromebooks, webcams, headphones, short-term hotspots, etc. Learn more at <https://library.seattleu.edu/collections/technology>

Further campus resources

I recognize that your ability to focus on your coursework does not exist in a vacuum. Your physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being is integral to your success as a student. Below are some campus resources that are available to support your overall well-being.

SU FOOD PANTRY

The SU Food Pantry provides free, supplementary food to all students, staff, and faculty with a current Seattle U ID card. The Pantry is located in Pavilion 180 (Office of Multicultural Affairs) and is part of a larger Food Security Initiative at Seattle University. Learn more at <https://www.seattleu.edu/oma/food-security-initiative/>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS)

CAPS offers short-term, individual therapy and referral and consultation services for currently enrolled SU students. Clinical services are confidential, provided by licensed clinicians, and free of charge. Call (206) 296-6090 to schedule an appointment. For detailed information about current services and resources visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/caps/>

TALKNOW (TIMELYCARE)

TalkNow offers 24/7, on-demand, emotional support from a mental health professional to talk about anything at anytime, provided by TimelyCare. There are no out-of-pocket costs or insurance requirements. For more information about the service and registration visit <https://www.seattleu.edu/wellness/timelycare/>

988 - SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE

You can call or text 988 for 24/7 crisis support or can chat online at <https://988lifeline.org/>

University policies

CAMPUS CLIMATE INCIDENT REPORTING & RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Seattle U has adopted a [Campus Climate Incident Reporting & Response Protocol](#) to support our commitment to providing an inclusive and nondiscriminatory campus community. If you have seen, heard, or experienced a harmful incident on the basis of one or more of your or another individual's actual or perceived identities, you may report that incident. Any member of the University community can make a report. For more information or to file a report, please visit www.seattleu.edu/equity/campus-climate-incidents/.

****SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Seattle University values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded an equal opportunity to participate in learning experiences. Disability Services (DS) works with students with disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations to support their learning experiences. Disabilities include "invisible disabilities," such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition. This could include any long-term effects of COVID, even after recovery ("long-COVID"), if a health care provider determines it is a chronic health problem.

If you have, or suspect you may have, a disability that may interfere with your performance as a student in this course and have not yet been assessed by DS, please contact DS staff at DS@seattleu.edu or (206) 296-5740. Disability-based accommodations to course expectations can be made only through this process and must be approved by DS before implemented in a course. I am committed to working with you, so please consider meeting with me to discuss the logistics of implementing any accommodations approved by DS.

****NOTICE ON RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS**

It is the policy of Seattle University to reasonably accommodate students who, due to the observance of religious holidays, expect to be absent or endure a significant hardship during certain days of their academic course or program. Please see, Policy on Religious Accommodations for Students (<https://www.seattleu.edu/media/policies/Policy-on-Religious-Accommodations-for-Students---FINAL.PDF>).

****ACADEMIC POLICIES ON THE REGISTRAR WEBSITE**

**** <https://www.seattleu.edu/redhawk-axis/academic-policies/>**

Be sure that you understand the following university academic policies, posted on the Registrar's website:

****ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

****ACADEMIC GRADING GRIEVANCE POLICY**

***HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

Seattle University is committed to our educational mission and to the safety of our community members. The university continues to closely monitor COVID-19 developments and respond accordingly based on public health guidance. For more information about the university's COVID-19 response, including current policies and protocols, please visit:

<https://www.seattleu.edu/coronavirus/reopening--covid-policies/>

CHANGE IN DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION

SU reserves the right to change the delivery of instruction for courses without prior notice due to COVID-19 or other events.

Materials for you to read, listen to, or watch

***REQUIRED READINGS AND MATERIALS**

- Principles of Microeconomics by OpenStax, 3rd Edition. Free online copy available at: <https://openstax.org/details/books/principles-microeconomics-3e> (referred to as POM)

Other reading materials will be posted on Canvas.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- See Canvas.

*Provisional schedule and readings

Week 1.1 4/1/2025	PREPARATION: TOPICS: AGENDA: ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 1.2 4/3/2025	PREPARATION: POM Ch 1 and Ch 6 TOPICS: Forming the Community CONCEPTS: Meet and know each other; debate roles; calibration session ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 2.1 4/8/2025	PREPARATION: POM Ch 3 TOPICS: The Market in the Invisible Hand CONCEPTS: Homo economicus; opportunity cost vs. sunk cost; marginal analysis ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 2.2 4/10/2025	PREPARATION: TOPICS: Markets and Economy CONCEPTS: Demand, supply, and market equilibrium; perfectly competitive market; economic rationality ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 3.1 4/15/2025	PREPARATION: POM Ch 3.4 TOPICS: Mom, will I ever afford a house? CONCEPTS: Goals for macroeconomic study; measurements of economic health; How microeconomic phenomenon leads to macroeconomic issues ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 3.2 4/17/2025	PREPARATION: TOPICS: Debate: The government should set up a rent ceiling. ASSIGNMENTS: Debate Reflection FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 4.1 4/22/2025	PREPARATION: POM Ch 4 TOPICS: Finding a Job and Hiring for Profit CONCEPTS: Supply and demand in the labor market; monopsony ASSIGNMENTS: FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 4.2 4/24/2025	PREPARATION: TOPICS: The debate: A minimum wage should be imposed by the government.

	ASSIGNMENTS:	Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 5.1 4/29/2025	PREPARATION:	POM Ch 14
	TOPICS:	Are Greg and Emily More Employable than Jamal and Lakisha?
	CONCEPT:	The tradeoff between equity and efficiency; predictable irrationality
	ASSIGNMENTS:	
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 5.2 5/1/2025	PREPARATION:	
	TOPICS:	Motion: Universities should not enroll students based on their races.
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 6.1 5/6/2025	PREPARATION:	POM Ch 8.4, Ch 13
	TOPICS:	Can Money Buy Education Success?
	CONCEPTS:	Return of education; rules of a competitive market; positive externality
	ASSIGNMENTS:	
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 6.2 5/8/2025	PREPARATION:	
	TOPICS:	Debate: K12 education can be improved by market competition between public, private, and nonprofit schools.
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 7.1 5/13/2025	PREPARATION:	POM Ch 12
	TOPICS:	This is Why You Should Recycle and Compost
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Market failure: common pool issues; negative externality
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 7.2 5/15/2025	PREPARATION:	
	TOPICS:	Debate: We should phase out the production of new gasoline cars and trucks by 2035.
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 8.1 5/20/2025	PREPARATION:	POM Ch 9
	TOPICS:	Cyberpunk 2025
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Incentives of innovation; the creation of monopoly; anti-trust laws
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 8.2 5/22/2025	PREPARATION:	
	TOPICS:	Debate: Patents on medication should be abolished.
	ASSIGNMENTS:	Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:	
Week 9.1 5/27/2025	PREPARATION:	POM Ch 16
	TOPICS:	What did Luigi Mangione tell us?

	CONCEPT: Risk, information asymmetry, moral hazard
	ASSIGNMENTS:
	FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 9.2	PREPARATION:
5/29/2025	TOPICS: Motion: The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) helps fix more problems than issues it creates.
	ASSIGNMENTS: Debate Reflection
	FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 10.1	PREPARATION:
6/3/2025	TOPICS: Fundamental Logics of Policy Analysis
	CONCEPTS: Empiricism; Utility; cost and benefit analysis; causal identification
	ASSIGNMENTS:
	FOR NEXT TIME:
Week 10.2	PREPARATION:
6/5/2025	TOPICS: Wrap Up and Moving Forward
	AGENDA: Students sharing experiences of reading and debating about policy issues through economic lenses.
	ASSIGNMENTS:
	FOR NEXT TIME: