

Economics 59000: Public Economics

Fall 2020

Course details

CRN: 17673

Credit Hours: 2

Professor: Jillian Carr, PhD

Email: carr56@purdue.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 1 – 3 pm and Wednesday 11 am – 1 pm

Course Description

This course explores the operations of government in society and the economy. Using real-world policy examples, motivations for intervention and policy alternatives are explored. A strong emphasis is placed on how individuals respond to government action. Policy topics covered include taxation, environmental policy, education policy, and transfer programs.

Course Objectives

1. Identify the most common types of government taxation and public programs.
2. Articulate the effects of taxation methods and programs on the behavior of economic agents
3. Collaborate with a group of classmates to devise a viable solution to a real world policy issue.

Textbook

None required, but the following is recommended for students who need/want more resources:

Public Finance and Public Policy by Jonathan Gruber (ISBN-13: 978-1464143335, ISBN-10: 1464143331).

Also, *Public Finance* by Harvey Rosen and Ted Gayer is a fine alternative. Any edition is fine as I will not be assigning readings or practice problems from the text.

Prerequisites

None.

Course Format

This distance learning course has been designed to be asynchronous in recognition that students will have a variety of other commitments and take the class from many different time zones. It will be delivered over Brightspace. All lectures are pre-recorded, and students can watch them at their convenience. Weekly problem sets are designed to help students receive feedback on work and incentivize staying up to date on course material. There is one exam per content module. The last module of the course is devoted to a group project where the students will apply course concepts in a real world scenario.

Grading

The course will be out of **100 points** with points derived as follows:

Exams (3): 15 points each

Problem sets (5): 5 points each

Discussion participation (Yellowdig): 10 points

Group project: 20 points

Exams:

There will be one exam for each of the first 3 modules of the course. Each exam is worth 15 points, so together exams are worth 45 points. These exams are designed to test a student's factual knowledge. Exams will be administered via Brightspace.

Problem Sets:

These are designed to give students feedback on exam-type questions. There will be 6 problem sets – one per week for the first 6 weeks of the course. I will drop the lowest grade so that the points are based on the 5 highest. Each is worth 5 points for 25 points total. Because I drop the lowest, I will not accept late problem sets. Problem sets must be completed via Brightspace (see there for specific instructions) and are due on **Mondays at noon** (West Lafayette time). Answers will be released at 1 pm on Mondays, and no further responses will be accepted after that point.

Discussion:

Students will gain 10 points by participating in online discussions. The content of this course is applied in nature, and students will need to complete outside readings (news articles, academic research, etc.) to participate in discussions with their classmates. We will be using a new technology called “Yellowdig” within Brightspace to facilitate this. Yellowdig isn't like normal message boards - it allows students to not only respond to official discussions posted by Dr. Carr, but also post topics of interest to them and respond to other students' ideas. It works more like a Facebook group and your points are awarded according to your participation in the community. It will be the first time Dr. Carr has used it, so we will all figure it out together.

Group Project:

The group project is designed to address Course Objective (3) and challenge students with the experiences of making real world policy. They will work as a consulting firm hired by a city government to address a specific multi-faceted policy challenge. They will have to provide specific policy outlines and explain their budget and plans for financing the initiatives.

Late Work:

Late work will be accepted with a 20% penalty, but will not be accepted after the working day following the due date. I will not allow late submission of the problem sets. Only the project may be submitted late. Please note that in emergency circumstances, other accommodations can be made.

Make-up Exams:

Exams will be asynchronous, and students will be able to take them at their convenience during a 24-hour window. Make-up exams will only be given to students who have a university-approved excuse. If you know ahead of time that you will have a conflict with an exam, please let me know. In the case of unexpected absence (or religious holiday), you must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. Failure to notify me of an absence in a timely manner as described in this syllabus may result in a score of zero for the assessment in question.

Regrades:

If you would like to contest a grade, you may do so, but it must be within 2 weeks of the graded work being returned to you. I will offer you a “regrade” in which I grade your work myself (not the TA), and you receive the grade I would have given you. Even if the regrade is lower than the original grade, you will receive it instead of the original.

Grade Breakdown: this course is NOT graded on a curve

Letter Grade	Greater than or equal to	Less than
A+	97	-
A	93	97
A-	90	93
B+	87	90
B	83	87
B-	80	83
C+	77	80
C	73	77
C-	70	73
D+	67	70
D	63	67
D-	60	63
F	-	60

COVID-19 Statement

This course is a distance learning course, and its design has not been altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are no expectations related to attendance or physical location associated with this class that may be impacted by the pandemic, I (Dr. Carr) understand that the world is crazy right now. For this reason, I am more than willing to address individual issues and situations related to the completion of coursework in a sympathetic way. Please do not hesitate to ask me for any accommodations that you need. We (including me) are all doing weird things like sharing a dining table workspace with our partner (*raises hand*) and begging our Boomer parents to stop eating out (*raises hand*) and all of these very 2020 things take a toll on you. If the pandemic is impacting your ability to get work completed for any reason, I am amenable to making modifications as needed.

Academic Integrity

“As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.”

Academic dishonesty absolutely will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to enact penalties for students I believe to be engaged in cheating up to and including a grade of “F” for the course and filing a report with the Dean of Students Office. In this course, academic dishonesty can include plagiarism, copying another student’s exam, answering hotseat questions when you are not present, having someone else complete your assignments or tests for you, and electronic (or otherwise) communication of test answers, among other offenses.

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breeches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.

Posting exams or assignments from this class to online services such as Course Hero, Chegg or Quizlet without my permission will be considered a violation of academic integrity in this class.

ADA

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247. I recommend presenting any "Letters of Accommodation" to me early in the semester so that we can begin to arrange accommodations as soon as possible.

Non-discrimination

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies. Any student who believes they have been discriminated against may visit www.purdue.edu/report-hate to submit a complaint to the Office of Institutional Equity. Information may be reported anonymously.

CAPS Information

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack, <https://purdue.welltrack.com/>. Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please see the Office of the Dean of Students, <http://www.purdue.edu/odos>, for drop-in hours (M-F, 8 am- 5 pm).

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765)494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office of the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Topics Covered

Module 1: 2 weeks

welfare economics

market failures
political economy

Module 2: 2 weeks

tax incidence
efficient and equitable taxation
behavioral responses to taxation
US personal taxes
corporate taxes
alternative tax systems

Module 3: 2 weeks

benefit-cost analysis
environment
transfer programs
elderly
education

Module 4: 2 weeks

Project

Important Dates: all times are West Lafayette time (Eastern time)

Problem Set 1: 8/31 at noon
Problem Set 2: 9/7 at noon
Exam 1: 9/9
Problem Set 3: 9/14 at noon
Problem Set 4: 9/21 at noon
Exam 2: 9/23
Problem Set 5: 9/28 at noon
Problem Set 6: 10/5 at noon
Exam 3: 10/7
Project Due: 10/15 at midnight
YellowDig closes: 10/16 at 5pm