

ECON 441: Public Economics
Section 001 – CRN 51962
Summer 2010
Monday-Friday 10:30 am – 11:45 am
Room: 349 B&E

Instructor: George R. Crowley

Office: B&E 329

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm, and by appointment

E-mail: george.crowley@mail.wvu.edu (preferred method of communication)

Office Phone: (304) 293-7872

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

WVU Course Catalog Description: “Economic roles of the public sector. Particular attention to market failure, redistributing income, the financing of public sector activities, relationships between federal, state, and local governments, and public choice.”

This course will cover the broad range of topics which comprise the field of Public Economics. Upon completion of the course, the student will have an understanding of government’s role in the economy as well as how the tools of economics can be used to analyze the public sector. The course will cover issues in public finance including public good provision, optimal taxation, expenditures, and externalities, as well as topics in public choice including the median voter theorem, special interest effects, bureaucracy, regulation, and positive theories of taxation.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

ECON 201 and 202

Familiarity with ECON 301 is not required, but will prove helpful

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Holcombe, Randall. *Public Sector Economics: The Role of Government in the American Economy*. 2006. (ISBN: 0131450425)

GRADING POLICY:

Students will be graded on the basis of two exams (a midterm and a final) and four short papers. The assignment weighting scheme and grading scale are as follows:

Assignment Weights:	
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Short Papers (10% each)	40%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale:	
A	89.5 and up
B	79.5 – 89.49
C	69.5 – 79.49
D	59.5 – 69.49
F	below 59.49

These grading policies are *final* and nonnegotiable.

ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Short Papers

Over the course of the semester students will be responsible for writing four short response papers. Each paper counts 10% towards the final course grade. These papers will be due at the *beginning* of class on Fridays of each *non exam week*. Late submissions will be penalized a letter grade for each day it is late. For example, an ‘A’ paper submitted after the *beginning* of class on Friday will receive a ‘B.’ If the same paper is submitted the following Monday it will receive a ‘C.’ After the *beginning* of class the following Tuesday, a student will receive a ‘zero’ for the paper. Papers should be typed, double-spaced with 1 inch margins, and written in a 12 point ‘normal’ (e.g. Times New Roman or Arial) font. Students should make an effort to submit papers which are free of spelling/grammatical errors.

A writing topic pertaining to the material covered in class will be provided at least one week prior to each paper’s due date, with the exception of the first paper topic which will be given on the first day of class. Students will be graded primarily on how well they address the topic, but poorly written papers will be marked down. While no specific length is required, approximately 3-5 pages should prove sufficient. Note that the content of a paper is obviously more important than its length. Shorter papers will not be discounted automatically and long papers will not necessarily score well. All else equal a concise and well written paper will score higher than a long, rambling submission.

Papers must represent the student’s own work. If another author’s work is referenced, it must be cited properly. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in an irrecoverable ‘zero’ for the paper at a minimum and potentially an ‘F’ in the course.

B. In Class Examinations

Two exams will be given during the semester, a midterm and a final. The final exam will not be cumulative. The midterm and final exams will each count 30% towards the final course grade. Exams will have a short answer/essay format and will consist of roughly 4-7 questions each. Points assigned to each question/part of question will be clearly indicated on the exam. All questions will be drawn from the study guide provided by the instructor. The instructor will indicate which questions are ‘fair game’ at least one week prior to the exam. Note that exam questions may cover any and all material covered in class *or* in the assigned reading.

No make-up exams will be given; it is the responsibility of the student to be in class on time with the proper materials each exam day. Late arrival for an exam is not cause for extra time. Failure to sit for the midterm exam will result in a ‘zero’ for that exam. Failure to sit for the final exam will result in an ‘F’ for the course. If a student must be absent from an exam, it is his or her responsibility to inform the instructor ahead of time so that arrangements may be made for the student to sit for the exam *early*.

Paper Due Dates
Paper 1: Friday, May 21
Paper 2: Friday, May 28
Paper 3: Friday, June 11
Paper 4: Friday, June 18

Exam Dates
Midterm: Friday, June 4
Final: Friday, June 25

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is not required but is strongly encouraged. As noted above, exams will cover material presented in the lectures that may not be covered in the text. Further, in class examples are likely an essential part of full understanding of the course content. If you choose to miss class, it is strongly recommended that you get a copy of the notes from a classmate; no notes will be provided by the instructor.

There will be no class on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated and can result in a failing grade, dismissal from class, and expulsion from the University. If I suspect you of cheating I will seek the appropriate punishment under the guidelines of the Student Code of Conduct (<http://www.arc.wvu.edu/rightsa.html>).

STATEMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me as soon as possible and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (phone: 293-6700; website: <http://www.wvu.edu/~socjust/disability/>).

DAYS OF SPECIAL CONCERN:

WVU recognizes the diversity of its students and the needs of those who wish to be absent from class to participate in Days of Special Concern, which are listed in the Schedule of Courses. You should notify me by email by the end of the second week of classes or prior to the first Day of Special Concern, whichever is earlier, regarding Day of Special Concern observances that will affect your attendance. I will make reasonable accommodations for tests that you may miss as a result of observing a Day of Special Concern.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:*The instructor reserves the right to modify—all changes will be announced in class*

Week	Topic	Assigned Reading
<i>Week 1 (May 17 – 21)</i>	Introduction; The Public Sector; Principles for Analyzing Government; Property Rights and Economic Efficiency Paper 1 due Friday, May 21	Chapters 1-3
<i>Week 2 (May 24 – 28)</i>	Externalities; Public Goods; Economic Role of the State Paper 2 due Friday, May 28	Chapters 4-6
<i>Week 3 (May 31 – June 4)</i>	Economic Role of the State; Theory of Collective Action; Public Sector Demand <i>No class May 31 (Memorial Day)</i> Midterm Exam: Friday, June 4	Chapters 6-8
<i>Week 4 (June 7 – 11)</i>	Public Sector Demand; Supply and Demand in Political Markets; Principles of Taxation Paper 3 due Friday, June 11	Chapters 8-11
<i>Week 5 (June 14 – 18)</i>	Taxes on Economic Transactions; Taxation of Income; Personal Income Taxation in the U.S.; Taxes on Business Income and Wealth; Tax System in the U.S. Paper 4 due Friday, June 18	Chapters 12-16
<i>Week 6 (June 21 - 25)</i>	Taxation and Redistribution; Government Redistribution Programs; Social Security; Federal System of Government; Health Care Final Exam: Friday, June 25	Chapters 18-20, 24, 22

Students are responsible for material covered both in class and in the assigned reading. Therefore, students are expected to complete reading of the assigned chapters *before* they are covered in class so that any questions may be addressed during the appropriate lecture.