

Public Finance
Econ 3431
Spring 2015
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 11:50 Oak Hall 112
Instructor: Linda Fisher, Ph.D.

Phone: 860 486 3027

Office: 334 Oak Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:15 – 11:15, Thursdays 8:15 – 9:15

(and by appointment Monday – Thursday 8AM – 2 PM)

Email: Linda.Fisher@uconn.edu

Course Overview: Public Finance is the study of government spending and taxation in our economy. It deals with issues such as when the government should intervene in markets, what methods it may use and the effects of those methods. In this course we will explore many topics including public education spending, how income taxes affect behavior, and methods to reduce pollution. These are just a few of the many interesting applications in Public Finance.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate the major rationales for government involvement in markets.
- Analyze and evaluate government spending programs and their impact on behavior of recipients
- Analyze and evaluate various government taxation programs and their impact on behavior, efficiency and equity
- Read and listen to current news articles concerning government involvement in markets and engage in thoughtful and informed discussion on these topics.
- Be a more informed voter and citizen on topics covered in the course.

Course Requirements:

Text Book: Jonathan Gruber, Public Finance and Public Policy, 4th edition

Quizzes 40%: Beginning the second week, we will have a 10 minute quiz at the beginning of class on Tuesday unless otherwise announced. It will cover the reading assignment for the week ahead and the in depth material of the previous week. It may be short answer, multiple choice, graphs and/or calculations. The lowest two grades (including missed quizzes) will be dropped. This includes excused absences for illness, family emergency, interviews, etc.

Participation 10%: There will be ample opportunity to participate in discussion and problem solving in class. Your quality participation enhances your own education as well as that of your classmates and is expected. You will earn points

for such participation and may check your current total at any time. The total amount of points you need in order to earn 100% for this part of your grade is 15. On any given day if you answer a question correctly or ask a good question you will earn one point. (You won't always get a chance to participate this way. I expect about one fifth of the class to earn a point each day.) Each time you work collaboratively in a group or participate in a game or experiment you earn one point. Each time you present a problem on the board, you receive two points.

Exam #1 25%: Covers all material prior to the exam. May include multiple choice, short answer, mathematical calculations & graphs

Exam #2 25%: Covers material after the first exam. May include multiple choice, short answer, mathematical calculations & graphs

Communications and Extra Help: I encourage you to stop by my office hours as frequently as you desire for extra help or discuss your progress and satisfaction with the course. You may email me at linda.fisher@uconn.edu or call my office phone.

Grading Scale:

93 and above: A

90 and above: A-

87 and above: B+

83 and above: B

80 and above B-

77 and above C+

73 and above C

70 and above C-

67 and above D+

63 and above D

60 and above D-

You should not assume that your grade will round up.

Office Hours

You are welcome to stop by my office hours or make an appointment for any reason. I like to get to know my students and this one of the best ways that happens. I really enjoy seeing and helping my students one-on-one, so don't be shy about asking for help or just stopping by to introduce yourself. If you need help with the material, please come prepared with your part of the work done as much as possible and organized questions for the areas in which you need help. If there is someone else waiting, I limit each visit to ten minutes.

Students with Disabilities:

Students needing extra time on exams, quizzes or other special accommodations should contact the University's Center for Students with Disabilities(CSD). You may contact CSD by calling (860) 486-2020 or by emailing csd@uconn.edu . If your request for accommodation is approved, CSD will send an accommodation letter directly to me so that special arrangements can be made. This includes extended

time on the weekly on-line quizzes if you need it. You must resubmit your request each semester. <http://www.csd.uconn.edu/index.php>

Academic Integrity and the Student Code:

Academic integrity of all students protects the value of your hard work and ultimate degree from UCONN. You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional and honest manner at all times. Any case of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Community Standards and may be subject to failure of the course. If you feel that another student may be violating the student code, I welcome your confidential input and promise to investigate the complaint and work to protect the value of your degree.

If you are not familiar with the student code of conduct, you may review it at:

<http://community.uconn.edu/student-behavior/>

Add/Drop

If you should decide to add or drop a course, there are official procedures to follow:

- Matriculated students should add or drop a course through the Student Administration System at <https://student.studentadmin.uconn.edu/>
- Non-degree students should refer to Non-Degree Add/Drop Information located on the registrar's website at <http://nondegree.uconn.edu/non-degree-services/>

You must officially drop a course to avoid receiving an "F" on your permanent transcript. Simply discontinuing class or informing the instructor you want to drop does not constitute an official drop of the course. For more information, refer to the Undergraduate Catalog.

Important Dates and Assignments

Week of	Reading Assignment*
1/19	Chapter 1: Why Study Public Finance? Chapter 2: Theoretical Tools of Public Finance (Sections 2.1 & 2.3 only – we will study the welfare programs later in the course)
1/26	Chapter 5: Externalities: Problems and Solutions (5.1,5.2, 5.3 only) Chapter 6: Externalities in Action
2/2	Chapter 7: Public Goods
2/9	Chapter 8: Cost Benefit Analysis
2/16	Chapter 9: Political Economy Chapter 10: State and Local Government Expenditures
2/23	Chapter 11: Education
3/2	Review & Exam
3/9	Chapter 12&13: Social Insurance - Social Security & Unemployment
3/23	Chapter 15: Health Insurance & Accountable Care Act
3/30	Chapter 17: Income Redistribution and Welfare Programs
4/6	Chapter 18: Taxation in the US and World (18.1, 18.2, 18.3 only) Chapter 19: Equity Implications of Taxation Chapter 20: Efficiency Implications of Taxation (20.1 only)
4/13	Chapter 21: Taxes on Labor Supply
4/20	Chapter 23 Capital Gains, Transfer Taxes, Property Taxes
4/27	Game and Review
5/7	Final Exam 8AM – 10AM

* In addition to these readings, I may occasionally post articles on Husky CT or refer you to on-line news coverage of issues that pertain to the course. You are expected to listen to and read these as well.

While I will do my best to follow this schedule, changes to the syllabus are possible. Changes will be announced in class. If you miss a class, please contact another student to determine what you missed and if there are any changes.