

ECONOMICS 3431W (Spring 2012)

PUBLIC FINANCE

INSTRUCTOR: MATT SCHURIN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

This is a course on the economics of government spending and taxation. Theoretical topics include: externalities and public goods, cost-benefit analysis, political economy, social insurance, theory of taxation, and budget analysis. We will also study social security and health insurance in the United States.

This is a W course and so students are required to write at least 15 pages. Students will write a five page paper on a public investment project or economic policy of their choice. Students will also write a 10 page paper on either the social security system or the health insurance system in the United States. Students are required to submit rough drafts and then revised final drafts of both papers. More information about these assignments will be given later on in the semester.

TEXT

The textbook for this course is *Public Finance and Public Policy*, 3rd ed. by Jonathan Gruber.

COURSE CONTENT

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Ch. 1, and 2.

EXTERNALITIES AND PUBLIC GOODS

Ch. 5, 7, and 8.

SOCIAL INSURANCE

Ch. 12, 13, 15, and 16

TOOLS OF BUDGET ANALYSIS

Ch. 4.

THEORY OF TAXATION

Ch. 19, 20, and 21.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Ch. 9

GRADING

In addition to the two writing assignments discussed above, there will be a midterm and a final exam. The 10 page paper assignment is worth 35% of the total grade, the five page paper is worth 20%, the midterm is worth 20%, and the final is worth 25%. According to university policy, one cannot pass a W course without earning a passing grade on the writing component.

Final drafts of papers are due two weeks after rough drafts have been returned with comments for revision. The final exam will be held during finals week. Due dates for the rough drafts of the papers and the date for the midterm will be announced in class and on HuskyCT.

Students are free to hand in assignments early. Papers will be penalized if either the rough draft or final draft is turned in late. Papers will be penalized by a third of a letter grade for every class period that the rough draft or final draft is late. For example, a paper's grade would drop from a B to a C+ if the rough draft was turned in two class periods (one week) late.

If a student misses an exam, they must get their reason for missing the exam approved by the Office of Student Services and Advocacy. If a student misses the midterm and the student's reason for missing the midterm is not approved by the Office of Student Services and Advocacy, then the student will receive a zero on the midterm. If the student misses the final, they will receive an XF in the course unless their reason is approved by the Office of Student Services and Advocacy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office: Monteith 446. Email address: matthew.schurin@uconn.edu. If you have specific question relating to the course material, please feel free to email me so that we can schedule a time to meet.

CLASS TIME

TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM in CB302.