

Syllabus
Public Finance
Econ 310, Sec 001
Fall, 2009

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Office Hours: M, W, F from 9:40-10:40am and by appointment

Class Time: M, W, F 11:40 am – 12:30 pm in B 309

Text: Public Finance by Laurence Seidman, 2009 (McGraw Hill-Irwin).

Objectives and Goals: The primary objective of this course is to enable you to appreciate an economic approach to public policy. The goal of the course is for you to be able answer such questions as the following. What is the market system and what are its advantages? What are some problem areas for the market? How can the public sector attempt to deal with those problem areas? How successful are its attempts to do so? What kinds of activities does the public sector engage in? What kinds of expenditures does it make in pursuit of public policies? What are the goals of some of these policies? What are some problems with these policies? What are some suggested reforms? How are the revenues raised in order to carry out public sector activities? What are some of the consequences of raising revenue in these ways?

Assessment: Your progress toward achieving the above goals will be assessed primarily by a series of four short exams (including the final exam), a research project (oral or written - your choice), a series of periodic assignments, and a series of evaluations. The evaluations will be your written assessments of the presentations by your classmates.

For the research project, you will choose between doing a written research project or an oral research presentation. All of the research projects will focus on the debate of issues at the federal level on a variety of issues - environmental, income re-distribution, social security, health care, etc. You'll choose one issue and research either the position taken by the Obama administration or by the opposition. If you choose to do an oral presentation, you will team up with other classmates, depending on how many students choose this option. More details will be given on the research projects as the semester progresses.

The exams will each be worth 100 points, the research project will be worth 200 points, the periodic assignments will total 50 points (the lowest two will be dropped) and the evaluations will total 50 points (none will be dropped). Thus, there will be total of 600 possible points for the semester. The attached course calendar gives dates for reading assignments and exams

The following grading scale used for the class: A = 90% and above; B = 89% - 76%; C = 75% - 60%; F = below 60% of the total possible points. I reserve the right to adjust each student's grade up or down somewhat according to individual performance on in-class discussions.

Responsibilities: Readings will consist of the textbook chapters as given in the calendar on page two. In addition, some short readings may be assigned. Your responsibilities, like mine, include being well prepared for class. Your job is to read the assigned readings before coming to class and to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Your attendance is expected and you are responsible for any information presented. If you can't make it to class, make sure you arrange to obtain the information you missed.

Class Policy: Exams must be taken on the scheduled dates. Writing assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date and must be printed out using a word processing program or typed. Late assignments will not be accepted! Exceptions to this policy will be granted only with prior permission from me.

The Deal: This syllabus and attached course schedule are essentially a contract between you and me. By choosing to remain in the course after reading the syllabus and schedule, you are implicitly agreeing to the requirements of the course and to submit the graded materials at the times specified.