



**Oregon State
University**

Course Name: Public Policy Analysis

Course Number: ECON 539

Credits: 4

Instructor name: Todd Pugatch

Instructor email: todd.pugatch@oregonstate.edu

Instructor phone: (541) 737-6628

Link to instructor bio or website: people.oregonstate.edu/~pugatcht

Teaching Assistant name and contact info: N/A

Course Description

Theory of public problems and decision-making. Evaluation of public policy strategies, selected public programs and individual public projects considering the full range of efficiency and equity effects. Direct and indirect impacts of policy, strength of implicit incentives, administrative feasibility, and problems of policy implementation. **Recommended PREREQS:** ECON 311 and ECON 435 or equivalent

Communication

Please post all course-related questions in the General Discussion Forum so that the whole class may benefit from our conversation. Please email your instructor for matters of a personal nature. I will reply to course-related questions and email within 24-48 hours. I will strive to return your assignments and grades for course activities to you within five days of the due date.

Course Credits

This course combines approximately 120 hours of instruction, online activities, and assignments for 4 credits.

Technical Assistance

If you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact 24-7 Canvas Support via chat, phone, or e-mail through the Help link within Canvas. If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, or need assistance logging into a course, contact the OSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call (541) 737-3474, email osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu or visit the [OSU Computer Helpdesk](#) online.

Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Human Services Resource Center (HSRC) for support (hsrc@oregonstate.edu, 541-737-3747). The HSRC has a [food pantry](#), a [textbook lending program](#) and other resources to help. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources that they may possess.

Reach Out for Success

University students encounter setbacks from time to time. If you encounter difficulties and need assistance, it's important to reach out. Consider discussing the situation with an instructor or academic advisor. Learn about resources that assist with wellness and academic success at oregonstate.edu/ReachOut. If you are in immediate crisis, please contact the Crisis Text Line by texting OREGON to 741-741 or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

This course is offered through Oregon State University Extended Campus. For more information, contact:
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Learning Resources

Required textbook: Jonathan Gruber, *Public Finance and Public Policy* (6th Edition).

Required license: Moblab, www.moblab.com. We will be playing online games using this platform. A subscription is required.

- For a discounted bundle including loose-leaf version of Gruber and Moblab license, try osubeaverstore.com or search ISBN: 9781319437367.

Optional textbooks: Charles Wheelan, *Introduction to Public Policy*.
Joshua Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke, *Mastering 'Metrics*.

Note on textbooks: Earlier editions of Gruber are fine to use and likely cheaper than the current edition. The books by Wheelan and Angrist & Pischke may be useful, but are not the core material for the course.

Note to prospective students: Please check with the OSU Bookstore for up-to-date information for the term you enroll (OSU Bookstore Website or 800-595-0357). If you purchase course materials from other sources, be very careful to obtain the correct ISBN.

Canvas

This course will be delivered via Canvas where you will interact with your classmates and with your instructor. Within the course Canvas site, you will access the learning materials, such as the syllabus, class discussions, assignments, projects, and quizzes. To preview how an online course works, visit the [Ecampus Course Demo](#). For technical assistance, please visit [Ecampus Technical Help](#).

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

- Describe the concept of economic efficiency and the conditions under which it is achieved or violated.
- Evaluate and compare the effects of public policies on economic incentives, efficiency, and equity.
- Assess alternative forms of empirical evidence on the effects of public policy.
- Assemble the elements of a cost-benefit analysis.
- Identify and interpret situations in which government intervention in the economy can improve social welfare.
- Adapt economic theory to the analysis of a public policy.
- Assemble and assess the evidence on the effect of a public policy on economic and social outcomes.

Evaluation of Student Performance

- Discussions: 15%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Midterm Exam I: 20%
- Midterm Exam II: 20%
- Final Presentation: 10%
- Final Paper: 25%

Grading Scale

Score	Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B

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Score	Grade
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F

Percentages will be rounded to the nearest integer. If necessary, I will apply a grading curve to the final distribution of scores (not individual assignments). Any curve applied will only raise grades, not lower them.

Course Content

All chapters in "Reading Assignments" refer to Gruber textbook. Readings and dates are tentative and subject to change. Check Canvas for updates.

Week	Topic	Reading Assignments	Learning Activities	Due Dates
1	Overview of Public Policy Analysis Microeconomics Review	Chapters 1-2	Online lectures Online discussion Quiz 1	First post due by end of week Quiz availability dates: Jan. 4 through Jan. 10 at 11:59 PM
2	Microeconomics and Social Welfare	Chapter 2 Journal article: Prendergast	Online lectures Competitive market game Online discussion Quiz 2	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week Game and Quiz availability dates: Jan. 11 through Jan. 17 at 11:59 PM
3	Data Analysis for Public Policy	Chapter 3 Journal articles: Burtless, Tingley TED Talk: Duflo	Online lectures Online discussion Quiz 3 Virtual meeting to discuss research paper	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week Quiz availability dates: Jan. 18 through Jan. 24 at 11:59 PM Virtual meeting due by Friday 5pm
4	Cost-Benefit Analysis	Chapter 8 Journal articles: Mulligan et al, Rogers	Online lectures Quiz 4 Cost-benefit analysis	Cost-benefit analysis and Quiz availability dates: Jan. 25 through Jan. 31 at 11:59 PM
5	Externalities	Chapter 5 Journal articles: Nordhaus	Online lectures Quiz 5 Externalities game Online discussion	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week

Week	Topic	Reading Assignments	Learning Activities	Due Dates
				Game and Quiz availability dates: Feb. 1 through Feb. 7 at 11:59 PM
6	Midterm Exam I and Research Paper Proposal		Midterm Exam I Research Paper Proposal	Midterm Exam I availability: Feb. 8 through Feb. 14 at 11:59pm Research Paper Proposal Due Feb. 14, 11:59pm
7	Public Goods	Chapter 7 Journal articles: Hardin, Frischmann et al	Online lectures Online discussion Quiz 6 Common pool resource game	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week Game and Quiz availability dates: Feb. 15 through Feb. 21 at 11:59 PM
8	Social Insurance	Chapter 12 Journal articles: Gladwell, Reinhardt	Online lectures Online discussion Quiz 7	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week Quiz availability dates: Feb. 22 through Feb. 28 at 11:59 PM
9	Taxation	Chapter 19-20 Journal article: Alcott et al.	Online lectures Market with taxation game Online discussion Quiz 8	First post due Thursday, second post due by end of week Game and Quiz availability dates: Mar. 1 through Mar. 7 at 11:59 PM
10	Midterm Exam II and Final Presentation		Midterm exam II Final Presentation Peer comments on Final Presentations	Midterm exam II available: Mar. 4 through Mar. 12 at 11:59pm Final Presentation Due: Mar. 16, 11:59pm Peer comments on presentations due: Mar. 17, 11:59pm
Finals week			Final Research Paper	Final paper due: Mar. 18, 11:59pm

List of required journal articles

Microeconomics and Social Welfare

Prendergast, Canice. "How Food Banks Use Markets to Feed the Poor." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2017.

Data Analysis for Public Policy

Burtless, Gary. "The Case for Randomized Field Trials in Economic and Policy Research." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Spring 1995.

Duflo, Esther. "Social Experiments to Fight Poverty." TED Talk, February 2010.
http://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty.html

Tingley, Kim. "How an Ill-Fated Fishing Voyage is Helping Us Understand Covid-19." *New York Times Magazine*, October 20, 2020.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Mulligan, Murphy, and Topel. "Some Basic Economics of COVID-19." *Chicago Booth Review*, April 27, 2020. <https://review.chicagobooth.edu/economics/2020/article/some-basic-economics-covid-19-policy>

Rogers, Adam. "How Much Is A Human Life Really Worth?" *Wired*, May 11, 2020.
<https://www.wired.com/story/how-much-is-human-life-worth-in-dollars/>

Externalities

Nordhaus, William. "Climate Change: The Ultimate Challenge for Economics." *American Economic Review* 2019, 109(6): 1991–2014.

Public Goods

Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*, New Series, Vol. 162, No. 3859 (Dec. 13, 1968), pp. 1243-1248.

Frischmann et al, "Tragedy of the Commons after 50 Years." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*—Volume 33, Number 4—Fall 2019—Pages 211–228. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.211>.

Social insurance

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Moral Hazard Myth." *The New Yorker*, August 29, 2005.

Reinhardt, Uwe. "Can Efficiency in Health Care Be Left to the Market?" *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, October 2001.

Taxation

Allcott et al, "Should We Tax Sugar-Sweetened Beverages?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*—Volume 33, Number 3—Summer 2019—Pages 202–227.

Course Policies

Important note on due dates for Winter 2021: I understand present circumstances may make it difficult or impossible for you to meet all course deadlines and expectations. I am willing to work with you to allow flexibility and provide you with every opportunity to succeed. To make this possible, please be **pro-active in communicating requests for deadline extensions or other accommodations**. In other words, if possible, tell me your needs in advance, not after the fact.

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Discussion Participation

Students are expected to participate in all graded discussions. While there is great flexibility in online courses, this is not a self-paced course. You will need to participate in our discussions on at least two different days each week, with your first post due no later than Thursday evening, and your second and third posts due by the end of each week. **I will drop the lowest discussion grade of the term when calculating your discussion participation grade.**

Quizzes

I will drop the lowest quiz grade of the term when calculating your discussion participation grade.

Makeup Exams

Makeup exams will be given only for missed exams excused in advance by the instructor. Excused absences will generally not be given after the absence has occurred, except under very unusual circumstances.

Exam Time Limits

Exams in this class are timed; if you exceed the time limit on an exam, you will be assessed a penalty of 10% for every five minute interval beyond the time limit.

Incompletes

Incomplete (I) grades will be granted only in emergency cases (usually only for a death in the family, major illness or injury, or birth of your child), and if the student has turned in 80% of the points possible (in other words, usually everything but the final paper). If you are having any difficulty that might prevent you completing the coursework, please don't wait until the end of the term; let me know right away.

Guidelines for a Productive and Effective Online Classroom

Students are expected to conduct themselves in the course (e.g., on discussion boards, email) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility.

Civility is an essential ingredient for academic discourse. All communications for this course should be conducted constructively, civilly, and respectfully. Differences in beliefs, opinions, and approaches are to be expected. In all you say and do for this course, be professional. Please bring any communications you believe to be in violation of this class policy to the attention of your instructor.

Active interaction with peers and your instructor is essential to success in this online course, paying particular attention to the following:

- Unless indicated otherwise, please complete the readings and view other instructional materials for each week before participating in the discussion board.
- Read your posts carefully before submitting them.
- Be respectful of others and their opinions, valuing diversity in backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.
- Challenging the ideas held by others is an integral aspect of critical thinking and the academic process. Please word your responses carefully, and recognize that others are expected to challenge your ideas. A positive atmosphere of healthy debate is encouraged.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by Disability Access Services (DAS). If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098 or at <http://ds.oregonstate.edu>. DAS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations.

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Accessibility of Course Materials

All materials used in this course are accessible. If you require accommodations please contact [Disability Access Services \(DAS\)](#).

Additionally, Canvas, the learning management system through which this course is offered, provides a [vendor statement](#) certifying how the platform is accessible to students with disabilities.

Expectations for Student Conduct in this Online Classroom

Students are expected to conduct themselves in the course (e.g., on discussion boards, email postings) in compliance with the university's regulations regarding civility. Student conduct is governed by the university's policies, as explained in the [Student Conduct Code](#).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to comply with all regulations pertaining to academic honesty. For further information, visit [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#), or contact the office of Student Conduct and Mediation at 541-737-3656.

OAR 576-015-0020 (2) Academic or Scholarly Dishonesty:

- a) Academic or Scholarly Dishonesty is defined as an act of deception in which a Student seeks to claim credit for the work or effort of another person, or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic work or research, either through the Student's own efforts or the efforts of another.
- b) It includes:
 - i) CHEATING - use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information or study aids, or an act of deceit by which a Student attempts to misrepresent mastery of academic effort or information. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized copying or collaboration on a test or assignment, using prohibited materials and texts, any misuse of an electronic device, or using any deceptive means to gain academic credit.
 - ii) FABRICATION - falsification or invention of any information including but not limited to falsifying research, inventing or exaggerating data, or listing incorrect or fictitious references.
 - iii) ASSISTING - helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty. This includes but is not limited to paying or bribing someone to acquire a test or assignment, changing someone's grades or academic records, taking a test/doing an assignment for someone else by any means, including misuse of an electronic device. It is a violation of Oregon state law to create and offer to sell part or all of an educational assignment to another person (ORS 165.114).
 - iv) TAMPERING - altering or interfering with evaluation instruments or documents.
 - v) PLAGIARISM - representing the words or ideas of another person or presenting someone else's words, ideas, artistry or data as one's own, or using one's own previously submitted work. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to copying another person's work (including unpublished material) without appropriate referencing, presenting someone else's opinions and theories as one's own, or working jointly on a project and then submitting it as one's own.
- c) Academic Dishonesty cases are handled initially by the academic units, following the process outlined in the University's Academic Dishonesty Report Form, and will also be referred to SCCS for action under these rules.

Turnitin Plagiarism Prevention

Your instructor may ask you to submit one or more of your writings to Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention service. Your assignment content will be checked for potential plagiarism against Internet sources, academic journal articles, and the papers of other OSU students, for common or borrowed content.

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Turnitin generates a report that highlights any potentially unoriginal text in your paper. The report may be submitted directly to your instructor or your instructor may elect to have you submit initial drafts through Turnitin and you will receive the report allowing you the opportunity to make adjustments and ensure that all source material has been properly cited. Papers you submit through Turnitin for this or any class will be added to the OSU Turnitin database and may be checked against other OSU paper submissions. You will retain all rights to your written work. For further information, visit [Academic Integrity for Students: Turnitin – What is it?](#)

Tutoring

[NetTutor](#) is a leading provider of online tutoring and learner support services fully staffed by experienced, trained and monitored tutors. Students connect to live tutors from any computer that has Internet access. NetTutor provides a virtual whiteboard that allows tutors and students to work on problems in a real time environment. They also have an online writing lab where tutors critique and return essays within 24 to 48 hours. Access NetTutor from within your Canvas class by clicking on the NetTutor button in your course menu.

OSU Student Evaluation of Teaching

Course evaluation results are extremely important and are used to help me improve this course and the learning experience of future students. Results from the 19 multiple choice questions are tabulated anonymously and go directly to instructors and department heads. Student comments on the open-ended questions are compiled and confidentially forwarded to each instructor, per OSU procedures. The online Student Evaluation of Teaching form will be available toward the end of each term, and you will be sent instructions via ONID by the Office of Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation. You will log in to “Student Online Services” to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.