

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 4231
Syllabus and Schedule
6 January 2020

Welcome! I am Prof. Jeffrey S. Zax. This is Economics 4231,
Applied Economic Analysis and Public Policy.

Course description:

This course applies economic analysis to current issues of public policy in the State of Colorado. It begins with an examination of the theoretical foundations for government economic activity. It then provides a description of the structure and procedures of the Colorado General Assembly (the official name of the Colorado State legislature). It continues with detailed discussions of the basic principles of public finance, the economic justifications for government action and the contents of specific Assembly bills. Throughout the semester, j

will drop any student who misses the first class, 16 January. As a consequence, enrollment is effectively available only to students who have enrolled prior to the first class.

I will hold regular office hours between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and between 2:00p.m. and 3:00p.m. on Thursdays in Economics 111, my office. Appointments may be made for meetings at other times, if these are inconvenient. Course information will be posted regularly on Canvas. Notifications will be posted there as well, and sent via campus email. It is your responsibility to monitor both.

Course prerequisites:

This course requires previous completion of Economics 3070, Intermediate Microeconomic Theory and Economics 3818, Introduction to Statistics, or their equivalents. These prerequisites will ordinarily be enforced. If you have questions in this regard, contact me at the email address above.

This course requires excellent auditory comprehension in the English language. Much of the important course material is presented orally in lectures. The ability to follow the discussion and participate in it is essential for successful course completion.

This course requires excellent reading comprehension in the English language. The remaining course material is presented in Assembly bills, textbook chapters and journal articles. The ability to understand their content and extract what is most important is essential.

Finally, the ability to write effectively in the English language is very important. Elements of the course that are based on essays constitute four-fifths of the final grade. One-tenth of the final grade is comprised of a final examination whose questions require original answers of approximately one to six sentences in length.

Course requirements:

Performance in this course will be judged on the basis of six instruments. Each student will be choose four bills before the Colorado General Assembly during the course of the semester. Each bill can be chosen by no more than one student. Assignments related to these bills will constitute 80 points, or 80% of the course.

The basic assignment for each of these bills will be worth 15 points, or 15% of the course. Each assignment will consist of three components.

The first component will be a briefing paper consisting of no more than five pages, with additional pages only for reference lists. The paper will summarize the relevant literature and

present an original economic analysis in language and figures that would convey the essence of the material to a general audience. Each of these papers will be worth 8 points, or 8% of the final grade.

Each paper may be submitted in up to four drafts. The first bill may be claimed starting on 29 January. The deadlines for the final drafts are 13 February, 5 March, 2 April and 23 April, at 11:59p.m. The most recent draft as of each of these dates will be graded. If no draft has been submitted as of these dates, the grade will be zero. First drafts should be submitted at least one week in advance of these deadlines. Final drafts can be submitted prior to these dates and may have to be, depending on the Assembly schedules for the bills in question.

These papers mu

Students must receive explicit approval from me before they may testify for course credit. Ordinarily, approval is granted only if the associated briefing paper has already been accepted, the associated oral presentation has occurred in class and has attained a grade of at least 3.5 out of 5 points. Any exceptions to this policy must be granted by me in advance of testimony.

The fifth graded instrument will be a mid-term legislative report card, to which all students will contribute. Each student will be assigned a share of the current Assembly bills for the purpose of evaluating their suitability as objects of government action. We will compile the evaluations of all students into a single document for distribution. Each student's contribution will be worth 10 points, or 10% of the final grade. The legislative report card will be due on 12 March.

The sixth graded instrument is the final examination. It will examine the material in the formal lectures and readings, as well as the experience of interacting with the Assembly. It will be worth 10 points, or 10% of the final grade. It is scheduled to take place on Monday, 4 May from 1:30p.m.-4:00p.m. Any student who has three or more final examinations scheduled on 4 May has the right to reschedule all exams following the first two. Any student wishing to invoke this right must do so by 20 March.¹

The course as a whole is valued at 100 points. The score attained by each student, evaluated relative to those of other students and to the score which would be attained by an intelligent student of economics at this level, will determine final letter grades.

Course conduct:

Excuses for the course requirements will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances. If granted, the excused points will be reallocated to subsequent requirements.

Attendance at lectures is essential to success in this course. Students who do not intend to attend all lectures should not enroll. All personal needs, such as the filling of water bottles and visits to restrooms, should be addressed prior to the beginning of each class, during the mid-class break, or after class ends. If this is impracticable, please consult with me.

Electronic devices such as laptops and cell phones may be used during class only for course purposes. Improper use may be penalized by dismissal from the lecture, grade penalties or both. Dismissal during the first lecture will violate the attendance requirement and result in drops from the course.

Assistance with regard to the material in this course is available ~~in~~ my h

a free drop-in tutorial office which may offer assistance on 4000-level electives in our Department. Its website is

https://www.colorado.edu/economics/sites/default/files/attached-files/tutorial-lab_0.pdf.

The Economics Department also maintains a list of tutors who are

- “The Case for Representative Democracy: What Americans Should Know About Their Legislatures”, the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2001.
- “Learning the Game: How the Legislative Process Works”, the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2005.
- “Making Your Case: How to Win in the Legislature”, the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2005.

30 January	Principles of writing, externalities, job creation Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapter 5
6 February	Legislative report card, education Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapter 7
13 February	Health care Readings: Assignment:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 9, 10 • First paper due today
20 February	Social welfare Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 12, 13
27 February	Cost-benefit analysis Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapter 8
5 March	Taxation Readings: Assignment:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 14-16 • Second paper due today
12 March	Taxation Readings: Assignment:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 14-16 • Assembly report card due today
19 March	Public goods Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapter 4
2 April	Public goods Readings: Assignment	• Rosen and Gayer, chapter 4 • Third paper due today
9 April	Government structure and legislatures	

	Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
16 April	Government structure and legislatures	
	Readings:	• Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
23 April	To be announced	
	Readings:	• To be announced
	Assignment	• Fourth paper due today
30 April	To be announced	
	Readings:	• To be announced
4 May	Final examination: 1:30p.m.-4:00p.m.	

Required statement of University policies

Accommodation for disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the Disability Services website. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, or ethnicity.

all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the Honor Code Office website.

Sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation: The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a posi