

University of California, San Diego
Department of Economics
Fall 2020

Professor Katherine Meckel
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ECONOMICS 151: Public Econ, Expenditures I

Overview of the public sector in the United States and the scope of government intervention in economic life. Theory of public goods and externalities. Discussion of specific expenditure programs such as education and national defense.

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:50 PM, on Zoom. Lectures will also be recorded and posted to Canvas. Please find the Zoom invitation information on Canvas under “Zoom LTI Pro” in the lower left-hand corner of the Course website.

Text: Jonathan Gruber’s Public Finance and Public Policy, 6th Edition. Earlier versions are OK, but homeworks may reference page numbers and problem numbers that change across editions.

Website: Class Materials on Canvas: Syllabus, Problem sets, and Answer keys

Pre-Requisites: ECON 100C (Microeconomics C)

Office Hours: W: 11 AM – 12 PM. Please email me during or before office hours and we can meet on Zoom.

Teaching Assistants:

Katherine Rittenhouse (krittenh@ucsd.edu)

TA Discussion Section

W: 5:00-5:50 PM via Zoom. Discussion sections will be recorded and posted to canvas. The Zoom invitation information is available on Canvas under Zoom LTI Pro. The TA section is helpful for understanding how to solve the problem sets.

TA Office Hours

Office hours will be held via Zoom, and will be available by appointment to accommodate students in different time zones. If you’d like to meet, please email me (krittenh@ucsd.edu) with three time options between 7am and 6pm Pacific time, as well as a brief description of what you’d like to discuss (eg. “Problem Set 2” or “Midterm 1 grade” or “yesterday’s lecture”). This will help me to better prepare for our discussion. I will then choose a time, and ask you to send me a meeting invitation.

Grading:

Homeworks (best 6/7):	20%
Midterm Exam 1:	20%
Midterm Exam 2:	20%

Final Exam: 40%

Homework:

- All homework is due by 3:30 PM on Thursday (start of class), as an Assignment submission on Canvas.
- Homeworks are graded pass/fail. Pass indicates that “a serious attempt was made to solve all problems.” Note that there is a significant penalty for not turning any homework in.
- Students are encouraged to collaborate on problem sets, but everyone must write up his or her own answers.
- The lowest homework will be dropped

Exams:

- Exams include a mixture of conceptual problems and analytical problems. The final is cumulative.
- There will be no make-up exams. Please see UCSD policy regarding missing exams here: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/operating-procedures/educational-policies/courses/epc-policies-on-courses/policy-exams-including-midterms-final-exams-and-religious-accommodations-for-exams/>

Final Exam: 12/14/2020, 3 PM-6 PM, via Zoom

Administrative Issues:

(1) Exams are open book/open notes, but you may not communicate with other classmates. To help maintain the integrity of the midterms and finals, we will require you to show your student ID when turning in your exam.

(2) Any student found responsible for violating academic integrity will earn a failing grade for the course. In addition to the academic sanction that I impose, the Council of Deans of Student Affairs will impose a disciplinary penalty. For a review of UCSD policy, please see <http://www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm>.

(3) If you have a documented disability, please bring your documentation and come to talk to me as soon as possible so that I can make suitable accommodations for you. If you believe that you may have a disability and will desire accommodation, please register with the Office for Students with Disabilities, Building 202 University Center

Course Schedule (Preliminary, subject to change)

Week	Topic	Reading (Gruber)	Homework
Week 1			
Thursday, 10/1	Introduction to US Public Sector	Chapter 1	
Week 2			

Tuesday, 10/6	Theory of Public Finance	Chapter 2	
Thursday, 10/8	Theory of Public Finance	Chapter 2	HW 1 due
Week 3			
Tuesday, 10/13	Empirical Tools	Chapter 3	
Thursday, 10/15	Empirical Tools	Chapter 3	HW 2 due
Week 4			
Tuesday, 10/20	Empirical Tools	Chapter 3	
Thursday, 10/22	Externality Theory	Chapter 5	HW 3 due
Week 5			
Tuesday, 10/27	Midterm #1		
Thursday, 10/29	NO CLASS		
Week 6			
Tuesday, 11/3	Externality Theory	Chapter 5	
Thursday, 11/5	Externalities: Theory	Chapter 5	
Week 7			
Tuesday, 11/10	Externalities: Applications	Chapter 6	
Thursday, 11/12	Externalities: Applications	Chapter 6	HW 4 due
Week 8			
Tuesday, 11/17	Theory of Public Goods	Chapter 7	
Thursday, 11/19	Theory of Public Goods	Chapter 7	HW 5 due
Week 9			
Tuesday, 11/24	Theory of Public Goods	Chapter 7	
Thursday, 11/26	No class – Thanksgiving Holiday		HW 6 due
Week 10			
Tuesday, 12/1	Midterm #2	Chapter 7	
Thursday, 12/3	Education	Chapter 11	
Week 11			
Tuesday, 12/8	Education	Chapter 11	HW 7 due
Thursday, 12/10	Review for Final Exam / Education	Chapter 11	