

Economics 130: Public Policy
UCSD Spring 2021
Monday 5-7:50pm
Meeting links posted at Canvas → Zoom Pro LTI

Brief Course Description

This course applies the tools of economics to study issues of public policy. You will develop a basic set of tools for policy analysis, and gain a better understanding of several contemporary public policy issues.

Readings

Required Textbook: *The Economics of Public Issues 20th ed., Miller Benjamin North (MBN)*

Required Supplemental Readings: linked from Canvas → Files → Readings

Course Website

I will post announcements, meeting links, grades, brief notes, problem sets, practice exams, and brief answer keys on our course website at Canvas. There will also be a Piazza discussion board available. <http://canvas.ucsd.edu>

Office Hours/Contact Information

The TAs and I will be available for office hours at the scheduled times below. Please contact me by email to schedule an appointment if you would like to meet outside of the scheduled hours.

Yuan Emily Tang, Ph.D.	yetang@ucsd.edu	Mon 8-10am	https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/99464621023
TAs: Minki Kim	mik094@ucsd.edu	Wed 5-7pm	
Min Lee	mslee@ucsd.edu	Thu 5-7pm	https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/99464621023

Evaluation

My prediction for how I will evaluate your performance is as follows:

10% Problem Sets (4 problem sets, graded based on demonstrated effort and completion)

90% Quizzes (highest 3 out of 4 quizzes, based on percentage points)

While I will do what I can to adhere to the plans for this course, it may be necessary for me to make a change. There will be four quizzes and one mini-quiz, each taken online. *The last quiz will be cumulative, though similar in format to the other three classes.* To pass the class, you must take the cumulative final quiz. You may not “opt-out” of the final quiz.

In Week 2, we will also have a mini-quiz to confirm that all of our systems are compatible with the testing format prior to the first quiz. *The mini-quiz will contribute to your Quiz 1 score. If you miss the mini-quiz, you will lose points on Quiz 1.*

Your lowest quiz score (out of Quizzes 1-4) will be dropped. Each of the three remaining quiz scores will be worth 30% of your grade. Please ensure that you have a stable internet connection and the ability to take an online quiz at the following times:

Mini-Quiz (Week 2): Monday April 5, 7:10 - 7:20 pm

Quiz 1 (Week 4): Monday April 19, 5:10 - 6 pm

Quiz 2 (Week 6): Monday May 3, 5:10 - 6 pm

Quiz 3 (Week 8): Monday May 17, 5:10 - 6 pm

Quiz 4 (Finals Week - *cumulative*): Friday June 11, 7:10 - 8 pm

The four problem sets will be due Sundays at 11:59pm Pacific Time before each of the four quizzes (April 18, May 2, May 16, June 6). There will be a grace period of one hour to accommodate last-minute technical difficulties but otherwise, problem sets must be turned in on time to receive credit. Please ensure that you allow sufficient time to upload your completed problem sets.

The final weighted points earned will be curved in the assignment of letter grades; the following apply as the *minimum* of the letter grade you can expect to earn based on the total weighted % of points you earn in the course: 98-100%= A+, 93-97=A, 90-92=A-, 88-89=B+, 83-87=B, 80-82=B-, 78-79=C+, 73-77=C, 70-72=C-, 50-69=D, <50% = F. To earn a P if your grade option is P/NP, your letter grade must correspond to a C-.

Policies

1. Lectures will meet at the scheduled time at Zoom. Meeting links will be available through Canvas → Zoom Pro LTI. Lectures will be recorded, and the recordings will be available through Canvas → MediaGallery. Attending lectures is not mandatory. Lectures will occasionally offer live activities with your classmates in small group “breakout rooms”, and these activities will not be recorded in the Zoom recording.
2. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. We are not able to accommodate requests for rescheduled or makeup quizzes. If you anticipate being unavailable at the quiz times, please consider enrolling in another class. We understand that unforeseen circumstances may arise. The dropping of one quiz score in the calculation of your final grade is intended to account for these surprises. Every student must take the cumulative final quiz.
3. Enrollment is managed through automated waitlists. Economics instructors do not have the authority to prioritize enrollment for individual students. Please contact the undergraduate advisors for questions related to enrollment at econugadvisor@ucsd.edu. Wait-listed students have access to the course Canvas and lectures. Late enrollment is NOT an excuse to miss or drop an early assessment.
4. If you have a documented disability, please send an email to Gabriela Ray (gray@ucsd.edu) with your documentation, so she can verify and arrange for your accommodations.
5. We will likely use Zoom for proctoring this quarter. Recordings will be deleted when no longer necessary. However, if cheating is suspected, the recording may become part of the student’s administrative disciplinary record.
6. I reserve the right to give an oral quiz if I feel it is necessary to uphold academic integrity. Any student found guilty of academic misconduct will earn a failing grade for the course. In addition to this academic sanction, the Council of Deans of Student Affairs will impose a disciplinary penalty.
7. If you believe that a quiz has not been properly graded, you must discuss this with the grader of the question within one week of when the quiz results were posted. To submit a regrade request, please email the grader a screenshot the question you have a concern about, and include a written justification of why you think your answer was not awarded sufficient credit.
8. Finally, the conditions under which we are currently learning are challenging. I hope we can all support each other with understanding, patience, and kindness. In particular, please be courteous and respectful in lecture and the online discussion boards. Please do your best to keep your comments constructive, and motivated by pursuit of common understanding.

Preliminary Course Outline (Subject to Change)

1. Introduction: Normative Goals, Tradeoffs, Incentives, and Unintended Consequences
2. Competitive Markets: Efficiency, Taxes and Subsidies, Price Controls
3. Market Power, Natural Monopoly
4. Externalities: Coase Theorem, Pigouvian Taxes, and Tradeable Permits
5. Public Goods and Common Property Resources
6. Imperfect Information and Uncertainty: Insurance
7. Interpreting Statistics
8. Income Distribution