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SOC POL 330: ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL POLICY

Fall 2022

Class meets Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30-10:50 AM, Annenberg G02

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Welcome to Economics of Social Policy! The purpose of the course is to analyze social policy issues through an economic lens. We will explore the basic economic foundations of individual decision-making and discuss the ways in which economists hypothesize that individuals respond to the incentives embedded within social policies. We will pay particular attention to the nature and detail of existing social policy and use economic analysis to predict how these policies might influence behavior. We will also explore some of the relevant empirical literature on a set of policy topics. I hope that by the end of the course you will understand the theoretical frameworks and some of the empirical tools that economists bring to their analyses of public policy issues. You need not be convinced that these frameworks are the best approach to analyzing policies, but you should understand them sufficiently to be able to analyze a policy issue in the way that an economist would.

Policy analysis involves both positive and normative aspects. Even when presented with the same sets of facts, people can have different opinions about the best policy responses to issues—indeed, that’s one of the factors that makes policy so interesting to study! The purpose of this class is to teach you *how* to think, not *what* to think. When you are asked to analyze a policy issue, you will be evaluated on your reasoning, not on the position you take.

The course is broadly divided into two topics: income support programs and social insurance.

Course requirements will include 4 problem sets, 2 policy memos, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Your course grade will be determined as follows:

- Final exam (30%)
- Policy memos (30%)
- Midterm (20%)
- Problem sets (20%)

Required (or at least strongly suggested) text:

Gruber, Jonathan *Public Finance and Public Policy* (Worth Publishers)

ISBN-10: 1429219491

ISBN-13: 978-1429219495

Note: *any edition is fine.*

I will also post some articles on the course Canvas website.

All instructors have been asked by the registrar's office to include the following statements on their syllabi:

Academic Integrity

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide." All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-guide-2022.pdf>

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (e: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

COVID-19 Classroom Expectations statement

Students, faculty and staff must comply with University expectations regarding appropriate classroom behavior, including those outlined below and in the COVID-19 Expectations for Students. With respect to classroom procedures, this includes:

- Policies regarding masking, social distancing and other public health measures evolve as the situation changes. Students are responsible for

understanding and complying with current University, state and city requirements.

- In some classes, masking and/or social distancing may be required as a result of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation for the instructor or a student in the class even when not generally required on campus. In such cases, the instructor will notify the class.

If a student fails to comply with the COVID-19 Expectations for Students or other University expectations related to COVID-19, the instructor may ask the student to leave the class. The instructor is asked to report the incident to the Office of Community Standards for additional follow-up.

COVID-19 Testing Compliance Statement

This statement should be added, unedited, to classes with any in-person component and may be added to any syllabus.

To protect the health of our community, Northwestern University requires unvaccinated students who are in on-campus programs to be tested for COVID-19 twice per week.

Students who fail to comply with current or future COVID-19 testing protocols will be referred to the Office of Community standards to face disciplinary action, including escalation up to restriction from campus and suspension.

Exceptions to Class Modality

Maintaining the health of the community remains our priority. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID do not attend class. Follow the steps outlined on the registrar's site for testing, isolation and reporting a positive case. Next, contact your instructor as soon as possible to arrange to complete coursework.

Students who experience other personal emergencies should contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange to complete coursework.

Should public health recommendations prevent in-person class from being held on a given day, the instructor or the university will notify students.

Guidance on Class Recordings

This class or portions of this class will be recorded by the instructor for educational purposes. Your instructor will communicate how members of the class can access the recordings. Portions of the course that contain images, questions, or commentary/discussion by students will be edited out of any recordings that are saved beyond the current term.

Prohibition of Recording Classes by Students

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](#).

Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Support for Wellness and Mental Health

Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on the resources mentioned above can be found here:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/care/>