

San José State University
Department of Economics
ECON 232 - 01, Seminar in Public Finance, Fall 2021

Course and Contact Information

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| Instructor: | Dr. Patralekha (Pat) Ukil |
| Office Location: | DMH 131; Zoom Meeting Room (<i>link is provided in Canvas</i>) |
| Email: | patralekha.ukil@sjsu.edu |
| Office Hours: | Wednesdays 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. PST (<i>via Zoom</i>) |
| Class Days/Time: | Tuesdays 4 – 5:15 p.m. |
| Classroom: | DMH 167 |
| Prerequisites: | Instructor consent. |

Course Description

From the SJSU course catalog: The public sector. Determination of objectives of the public sector; pricing and output in the public sector; taxes, their distribution and allocative effects; public expenditure theory; public debt theory and policy.

This course is a graduate-level course on the economics of the public sector. The focus of this course is on understanding the microeconomic reasons behind public sector involvement in a market economy. We will use microeconomic principles to understand the *reasons for* government involvement and intervention, and will also focus on gaining a quantitative and analytical understanding of such topics. We will cover a wide range of theoretical issues relating to public economics with a specific focus on practical issues relating to public goods, education, social insurance, healthcare, redistribution and taxation. This course will also link public finance issues to recent empirical research that use quantitative (quasi-experimental) methods and insights from behavioral economics.

Course Format

This course will follow a **hybrid** format where there will be regular in-person classes and also an asynchronous online component using the [Canvas Learning Management System](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. All students will require a reliable internet connection and an electronic device for access to Canvas LMS. You can borrow laptops and other equipment from the MLK library. Please visit the library or this website: <https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services>.

Classes will be held on selected Tuesdays (**class schedule has been provided**) at 4 – 5:15 p.m.in DMH 167. All remaining lecture materials (lecture videos, lecture slides, additional readings, etc.) will be posted on Canvas each week. Modules on Canvas will be organized by topic/week, and you will receive weekly notifications from me. ***Please make sure that you check your Canvas notifications regularly.***

Course Web Page and Canvas Messaging

All relevant course materials such as the course syllabus, lecture materials, readings, notes, assignments and instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System](http://sjsu.instructure.com) course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas to learn of any course updates.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Understand and apply microeconomic principles to the involvement of the government in a market economy.*
2. *Understand and analytically explain the quantitative methods used in the recent empirical research used in the literature.*
3. *Review and understand the different concepts of public economics and apply those to situations involving social insurance, education, health insurance, redistribution, taxation, etc.*
4. *Read and review recent research on different field in public economics and analytically analyze them via written assignments.*

Required Texts/Readings

Journal articles, lecture videos, and all reading materials posted on Canvas are the required learning material for this course. **There is no requirement to purchase a textbook for this course.**

Recommended reading: *Public Finance and Public Policy, 5th edition, Jonathan Gruber, Macmillan.*

Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practical. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

The course assessment will be based on the following:

1. **Homework exercises** (short/medium-length answer questions assigned on a biweekly basis)
2. **Analytical Writing Assignments** (3 assigned throughout the semester)
3. **One final examination** (as per the SJSU Final Exams schedule; submission date TBA)
4. **Participation** in class discussions, any questions, surveys, or discussions posted online in Canvas
 - **Homework exercises** will be assigned on Canvas *on a biweekly basis throughout the semester*, and the questions will be based on the lecture/reading materials. These are built to test your understanding of the material covered, to help you prepare for the final examination, and to help you apply the theoretical foundations of public economics.

- For the **analytical writing assignments**, each student will submit a 3-to-4-page summary on a particular sub-section of topics covered in class (*I will let you know which topics in due course*). I expect you to go through the assigned readings, lecture materials and the scholarly articles that I will post on those topics and provide a summary (*in your own words*) that not only includes what was covered in class, but also your own takeaways from/critique of the material covered in the section.
- Your **final examination** will consist of questions that are similar to the questions asked in the homework exercises, and will be assigned during the Final Examinations week as per the SJSU Fall 2021 schedule.
- **Participation grades** will be based on your engagement in any class/online discussions, surveys, or questions posted on Canvas.

Final Examination or Evaluation

The final evaluation for this course will be a final take-home examination taking place during the Final Examinations week as per the SJSU Fall 2021 schedule, which will be the culminating activity based on the course material covered in the semester.

Grading Information

Course grades will be as follows:

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|---------------------------------|-----|
| Homework Exercises: | 30% |
| Analytical Writing Assignments: | 30% |
| Final Examination: | 35% |
| Participation: | 5% |

| <i>Grade</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|----------------|-------------------|
| <i>A plus</i> | <i>97 to 100%</i> |
| <i>A</i> | <i>94 to 96%</i> |
| <i>A minus</i> | <i>90 to 93%</i> |
| <i>B plus</i> | <i>86 to 89 %</i> |
| <i>B</i> | <i>83 to 85%</i> |
| <i>B minus</i> | <i>80 to 82%</i> |
| <i>C plus</i> | <i>76 to 79%</i> |
| <i>C</i> | <i>73 to 75%</i> |
| <i>C minus</i> | <i>70 to 72%</i> |
| <i>D plus</i> | <i>66 to 69%</i> |
| <i>D</i> | <i>63 to 65%</i> |
| <i>D minus</i> | <i>60 to 62%</i> |

Office hours/emails information

I will hold office hours on Wednesdays 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. PST in Zoom. You are welcome to meet me either in groups or by yourself. If you wish to set up a meeting outside of this time slot, please send me an email.

I also welcome you to submit any questions or doubts via email if you prefer. I generally respond to emails within 24 hours.

Strategies for Success in this course:

1. I will set up the weekly modules on Canvas to be as comprehensible as possible, **but if you can't understand something, please email me at the earliest.** If you like studying in groups please reach out to your peers as well.
2. The homework exercises are a great way to understand and apply the concepts and theories that we will learn in this course. If you have difficulty understanding any of the concepts/questions, please reach out to me before submitting any assignments.
3. The homework exercises are also built to help you prepare for the final examination, so please keep this in mind as you go through the semester.
4. I take academic honesty seriously and this is particularly important to keep in mind for the analytical writing assignments in which you are required to use economics knowledge in your own words.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

I will follow the [SJSU policy regarding academic integrity](#) and honesty, and will take it very seriously. Please read and understand what constitutes a violation in this respect and all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported.

Please come and talk to me as soon as you can if you are in need of any course changes, adaptations or any accommodations due to a disability. According to the [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center \(AEC\)](#) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following university policies:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)
- [University Attendance and Participation Policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)
- [University Grading System Policy F18-5](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf>)

You may also find the following information useful:

- [SJSU Cares](#)
- [The SJSU Food Pantry Program](#)
- [SJSU Counseling](#)
- [SJSU Learn Anywhere](#)

In-person Class Schedule:

We will have in-person classes in **DMH 167** on the following Tuesdays only:

August 24th

September 7th

September 21st

October 5th

October 19th

November 2nd

November 16th

November 30th

ECON 232-01 Fall 2021 Course Schedule

This is the **tentative schedule** for the course. We will try to stay on track with this syllabus as the semester progresses. Lecture materials (lecture slides and videos) will be provided on Canvas each week, irrespective of whether there is an in-person class or not.

If any changes have to be made to the syllabus, those changes will be communicated to all students in Canvas. A timely notice and consideration will be provided to all students if any changes need to be made.

Course Schedule

| Week # | Week beginning | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines | Notes relevant for this week |
|--------|----------------|---|--|
| 1 | 8/19 | Introduction to the course and syllabus | The course will open on Canvas |
| | | Introduction to Public Economics (The Four Questions of Public Finance) | |
| 2 | 8/23 | Markets, Competition and the Government | In-person class on August 24 th |
| 3 | 8/30 | Externalities – Part 1 | |
| 4 | 9/6 | Externalities – Part 2 | In-person class on September 7 th |
| 5 | 9/13 | Theory of Public Goods | |
| 6 | 9/20 | Public Goods: Education in the U.S. | In-person class on September 21 st |
| | | | Analytical Writing #1 will be assigned this week |
| 7 | 9/27 | Topics in Political Economy | |
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| Week # | Week beginning | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines | Notes relevant for this week |
|--------|----------------|---|--|
| 8 | 10/4 | Taxation and Incidence of Taxation | In-person class on October 5 th |
| | | Optimal Taxation | |
| 9 | 10/11 | Taxation and Labor Supply | |
| 10 | 10/18 | Taxation and Savings | In-person class on October 19 th |
| | | Behavioral Insights and Evidence | |
| 11 | 10/25 | Social Insurance: Asymmetric Information | |
| 12 | 11/1 | Social Insurance Programs and Moral Hazard | In-person class on November 2 nd |
| | | | Analytical Writing #2 will be assigned this week |
| 13 | 11/8 | Healthcare and Health Insurance | |
| 14 | 11/15 | Spatial Public Finance and Policy | In-person class on November 16 th |
| 15 | 11/22 | Spatial Public Finance and Policy (contd.) | |
| 16 | 11/29 | Intergenerational Economic Mobility | In-person class on November 30 th |
| | | Income Redistribution: Poverty in the U.S. | Analytical Writing #3 will be assigned this week |
| 17 | 12/6 | Final examination will be assigned this week | |

SJSU Land Acknowledgement:

San José State University and Surrounding Region Thámien Ancestral Muwekma Ohlone Territory. The San José State University community recognizes that the present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, with an enrolled Bureau of Indian Affairs documented membership of over 550, is comprised of all of the known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who trace their ancestry through the Missions Santa Clara, San José, and Dolores, during the advent of the Hispano- European empire into Alta

California; and who are the successors and living members of the sovereign, historic, previously Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County.

Furthermore, the San José State University community recognizes that the university is established within the Thámien Ohlone-speaking tribal ethnohistoric territory, which based upon the unratified federal treaties of 1851-1852, includes the unceded ancestral lands of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the enrolled Muwekma lineages are descended from direct ancestors from the Thámien Ohlone tribal territory whose ancestors had affiliation with Mission Santa Clara.

The San José State University community also recognizes the importance of this land to the indigenous Muwekma Ohlone people of this region, and consistent with our principles of community and diversity strives to be good stewards on behalf of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe whose land we occupy.