

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

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Patralekha (Pat) Ukil
Office Location:	Zoom Meeting Room (<i>link is provided in Canvas</i>)
Email:	patralekha.ukil@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Monday 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. PST (<i>via Zoom</i>)
Class Days/Time:	N/A (asynchronous online course)
Classroom:	N/A
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 be covering a wide range of theoretical issues relating to public economics with a specific focus on practical issues relating to public goods, 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 take place **entirely online** using the [Canvas Learning Management System](https://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>.

The course will follow *an asynchronous online format* in which ALL lecture materials (lecture videos, lecture slides, additional readings, etc.) will be posted on Canvas each week. There are **no** required online synchronous classes for lectures that need to be attended at a set time. Modules on Canvas will be organized by topic/week, and you will receive weekly notifications whenever new lecture materials are posted. ***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, health insurance, redistribution, taxation, etc.
4. Read and review recent research on different field in public economics and develop a research paper on a topic related to public economics (or a very closely related field)

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. **Research Paper Proposal** (**will be due on March 28th 2021**)
4. **Preliminary Draft** of Research Paper (**will be due on May 3rd, 2021**)
5. **Final Research Paper** (**will be due on May 26th 2021**)
6. **Participation** in any questions, surveys, and any discussion posts on Canvas
 - **Homework exercises** will be assigned on Canvas *on a biweekly basis throughout the semester*, and the questions will be based on the lecture materials. These are built to test your understanding of the material covered, and to help you apply the theoretical foundations of public economics.
 - For the **analytical writing assignments**, each student will submit a 2-to-3-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 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.

- **The proposal of your research paper** is due by **March 28th 2021** on Canvas. I expect you to submit your specific research question / the hypothesis you wish to test, the sources of data you and the method you want to utilize, and an initial literature review. More details and the rubric for the paper proposal will be provided on Canvas. **To help you stay on track with this proposal, I expect you to submit to me your hypothesis/research question by March 19th, 2021.**
- **A preliminary draft of your research paper is due on Canvas by May 3rd 2021.** This should be an edited version of your paper following my comments on the proposal, an updated literature review and any preliminary results that you may have. More details and the rubric for the preliminary draft will be provided on Canvas.
- Your **final research paper** is due on **May 26th 2021** on Canvas. It should be approximately 15-20 pages (Times New Roman, font 12 and double spaced) and the grading rubric for the paper will be provided on Canvas.
- **Participation grades** will be based on your engagement in any online discussions, surveys, or questions posted on Canvas. Since we have an asynchronous format, I will not get to meet you every week. However, **I will hold regular check-in sessions with students, and I request you to attend those.** More information about check-in sessions will be posted on Canvas as the course progresses.

Grading Information

Course grades will be as follows:

Homework Exercises:	25%
Analytical Writing Assignments:	20%
Research Proposal:	10%
Preliminary Draft of Research Paper:	15%
Final Research Paper:	25%
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 Mondays 2 p.m. to 4 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. Building and writing a research paper can often be a long and demanding process, and I've set up course milestones so that you can stay on track with this paper. Meeting these milestones is a great way to make sure you are not falling behind!
4. I take academic honesty seriously and this is particularly important to keep in mind for (1) the analytical writing assignments in which you are required to write in your own words; and (2) the research project that you will build for this course.

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.

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](#)

ECON 232-01 Spring 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. 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	January 27 th	Introduction to the course and syllabus	The course will open on Canvas
2	February 1 st	Introduction to Public Economics	
3	February 8 th	Market Structure and Competition	Homework #1 will be assigned
		Markets and the Government	
4	February 15 th	Externalities	
5	February 22 nd	Public Goods	Homework #2 will be assigned
6	March 1 st	Taxation and Incidence of Taxation	Analytical Writing #1 will be assigned
		Optimal Taxation	
7	March 8 th	Taxation and the Firm	Homework #3 will be assigned
		Corporate Taxation	
8	March 15 th	Individual Taxation	Research question due by March 19th
		Taxation and Labor Supply	
9	March 22 nd	Taxation and Savings	Research paper proposal due March 28th
		Behavioral Insights and Evidence	
10	March 29th	SPRING RECESS	
11	April 5 th	Political Economy	Homework #4 will be assigned
12	April 12 th	Asymmetric Information	
		Adverse Selection and Moral Hazard	

Week #	Week beginning	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Notes relevant for this week
13	April 19 th	Social Insurance	Analytical Writing #2 will be assigned
		Healthcare and Health Insurance	
14	April 26 th	Spatial Public Finance and Policy	Homework #5 will be assigned
15	May 3 rd	Place-based Policies: Theories and Evidence	Preliminary draft of research paper due on May 3rd
16	May 10 th	Income Redistribution: Poverty in the U.S.	Analytical Writing #3 will be assigned
17	May 17 th	Intergenerational Economic Mobility	Homework #6 will be assigned
18	May 26th	Final research paper due in Canvas	

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.