

ECONOMICS 4221
Political and Public Choice Economics
Fall 2012

Professor: Billy Mertens
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Office Hours: M 1-5pm, W 11:15-11:45am, Friday afternoons by appointment

Course Overview

Political and public choice economics can be defined as the analysis of decisionmaking behavior, even if they do not

The public choice field
can be roughly divided into two subfields, institutional political economy and social choice theory.

Grading:

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Class participation and attendance | 15% |
| Article critique and presentation | 11% |
| Semester project presentation | 5% |
| Semester project paper | 15% |
| Exam 1 | 20% |
| Exam 2 | 13% |
| Final exam | 21% |

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Article Presentations and Critiques, and Class Participation*:

For most of the course I will lecture and present papers, but in the last few weeks you will divide into small groups for the presentation papers each class. By working in groups and by noticing the grading rules (which we will discuss on the first day of class) for the group presentations, you may gain extra insight into the theory of collective action and well-made constitutional rules (in this case, course rules) can increase social welfare. The groups presenting a paper will have studied them in great detail, but I expect the rest of the class to have read all of the papers and be ready to discuss them (most days there will be a short quiz on the readings that will count toward your participation grade). Rude and counterproductive behavior such as texting and having your laptop open during class discussion will severely damage your participation grade.

Term Projects:

Students will be required to work in small groups (or possibly individually) and choose a topic and examine it in a political economics or public choice setting. This leaves open a range of subject matter from which to choose, so you must submit a first and second choice topic to me by the beginning of the third week (9/14) and you must have an approved topic by the end of the fifth week (9/28). Your paper must emphasize the political economy or public choice aspects of the situation you are analyzing, and should most importantly be an analytical (NOT narrative) study. No paper should be longer than 8 pages (double spaced). More details on the paper are posted on the website. Feel free to meet with me on a regular basis to discuss your paper.

Plagiarism is an academic offense and any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be sanctioned. If you are unsure or uncertain about what constitutes either cheating or plagiarism, please consult me or the University of Colorado Catalog. To insure a level playing field on this front, all papers will be submitted to turnitin.com.

Exams

There will be two exams and a cumulative final. Tests will consist of short answer questions and some longer problems. To be fair to everybody, I will not answer ANY questions during exams (even about typos) - this puts everyone on equal footing during the exam. The exams (other than the final) will not be cumulative, but the material does build on itself so it is important to understand all of the concepts as we go. Exams will be given in class on the days listed. Do NOT miss an exam. There will be NO makeup exams, and NO EXAMS WILL BE DROPPED!!

Exam Schedule:

Exam I: Wednesday, September 2nd

Exam II: Wednesday, October 13th

Final exam: Saturday, December 5th 1:30-4pm in our usual room.

If you have three or more final exams scheduled on the same day, you are entitled to arrange an alternative exam time for the exam or exams scheduled on that day. To qualify for rescheduling final exam times, you must provide evidence that

Religious holidays