

# Public Economics

## ECO 4504

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Dr. Steven Slutsky

Spring 2025

Office: MAT 338

Course Time: T/R 1:55 - 3:50 pm

Office Hours: T/W 4:00 – 5:00 pm

Course Location: MAT 107

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**Prerequisites:** Intermediate Microeconomics (ECO 3101 or equivalent) and Knowledge of Basic Calculus

**Required Text:** “Public Finance and Public Policy” by Jonathan Gruber

### FIRST WEEK

1) Read the Syllabus

### ASSIGNMENTS

2) If needed: Review basic differential calculus

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:** be careful to read the syllabus for unique features of this course.

1) Continued enrollment in this course is equivalent to acceptance of all stated responsibilities, policies, and due dates. If there is anything that is unclear, talk to me immediately. Waiting until the end of the term often results in less favorable outcomes.

2) Students are expected to attend regularly and participate actively in this course. It is assumed that you have read the assigned material before attending class and are prepared to answer questions based on the readings.

3) There will be a few problem sets handed out during the semester whose purpose is to help you prepare for the exams.

5) There will be two exams: a Midterm Exam (March 5) and a noncumulative Final Exam (April 25).

### COURSE RESOURCES (AND HINTS FOR SUCCESS)

- The problem sets are the greatest resource you have. These problem sets provide an almost-comprehensive review of the relevant course material and solution techniques. I highly recommend taking thorough notes when the solutions are presented in class.
- I will provide sample exams. These exams offer insight into the structure and difficulty level of the actual exams, but they do not necessarily cover the same material. Also, students regularly report that sample (or old) exams are less difficult than current term exams. Be prepared for this!
- Superficial cramming will not lead to success; keeping up with the material is essential. After each lecture, review your notes, and test whether you understand a particular concept. You may, for example, take an example or worksheet problem from class in which I examined the effect of an income increase on a consumer's equilibrium consumption bundle and attempt to identify the effects of an income decrease. These thought exercises increase your exposure to the material and sharpen your ability to apply the analytic tools covered in class.
- As with any "tools" course (e.g., mathematics), the only way to learn the material is to practice it. Take advantage of the many resources you have.
- Attend class regularly. It is almost impossible to pass this class without regular attendance.

## GRADING POLICY AND SCALE

- Grades are calculated as follows: Midterm Exam (50%), and Final Exam (50%).
- Make-up exams must be arranged before the exam date/time and will only be offered for absences that are explicitly excused by the UF Attendance Policy. Keep in mind that your academic obligations always take precedence over personal and social commitments.

Exams will be graded on a curve which will be given after the exams.

A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

---AND---

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Irregular attendance and/or tardiness will most likely result in substantially reduced course performance, as well as reflect poorly upon your commitment to this course.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS ON WELLNESS AND SUCCESS**

If you are a student with special needs and you require additional resources to participate successfully in this course, please contact me during the first week of classes. The Disability Resource Center may provide special accommodations for students. Once you obtain documentation from the DRC, please forward it to me and accommodations will be arranged.

College is an exciting learning experience and a unique opportunity for personal growth. It can, however, also be a stressful and difficult transitional period. If you are ever having general issues with your coursework in any course or trouble in your personal life, please seek help from myself or another faculty member. I also encourage you to utilize the FREE and ANONYMOUS services of the UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu>

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

You are expected to abide by the University's rules for academic honesty as outlined in the UF Student Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>). All suspicious evidence of cheating, plagiarism, making false statements, and any other violation of these rules will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. Additionally, I will advocate for the strictest of available sanctions (inc. dismissal from the University of Florida) for any student who is found responsible for violating these rules.

It is important to note that cheating and plagiarism are not the only forms of academic dishonesty. "Making a false or misleading statement for the purpose of procuring an improper academic advantage" is also a violation of the UF Student Honor Code. This includes making false statements to your instructor and/or presenting forged documents (e.g., doctors' notes). I verify all suspicious claims and documents, for example, by contacting a student's medical provider or by reviewing a student's UF systems connection data.

## **NOTE ON END-OF-TERM COURSE EVALUATIONS**

At the end of each term, you have the ability to evaluate the quality of each of your courses and the effectiveness of your instructors. I encourage you to take this opportunity seriously and to provide serious and informative feedback. Personally, I am always trying to improve my courses –

tweaking them bit-by-bit each term – and student feedback is essential to making real improvements. As the term nears an end, I will discuss this issue (numerous times) in lecture, as I believe the high quality of your education depends on your constructive criticism and affirming support. You can access end-of-term course evaluations at: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

## COURSE OUTLINE (AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE)

- L1 January 14** ----- Syllabus and review of course content
- L2 January 16** ----- Topics in Public Economics and Some Facts about the  
Government  
Chapters 1 and 10.1
- L3 and 4 January 21 and 23** ----- Tools of Analysis  
Chapters 2 and 3
- L5 and 6 January 28 and 30** ----- Government Budgets and Deficits  
Chapter 4
- L7 and 8 February 4 and 6** ----- Externalities  
Chapters 5 and 6
- L9 and 10 February 11 and 13** ----- Public Goods  
Chapter 7
- L11 February 18** ----- Cost Benefit Analysis  
Chapter 8
- L12 and 13 February 20 and 25** ----- Political Economy  
Chapter 9
- L14 February 27** ----- Fiscal Federalism  
Chapter 10
- L15 March 4** ----- Exam Review
- L16 March 6** ----- 1<sup>st</sup> Exam in Class

**L17 March 11** ----- Education

Chapter 11

**L18 March 13** ----- Social Insurance Theory

Chapter 12

March 18 and 20 No Class Spring Break

**L19 and 20 March 25 and 27** ----- Social Insurance Applications – social  
security and unemployment insurance

Chapters 13 and 14

**L21, 22, 23 April 2, 4, and 8** ----- Health Economics

Chapters 15 and 16

**L24,25, 26 April 10, 15, and 17** ----- Taxation

Chapters 17 -25

**April 22** ----- Exam Review

**April 25 Exam 2**