PUBLIC FINANCE: EXPENDITURE
ECONOMICS EC3328B-001
Department of Economics
Western University

January 2021

General Information:

Instructor: Nirav Mehta
Office: 4037 SSC
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E-mail: nirav.mehta@uwo.ca
Delivery mode: online synchronous
Time zone: All times in this document are for London, ON (ET)
Office hours: T 12:35pm-1:35pm; Th 12:35pm-1:35pm.
Meeting time(s): T 11:30am-12:30pm; Th 10:30am-12:30pm
“Classroom”: I will post the Zoom link to our Owl site, ahead of the first lecture
Course website: https://owl.uwo.ca/portal
Undergraduate inquiries: 519-661-3507 or SSC Room 4075 or econugrd@uwo.ca

Registration:

You are responsible for ensuring you are registered in the correct courses. If you are not registered in this course, the Department will not release any of your marks until your registration is corrected. You may check your timetable by using the Login on the Student Services website at https://student.uwo.ca. If you notice a problem, please contact your home Faculty Academic Counsellor immediately.

Prerequisite Note:

The prerequisites for this course are Economics 2223 and 2261A/B. The antirequisite for this course is Economics 2159A/B.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken any anti-requisite courses. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed.

If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.
Course Objectives:

This course studies the role of government in the provision of goods and services from theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Course Learning Outcomes:

After this course, students should be able to: (i) explain economic concepts and theories related to basic welfare economics and the role of government in addressing the provision of public goods and externalities and (ii) explain, from an economic perspective, aspects of government involvement with education and social insurance programs.

Textbooks:

This course covers many different topics. There is no required textbook because there is no one text covering all these topics at the appropriate level. The classes will consist of lectures and discussion that will present the material in a self-contained way. This means it is very important that you attend class to make sure you get appropriate coverage of the material. While there is no assigned textbook, background to much of the material is available in standard undergraduate textbooks, such as

  ▪ Note: I have placed copies of this on reserve at Weldon.

  ▪ Note: This book is available as an ebook through Weldon, where it has also been placed on reserve.

Attendance:

Students enrolled in the course are expected to attend all online lectures at the scheduled times. Lectures for this course will not be distributed to students. In addition, students are neither allowed to record nor allowed to distribute lectures, presentations or other course material. Except for students with approved accommodations or a documented illness, no special provisions will be made for students who miss a lecture.

Prior to registering in this course, students should understand that their absences could adversely affect their overall class performance. Therefore, students who cannot attend class regularly should not enroll in the course, and if they do, they do so at their own risk.
Communication:

- Please use Zoom with your Western account for office hours and lectures.
- Important announcements will be posted on OWL. Please check the course OWL site every day or two.
- Email:
  - Students must use their Western email address when emailing me about the course; all other domains will be ignored. Please include “Econ 3328” in the Subject when you email me about the course.
  - Emails will be monitored daily on weekdays; students will receive a response in one or two days
- Discussion forums:
  - This course will use OWL forums for discussions
  - You should post course-related questions in the forums on OWL, and discuss other students’ comments or questions. I (or the teaching assistant) will monitor the forums on weekdays and post responses addressing frequently discussed topics.
  - I will also post on OWL answers to questions that I get over email, if I think they are useful for others.

Technical Requirements:

- Device capable of watching synchronous Zoom lectures (ideally, a laptop or desktop computer)
- Stable internet connection (for lectures and exams)
- Microphone
- Webcam
- For technical support, see the OWL Help page or contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk (link). Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox are the preferred browsers for OWL; update your browser frequently.

Online Etiquette:

- Connect to class on time
- Ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions.
- To minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise.
- Please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable.
- Unless invited by your instructor, do not share your screen in the meeting.
- Comments and discussion:
  - If you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for me to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question.
  - Remember to unmute your microphone and to turn on your video camera before speaking.
  - Self-identify when speaking.
  - Remember to mute your microphone and to turn off your video camera after speaking, unless directed otherwise.
Assessments and Grading:

We will read and discuss some empirical papers in this course. Participation in these discussions has positive externalities. To ensure you’ve completed the papers before we discuss them in class, I will collect and grade brief (approximately 100 words) article summaries online, before the beginning of the class during which we will discuss each article to be graded. This will be done for three readings, which will be designated the class before; the lowest article summary grade will be dropped.

There will be one short writing assignment, where you can submit your choice of an op-ed or article critique. Late assignments are forfeited; an assignment is considered late if it has not been turned in to me by the beginning of class on the day it is due (March 30, tentatively). Detailed instructions and examples will be posted on the course website.

There will be one cumulative midterm exam, held in class on March 4 (tentatively), and a cumulative final exam, date to be determined. There will be no make-up midterm exams. If you lack official justification for missing the midterm, a grade of zero will be attributed to the exam. The marked midterm exam will be returned electronically through OWL.

Online Proctoring Notice

- Tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using Zoom. You will be required to keep your camera on for the entire session, hold up your student card for identification purposes, and share your screen with the invigilator if asked to do so at any time during the exam. The exam session will not be recorded.¹
- More information about the use of Zoom for exam invigilation is available in the Online Proctoring Guidelines at this link.
- Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the system requirements for Zoom. Information about the system requirements are available at this link.

You may submit an exam for a regrade within one week of when it has been handed back in class; since I may scrutinize the entire exam during the regrade, your grade may go up, go down, or stay the same. Students are forbidden from using any books, notes, study guides, diagrams, communication equipment such as a cell phone, computer programs or software, online resources or websites, or other aids unless authorized by the instructor; such authorization must be stated explicitly during the examination.

The course grade will be computed using the following weights:

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¹ Please note that Zoom servers are located outside Canada. If you would prefer to use only your first name or a nickname to login to Zoom, please discuss this with your instructor in advance of the test or examination.
Article Summaries: 5%
Writing Assignment: 15%
Midterm Exam: 30%
Final Exam: 50%

Tips for Success:

- Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. Take notes as you go through the material. Keeping notes will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching.
- Connect with others. Try forming an online study group and meet on a weekly basis for study and peer support.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you have questions or are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor or teaching assistant.

Topics Covered and Readings:

This is a tentative outline of our course. For those who would like additional background, I have included book chapter references for Rosen denoted “R” and Feldman and Serrano denoted “F” in parentheses. Note that material in lectures that is not in the textbook may still appear on exams. The outline may be adjusted based on our progress.

1. Introduction
   - Introduction (R1)
   - Fundamentals of Welfare Economics (R2, F1-3)
2. A Framework for the Analysis of Public Expenditure
   - Public Goods (R4, F8)
   - Externalities (R5, F7)
   - Income Redistribution (R6)
3. Political Economy
   - Public Choice (R7)
   - Fiscal Federalism (R8)
4. Public Expenditures
   - Education and Education Reform (R13)
   - Social Insurance (Health Care (R9), Employment Ins. (R10), Social Security (R11))

Professionalism, Privacy and Copyright:

- Students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct.
- All lectures and course materials, including slides, presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. Students may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational purposes only.
- Students may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, assessments, or any other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without written consent of the instructor.
- Recordings (audio or video) are not permitted without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Permitted recordings may not be distributed or shared.
• Students will be expected to take an academic integrity pledge before assessments.
Please Note
Department & University Policies for 2020-2021

The University expects all students to take responsibility for their own Academic Programs. Students should check their registration to ensure they are enrolled in the correct courses.

**Academic Rights and Responsibilities:** Students should be familiar with their “Academic Rights and Responsibilities” as outlined here in the Western Academic Calendar. Claiming that “you didn’t know what to do” is not an acceptable excuse for not following the stated procedures.

**Guidelines and Policies for Students** are posted online in the current Western Academic Calendar at [http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca](http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca). Undergraduate information for the Faculty of Social Science can be found at: [https://www.ssc.uwo.ca/undergraduate/index.html](https://www.ssc.uwo.ca/undergraduate/index.html) and for the Department of Economics at: [https://economics.uwo.ca/undergraduate/index.html](https://economics.uwo.ca/undergraduate/index.html).

**Rules of Conduct for Examinations:** Students are expected to know the university’s Rules of Conduct for Examinations, available here.

**Cheating and Academic Offences:** Students are responsible for understanding what it means to “cheat.” The Department of Economics treats cheating and other academic offences very seriously and will investigate any suspect behavior. Students found guilty will incur penalties that could include a failing grade or being barred from future registration in Economics courses or programs. The University may impose further penalties such as suspension or expulsion.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is an academic offence. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Ideas/passages taken from another author must be referenced with footnotes or citations and acknowledged with quotation marks where appropriate. Western University uses software to check for plagiarism and students may be required to electronically submit their work. Those found guilty will be penalized as noted in point 3. See Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students here in the Western Academic Calendar.

**Academic Appeals:** Students should refer to the Student Academic Appeals section here in the Western Academic Calendar. Please note the relevant deadlines.

**Department Appeals Procedures:** The Department will not consider an appeal unless an attempt has been made to settle the matter with the instructor first. Students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome may submit a written appeal to the Undergraduate Director in Economics, stating the reasons for their appeal. Information on the Department of Economics’ appeals procedure and the appeals form are available here.

**Systematic Adjustments:** Systematic adjustments of class grade distributions (either up or down) can occur in Economics courses. The systematic adjustment of a class grade distribution is not grounds for an appeal.
Add/drop deadlines:
Deadline to add a second term half course: Tuesday January 19, 2021
Deadline to drop a second term half course: Sunday March 14, 2021

Oversleeping or Misreading the Exam Schedule: Faculty of Social Science policy states that oversleeping or misreading the exam schedule is NOT grounds for a makeup. This rule applies to all exams in the Department of Economics.

End of Term Travel: Students must book travel arrangements AFTER final exam dates have been posted; travel is not an acceptable excuse for absence from a final exam.

Rewriting Exams and Retroactive Reweighting are NOT Permitted: Students who proceed to write a test or examination must be prepared to accept the mark. Rewriting tests or examinations, or retroactive reweighting of marks, is not permitted.

Accommodation Policies: Students with disabilities should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.

Academic Consideration for Missed Assessments/Exams due to Student Absence: Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to receive academic consideration if they self-report a missed assessment using the online portal, provided the following conditions are met: the assessment is missed due to an absence of no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted otherwise on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) if the absence is medical or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office for more information about the relevant documentation. It is strongly recommended that students notify the instructor as soon as possible, ideally before the assessment, when they become aware of an absence. University policy is that students must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the SMC or immediately upon their return from their documented absence. Failure to follow University policy and procedures may result in denial of academic accommodation and a grade of zero.

Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.
All required documentation for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:
Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs.

For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

**Religious Accommodation:** Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

**Policy Regarding Class Attendance and Engagement:** If the instructor deems a student’s attendance or engagement in the class to be unsatisfactory, that student may be prohibited from writing the final examination. Examples of unsatisfactory class engagement include frequent absences from an in-person or synchronous online class, lack of assignment submissions, and inadequate use of online course materials. Instructors who intend to make use of this policy will notify the student in advance.

**Statement on Mental Health and Support Services:** Students under emotional/mental distress should visit http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for more information and a complete list of resources on how to obtain help.