



Department of Economics Course Outline

		Term:	Winter 2008
Course:	Economics 405 [Political Economics of Public Policy]	Section:	01
Time:	TR 09:30 – 10:45	Place:	SA 119
Instructor:	John R. Boyce		
Office:	SS 412	Telephone:	220-5860
Office Hours:	TBA	E-mail:	boyce@ucalgary.ca

Textbook:

- Dennis C. Mueller (1989), *Public Choice III*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K.. (Required)

Other Reference Books:

- Kenneth Shepsle & Mark S. Bonchek (1997), *Analyzing Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton. (A nice non-technical introduction to social choice theory.)
- W. Kip Viscusi, John M. Vernon, and Joseph E. Harrington, Jr. (1995), *Economics of Regulation and Antitrust*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. (an advanced regulation text)
- P. O. Johansson (1991), *An Introduction to Welfare Economics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge U. Press (a low-level but good text on welfare economics)
- H. Van den Doel & Ben Belthouvan (1993), *Democracy and Welfare Economics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge U. Press. (a substitute for Johansson)
- Donald Wittman (1995), *The Myth of Democratic Failure*. Chicago: U. Chicago Press. (an argument for why government is efficient)
- Torsten Persson & Guido Tabellini (2000), *Political Economics: Explaining Economic Policy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. (a modern and advanced text)
- Robert D. Cooter (2000), *The Strategic Constitution*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton U. Press. (an advanced text on constitutions)
- David Austin Smith & Jeffery Banks (1999), *Positive Political Theory*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U. Michigan Press. (a modern and advanced text)
- Peter Ordeshook (1986), *Game Theory & Political Theory*, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge U. Press. (one of the best books on political game theory)
- Joe B. Stevens (1993), *The Economics of Collective Choice*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. (an introductory level text to public choice)

Course Outline:

This course will introduce the student to the fundamentals of the literature on social choice and public choice. The social choice literature studies social decision making rules. Emphasis in this literature is on the normative properties of voting rules, political competition, and social welfare functions. The public choice literature is largely about how interest groups, bureaucracy, the judiciary, and legislative and executive bodies of government interact and compete. The Mueller text will be supplemented with readings from time to time.

Grade Determination and Final Examination Details:

First Midterm Examination	Thursday, February 14	30% of course grade
Second Midterm Examination	Tuesday, April 8	30% of course grade
Course Term Paper	See below for dates	40% of course grade

The midterm examinations are marked on a numerical (percentage) basis. The course project is marked as a letter grade, whose numerical value is the midpoint of the scale below (e.g., an A gives you a 96%). The course grade is then calculated using the weights indicated above. As a guide to determining standing, these letter grade equivalences will generally apply:

A+	99-100	B	80-84	C-	60-64
A	94-98	B-	75-79	D+	55-59
A-	90-93	C+	70-74	D	50-54
B+	85-89	C	65-69	F	< 50

If the distribution of grades determined using the aforementioned conversion chart appears to be abnormal the instructor reserves the right to change the grade conversion chart if the instructor, *at the instructor's discretion*, feels it is necessary to more fairly represent student achievement.

Course Term Paper:

Econ 405 is one of four courses this academic year included in the Economics Writing Program. The only way to learn effective writing skills is to practice writing.

The course term paper grade is the sum of four weighted parts:

	Writing Component	Due to Diane Guichon	Due to Dr. Boyce	Percent of Course Grade
(i)	Proposal	January 31	February 8	5%
(ii)	First Draft	March 18	March 27	10%
(iii)	Opinion/Editorial	February 28	March 6	5%
(iv)	Final Draft	April 10	April 17	20%

Each component is graded with equal weight on the writing and the economic content.

A significant portion of the course grade will be determined by the course writing component. The term paper is graded in four. The first assignment is the proposal. This is a short (two to five pages) paper in which the student explains the central question the term paper hopes to answer and the methodology the student intends to use. A brief synopsis of the relevant literature is required. This means that you will likely have to read ahead in the text to find literature relevant to your topic.

The first draft of the term paper, expected to be between ten and twenty pages in length, the student is expected to have thoroughly reviewed the relevant literature and to have sketched out the basic economic model underlying the analysis. The student is also required to turn in a short synopsis (separate from the paper) of how she has responded to comments on the proposal.

The Opinion/Editorial piece is the non-technical component of the writing assignment. In this component, the student is expected to use the economic theory and empirical evidence that they have mustered for their term paper to take an advocacy position on the topic of their term paper. This is to be written in the form of an opinion (800 words) piece that could be published in the newspaper.

In the final draft of the term paper, the student is expected to have formulated her conclusions and to have completed her analysis of the topic. The student is required to turn in a short synopsis (separate from the paper) of how she has responded to comments on the first draft of the paper.

Each component of the term paper is graded on a pass/fail basis by Diane Guichon. The Opinion/Editorial writing will be graded by Diane Guichon. Dr. Boyce will grade each component of the term paper on the economic content as well as on the clarity of the presentation.

Writing Tutorials:

In addition to the usual two lectures, students have the option of attending a weekly writing tutorial delivered by the Effective Writing Office. Our effective writing instructor is Diane Guichon. Her email is d.guichon@shaw.ca. She is available in SS 106 (the Writing Centre) or by appointment.

Times for the tutorials are to be announced. We will coordinate with the students to try to find times that fit the students' schedules.

Given that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the term paper grade is on the writing component, the writing tutorials are not really an option.

For the first third of the course, the writing tutorials will cover topics such as generating ideas; researching sources (session to be held with the librarian for Economics); organizing and structuring effective arguments; and the mechanics of sentences, paragraphs, punctuation, and self-editing. The Effective Writing Tutorials in the last two thirds of the course will focus on developing skills necessary for the successful completion of a major research project consisting of a fifteen to twenty-five page analysis of a topic of interest in political economy.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is academic theft. A student caught plagiarizing shall receive an 'F' grade for the course project. See <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html> for the guidelines I shall use on plagiarism.

Examinations

Non-programmable calculators are allowed during the writing of tests or examinations.

There will be NO Registrar scheduled final examination.

Tests and exams will **not** involve multiple choice questions.

Notes:

- Students seeking reappraisal of a piece of graded term work must discuss their work with the Instructor within two weeks of the work being returned to the class.
- It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

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