



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

UPADM-GP 140

Economics of Public Policy

Fall 2021

Course Information

- Lecture:
 - Thursdays, 4:55pm–7:25pm
 - Bldg: SILV Room:520 Loc: Washington Square
- Recitations:
 - Fridays 8-9am, Virtual

Instructor Information

- Alexander Heil, PhD
- ah5701@nyu.edu
- 347-616-9039
- Office hours by appointment

Teaching Assistant Information

- Donny Hernandez
- dh3094@nyu.edu

Prerequisites

- ECON-UA2 Introduction to Microeconomics, or equivalent
This course requires a working knowledge of the material in ECON-UA2. It is your responsibility to review that material in advance of taking this course.

Course Description and Objectives

This course analyzes the impact of public policy on the allocation of resources and the distribution of income in the economy. Students completing the course will know how to use the tools of microeconomics and empirical analysis to answer these questions:

- When should the government intervene in the economy or markets?
- How might the government intervene? What policy options are available?
- What are the effects of those interventions on economic outcomes and society?
- What are the short and long-term impacts of selected policies?

The assignments and exams assess all the above learning objectives.

Required Readings

- [Jonathan Gruber, *Public Finance and Public Policy*, 6th edition, 2019](#). Using another edition is at your own risk as public policies are frequently revised.
- A microeconomics principles textbook. The course outline below refers to chapters in N. Gregory Mankiw's *Principles of Microeconomics*, but you can use any introductory text, such as the one you used in ECON-UA2.
- A number of required articles and book chapters will be posted on NYU Brightspace. In most weeks, specific readings for discussion will be assigned along with a set of discussion questions. You should apply economic reasoning to the issues raised in these readings and jot down your answers to the associated questions before coming to lecture. Your answers to these questions will form the basis of in-class discussion. Note that you can obtain access to the linked New York Times articles by activating an Academic Pass using your NYU email address: <http://nytimes.com/passes>

Lecture

- PowerPoint slides will be available on Brightspace prior to each week's lecture. Please review these slides before coming to class.
- Assigned readings must be completed **before** coming to lecture.
- Please make every effort to be on time for the in-class lecture. We will take a 10-minute break during each lecture class (timing will vary). If you need to leave early, please tell me before class begins.

Assignments

An assignment will be posted on the NYU Brightspace site after most lectures (see outline below). Completed assignments should be scanned as a **PDF file** and submitted as an attachment via the Assignments tab on NYU Brightspace **one hour before the start of the next lecture**.

These assignments are intended to provide timely feedback on your progress. They will be graded as check ++, check+, check, check minus, no credit which corresponds to 100/90/85/75/zero. No late assignments will be accepted as the answer keys are posted after they are due.

Recitations

- Recitation problems will be posted on the NYU Classes site the day before class.
- Recitations reinforce the current week's material primarily by going over these problems. You should try them on your own before attending recitation. While attendance is not mandatory, you will need to master the content of these recitations to successfully pass the exams and complete the course; the typical student will need to attend. Recitations may also review completed assignments or address other content questions, as needed.

Grades

Grades will be calculated according to the distribution below. There will be no makeup exams or extra credit.

- **Participation (10%):** Participation consists of two components: in-class participation and the presentation of an "economic highlight" relevant to the course content.
 - **In-class participation (5%):** If you attend regularly and contribute meaningfully to class discussions, participation will be incorporated into your final grade. You can only contribute in a meaningful way if you have completed all assigned readings and discussion questions before lecture.
 - **Economic Highlight Presentation (5%):** You will choose a topic and deliver a presentation not exceeding two minutes in length, accompanied by one PowerPoint slide. The presentation needs to be recorded and submitted on our course website [either as a combined file or two separate files]. Zoom works well for this purpose.
- **Assignments (20%):** You will receive credit for up to 10 of the 11 assignments. If you submit all 11 assignments, your worst performance will be ignored.
- **Midterm exam (35%):** The midterm will cover material from weeks 1-6.
- **Final exam (35%):** The final exam will focus on material from weeks 8-14, however, you will need to apply concepts learned in earlier weeks.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

For this particular course, there are some specific behaviors required to meet the standards of academic integrity.

- **Assignments:** While all students are encouraged to work in groups, the final write up of assignments must be done individually with no sharing of written answers.
- **Exams:** All exams must be the sole work of the individual student.

Violations of these standards may result in all participating students failing the course.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Students approved for accommodations should share their documentation from the Moses Center with me **within the first three weeks of the semester**. Students approved for testing accommodations are responsible for adhering to the Moses Center's strict deadlines for test scheduling (sooner is better as they are heavily booked), and all exams must overlap with the in-class time.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. **Within the first three weeks of the semester**, please notify me of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

Outline

The pacing of topics is subject to change.

Week 1 (Lesson 1)

9/2

- Course introduction, review of perfectly competitive markets, welfare economics and policy applications
- Gruber 1
- Review Mankiw 4 (supply and demand), 5 (elasticity), 6 (government policies), 7 (market efficiency), 8 (costs of taxation), Mankiw 9 (international trade)

Week 2 (Lesson 2)

9/9

- Review of welfare economics and policy applications (continued), short and long run market supply, labor markets
- Gruber 2.3
- Review Mankiw 13 (production costs), 14 (firms in competitive markets), 18 (labor markets), 19 (earnings and discrimination)
- **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE**

Week 3 (Lesson 3)

9/16

- Constrained utility maximization, consumer choice
- Gruber 2.1
- Review Mankiw 21 (consumer choice)
- **ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE**

Week 4 (Lesson 4)

9/23

- Empirical analysis tools, introduction to market failures, imperfect and asymmetric information
- Gruber 3
- Review Mankiw 22.1 (asymmetric information)
- **ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE**

Week 5 (Lesson 5)

9/30

- Externalities
- Gruber 5
- Review Mankiw 10 (externalities)
- **ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE (10/5)**

Week 6 (Lesson 6)

10/7

- Public goods and cost-benefit analysis
- Gruber 7, 8
- Review Mankiw 11 (public goods), 15 (monopoly)
- **ASSIGNMENT 5 DUE (10/12)**

Week 7

10/14

- **Midterm Exam**
- No recitation this week.

Week 8 (Lesson 7)

10/21

- Redistributive policies, in-kind and cash transfers
- Gruber 2.2, 17
- **ASSIGNMENT 6 DUE (10/26)**

Week 9 (Lesson 8)

10/28

- Introduction to tax policy, tax incidence and efficiency
- Gruber 18, 19, 20.1, 20.4
- **ASSIGNMENT 7 DUE (11/2)**

Week 10 (Lesson 9)

11/4

- Taxes and labor supply
- Gruber 21
- **ASSIGNMENT 8 DUE (11/9)**

Week 11 (Lesson 10)

11/11

- Taxes on Savings & Wealth, Education
- Gruber 22, 23.2, 23.3, 11
- Review Mankiw 21.4c (consumer choice – saving)
- **ASSIGNMENT 9 DUE (11/16)**

Week 12 (Lesson 11)

11/18

- Introduction to insurance
- Gruber 12
- **ASSIGNMENT 10 DUE (11/30)**

Week 13
11/25- NO CLASS DUE TO THANKSGIVING

Week 14 (Lesson 12)

12/2

- Health Insurance
- Gruber 15.1-15.2, 16.1, 16.3, 16.6
- **ASSIGNMENT 11 DUE (12/7)**

Week 15 (Lesson 13)

12/9

- Social insurance programs
- Selections from Gruber 13-16

Week 16

Dec 15-21 (date to be confirmed by registrar)

- **Final Exam**