

Seminar in Public Choice

Economics 490

Section: D100

Term: 2007 Summer

Instructor: Z. Spindler

Discussion Topics: Public choice is a relatively new branch of economics that focuses on the political market place. In its positive mode, it rests on three basic postulates characterized as methodological individualism, utility maximization, and politics as exchange. In its normative mode, it considers existing and prospective contractual limitations on government embodied in constitutions and post-constitutional rules.

Grading: Format: We will follow a mixed seminar format with limited lecturing on some high points from the text assignments and with assigned class preparations and participation. Each student will be required to make at least one presentation as well as answering questions when required.

Participation: Your participation in this seminar will be graded and your Participation score (PAR) will count for a mandatory minimum 30% of your Final Course Score (FCS). In addition to the mandatory participation described above, you may participate by asking your own questions, and/or by participating in class discussion. Optional class presentations based on optional readings and/or on student essays may augment this score.

Tests: There will be Two 1-hour Optional Midterm Analyses (OMA), which may each count up to 20% of your FCS, and one 3-hour Final Mandatory Analysis (MFA), which may count from a minimum of 30% (if your OMA scores are higher) to a maximum of 70% of your FCS. Both the OMA & MFA will involve writing a few short essays addressing a choice of questions on public choice analysis and issues. All analyses will be graded on your use of logic, economics, and public choice perspectives.

Essay: You may submit an Optional Final Essay (OFE), which may be used as a substitute for one of your OMAs. Alternatively, your OFE may be used to augment your PAR score, but only if you make an in-class presentation on it. Your OFE may be written (with a 2000 word limit) to address a public choice issue of your choice. For full credit, your OFE must be approved based on an Abstract submitted one month in advance of the submission of a first draft, which must be submitted one month in an advance of the final draft, which, in turn, must be submitted by the last day of class. All submissions must be by e-mail. Missing these deadlines will invalidate any submission. Plagiarism, and any failure to fully acknowledge any aide by others in the preparation of these submissions, will be penalized by a failing grade (F) on the essay and the course. **DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS OPTION UNLESS YOU INTEND TO DO YOUR OWN WORK.** Your OFE will be graded on the basis of your use of facts, logic, and public choice perspectives. The latter is most crucial. Indeed, you should undertake an essay only as a way to demonstrate your course knowledge by its application. It is a rare student who can improve her/his course grade by accepting the challenge of this option, but you are encouraged to try it.

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Grades: Your Final Course Score (FCS) will be based on a weighted average of your PAR score, your MFA score, and possibly your OMA and/or OFE scores (if the latter are higher than your MFA and PAR scores, respectively). The respective weights are as indicated above.

Required Texts: This semester we will study public choice with the aid of a recently published text by Patrick Gunning, UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY: An Introduction to Public Choice. This text was previously used as a web-based text but it is now only available in hard cop

Recommended Texts:

Materials/Supplies: Other readings may be distributed via email from time to time. Be prepared to check your email daily. Additional course details may be found on: <http://www.sfu.ca/~spindler>.

Prerequisite/Corequisite: ECON 301 and 305; 60 credit hours

Notes: Students requiring accommodations as a result of a disability must contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities (604) 291-3112 or csdo@sfu.ca.

All students are expected to read and understand SFU's policies with regard to academic dishonesty (T 10.02 and T 10.03). These policies are available at the following web addresses:

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-02.htm> and

<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-03.htm>

This outline is derived from a course outline repository database that was maintained by SFU Student Services and the University's IT Services Department. The database was retired in 2014 and the data migrated to SFU Archives in 2015.