

# Graduate Public Economics I, Spring 2022 Course Syllabus

Last updated: March 7, 2022

**Course Number:** ECON 6363.001

**Course Title:** Public Economics I

**Course Term:** Spring 2022

**Meeting Times and Location:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. on Teams until February 4. In CB 1.214 starting February 7 unless otherwise noted in eLearning or via email

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## Professor's Contact Information

**Name:** Anne M. Burton (you are all graduate students so you can call me Anne)

**Email:** [anne.burton@utdallas.edu](mailto:anne.burton@utdallas.edu)

**Office Phone (send me an email—I'll respond much quicker):** 972-883-4935

**Office Location:** GR 2.532

**Office Hours:** virtual on Mondays from 2:00-3:30 p.m. (sign up through Calendly). Links are posted in eLearning and available in the course Teams page

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## General Course Information

### Course Prerequisites

ECON 6301 (Ph.D.-level Microeconomic Theory)

**This course relies on concepts and topics taught in the Ph.D.-level microeconomic theory and econometrics courses.** If you wish to take this class and have not taken ECON 6301 and some combination of ECON 6309, ECON 7309, and/or ECON 6306, **it is your responsibility to fill in the gaps in your knowledge and keep up with the course material. I will not provide extra help.**

### Course Description

This course is one half of the two-course Economics Ph.D. field sequence in public economics. This course focuses on the expenditure/government program side of public economics; the other course focuses on the revenue/taxation side.

In addition to learning about government programs and the many effects of government interventions in markets, this course is designed to help you transition from being a *consumer of research* to a *producer of research*.

A main focus of the course is reading and presenting economics papers on topics in public economics, broadly defined. Major projects include writing referee reports and drafting and presenting a research proposal.

## **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

1. Learn about influential papers in public economics and about the research frontier
2. Transition from being a consumer of research to a producer of research
3. Improve writing, speaking, and presentation skills

## **Required Textbooks and Materials**

Textbook: none

Other Materials: economics papers will be required reading. I will post PDFs of required readings on eLearning in the "Readings" folder.

## **Supplemental Class Materials**

I may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience (e.g., the slides from class). These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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## **Grading Policies**

### **Determinants of Course Grade**

<b>Item</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>
<b>Research proposal</b>	<b>50%</b>
Written proposal	30%
Presentation	20%
<b>Referee reports (3)</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Reading presentation</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Attendance and participation</b>	<b>20%</b>

100 >= A >= 93, 93 > A- >= 90, 90 > B+ >= 87, 87 > B >= 83, 83 > B- >= 80  
80 > C+ >= 77, 77 > C >= 73, 73 > C- >= 70, 70 > D+ >= 67, 67 > D >= 63, 63 > D- >= 60, 60 > F

**I will not round up (e.g., 89.99 is a B+, not an A-)**

## **Research Proposal**

You will spend a good portion of the semester coming up with and writing a research proposal. Your proposal should seek to answer a question in the field of public economics (broadly defined, and not necessarily limited to the topics covered on the

syllabus). This assignment is designed for you to develop and receive feedback on a research project that could turn into a chapter of your dissertation and/or a publication. The final proposal is due on the last day of class but there are several intermediate deadlines interspersed throughout the course. You will also give a short presentation on your proposal in class. Further information about the proposal and presentation will be provided in class.

### **Referee Reports**

I will assign 3 working papers for you to referee (worth 5% each). Your report should first briefly summarize the paper (1-2 paragraphs), then outline the 2-4 most important comments/criticisms/suggestions for improvement, then briefly mention additional comments/criticisms/suggestions. The report should total 2-5 pages in length (single spaced).

### **Reading Presentation**

You will be responsible for presenting 1 or 2 of the papers on the syllabus (depending on final class size). Your presentation should cover each of the reading questions on the reading questions handout (and be similar in style to my presentations of the readings). Sign-ups for the papers will happen on the first day we meet for class (January 19).

### **Attendance and Participation**

**My policy, which is subject to change given ever-fluctuating university, CDC, etc. rules and guidance:**

You are expected to attend and actively participate in this course. That means doing the readings and other assignments and showing up to class ready to discuss the readings with me and the rest of the class. Missing more than 2 classes will negatively affect your attendance and participation grade.

Notice that there is no final exam. Think of class participation as a substitute for assessing your knowledge and understanding of the readings. Participation is also one of the best ways to improve your speaking skills. I hope this doesn't need saying, but just in case, disrespectful and disparaging remarks will not be tolerated and will negatively affect your participation grade.

Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The readings in this course cover a variety of topics in public economics and applied microeconomics more broadly. There are hundreds of excellent papers that I could assign but rather than overwhelm you with a 10-page reading list, we will cover fewer papers in detail (1-2 per class). Because we are covering fewer papers, you are expected to come to class having read and understood the paper(s).

If you are interested in a particular topic and want suggestions for additional papers to read, I am happy to do so.

You are expected to be in class in person on the day we discuss your research proposal ideas, the day(s) you give a reading presentation, and the days for student presentations, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which in most cases I will need to be made aware of well in advance. If you won't be in class on the aforementioned days, I will decide how you will make up the work.

That being said, there are a lot of reasons why it may not be privately or socially optimal for you to show up to class on a particular day (for example, you are sick, you are caregiving for somebody who is sick, or your childcare falls through).

When you know you won't make it to class on a particular day, send me an email as soon as you know. I don't need detailed reasons or excuses (for example, a simple "I won't make it to class on February 2 because my kid got sick at daycare and I have to take care of her at home now" will suffice). To the extent feasible, if you cannot make it to class in person, you will be expected to join via Teams.

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## **Course & Instructor Policies**

### **Flexibility due to Rapidly Changing Circumstances**

Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic is still a thing. The current plan is for this course to start out online on Teams and switch to in-person eventually, but that may change due to public health directives, government policies, and/or university regulations.

**Some aspects of this course will change with the course modality.**

The latest COVID-related updates from the University are available here:

<https://www.utdallas.edu/covid/response/>

### **Classroom Conduct Requirements Related to Public Health Measures**

UT Dallas will follow the public health and safety guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and local public health agencies that are in effect at that time during the Spring 2022 semester to the extent allowed by state governance. Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Executive Order [GA-38](#) prohibits us from mandating vaccines and face coverings for UT Dallas employees, students, and members of the public on campus. However, we strongly encourage all Comets to get vaccinated and wear face coverings as recommended by the CDC. Check the [Comets United: Latest Updates webpage](#) for the latest guidance on the University's public health measures. Comets are expected to carry out [Student Safety](#) protocols in adherence to the Comet Commitment. Unvaccinated Comets will be expected to complete the [Required Daily Health Screening](#). Those students who do not comply will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct for disciplinary action under the [Student Code of Conduct – UTSP5003](#).

## **Feeling Unwell**

**If we have class but you don't feel well** (including but not limited to having new-to-you symptoms like a fever or chills, cough, nausea or other gastrointestinal issues, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or muscle or body aches that cannot be explained by exercise), **please do not come to class!** Your health is very important, and not creating negative externalities by showing up to class possibly infectious and infecting others is also very important.

You're all adults and I don't need a doctor's note; just send me an email before the start of class (emails after class are acceptable for extenuating circumstances) explaining that you are not feeling well and will not make it to class today (I do not need you to describe your symptoms; "I don't feel well" suffices).

## **Email**

I will respond to emails by the next business day. I define business days as Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dallas time (central time), not including federal or university holidays. That means if you send me an email after 5 p.m. on a generic Friday, do not expect an email response from me until a generic Tuesday. If you send me an email at 11 p.m. on a Tuesday, I will respond by 5 p.m. Thursday. And if you send me an email at 4:59 p.m. on a Thursday, I will respond by 5 p.m. on Friday. If I have not replied to your email within 2 business days, please send a follow-up email because that probably means your original email got lost (went to my spam folder or I otherwise missed it in a barrage of emails).

## **Office Hours**

Office hours will be virtual this semester and are on Mondays from 2:00-3:30 p.m. by appointment (sign up through Calendly; link on the course website). You are welcome to make an appointment for office hours to talk about research, class assignments, and/or graduate school/career advice.

## **Class Recordings**

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## **Academic Honesty**

from the UT Dallas syllabus policies and procedures page (<https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>):

The faculty expects from its students a high-level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. See <https://conduct.utdallas.edu/integrity>

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty can occur in relation to any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can include individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. In order to avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand the expectations of their professors. This is best accomplished through asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found here: <https://conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty>

**My Policy:** You are welcome to discuss the readings with other students in the class and you are welcome to talk with other students in the class about your research proposal. What's not okay are things like not doing the reading and copying somebody else's answers to the reading questions or copying somebody else's referee report.

**If you have questions about where the line is between collaborating with other students (allowed) and copying from other students (not allowed), please ask!**

## **Comet Creed**

*This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

## **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

## Resources

I want all of you to succeed in this class and learn the material, and I believe you are all capable of doing so given the right opportunities and resources (and of course some hard work on your part). To that end, here are some resources that may be relevant for you.

### **Title IX and Lauren's Promise - I will listen and believe you if somebody is threatening you**

Lauren McCluskey, a 21-year-old honors student athlete at the University of Utah, was murdered on October 22, 2018, by a man she briefly dated, on the University of Utah campus. **We must all take actions to ensure crimes like this one never happen again.**

If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or the UT Dallas police: 972-883-2222.

**If you are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or stalking, you can report it to me** and I will connect you to resources. You can also call confidential resources that are listed below.

Please be aware that as a faculty member at UT Dallas, I am considered a “responsible employee” under UT Dallas’s sexual misconduct policy, which means that per UTD policy and Texas state law **I am required to report a potential Title IX incident that you disclose to me to the university’s Title IX coordinator.** I am revealing this information to you because I care and want to help keep you safe, but I cannot (per university policy/state law) keep a potential Title IX violation confidential and I don’t want you to feel like I betrayed your confidence.

<https://institutional-initiatives.utdallas.edu/title-ix/faq/>

Here is a list of resources for survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and other prohibited conduct:

<https://institutional-initiatives.utdallas.edu/title-ix/resources/>

Here is a link to the UT Dallas sexual misconduct policy (UTDBP3102):

<https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdbp3102>

**Here are some confidential resources if you prefer confidentiality:**

- Student Counseling Center, SSB 4.600
  - phone number: 972-883-2575, or after hours helpline 972-UTD-TALK (972-883-8255)
  - website: <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/>
- healthcare professionals at the Student Health Center, SSB 4.700
  - phone number: 972-883-2747, after hours nurse line same number

- website: <https://studenthealthcenter.utdallas.edu/>
- licensed counselors at the Galerstein Gender Center, SSB 4.300
  - phone number: 972-883-6555
  - website: <http://www.utdallas.edu/gendercenter>
- Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center, Dallas, TX
  - phone number: 972-641-7273 (24-hour crisis hotline)
  - website: <https://www.darcc.org/>
- The Turning Point, Plano, TX
  - phone number: 800-886-7273 (24-hour crisis hotline)
  - website: <https://www.theturningpoint.org/>

## **Mental Health**

**Mental health is health too!** Graduate school in normal times is stressful, and the last 2 years have been exceptionally stressful and challenging for everybody in different ways. If you are not feeling okay, you are not alone in feeling that way. **Please reach out and get help.** Here are some resources that you may find helpful.

- **if you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call 911**
- if you are experiencing a crisis and need to speak to a mental health professional, call UTD TALK: 972-883-8255
- Student Counseling Center
  - <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/>
- if you are concerned about a friend, check out this page from the counseling center on how to help a friend who may be in distress:
  - <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/distress/>

## **Other Resources**

- Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA)
    - if you need academic accommodations for this class for a documented physical, psychiatric, or sensory disability (their words, not mine), get a form from OSA and send it to me
    - link to website:
      - <https://studentaccess.utdallas.edu/>
  - Comet Cupboard
    - need food or personal care items?
    - all students enrolled at UT Dallas are eligible to use the Comet Cupboard, and it's free!
    - see the website for info on hours and policies:
      - <https://oue.utdallas.edu/cupboard>
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## Tentative Course Schedule and Reading List (subject to change)

Class Date	Topic	Readings/Activities
1/17	No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Martin Luther King Day!</b></li> </ul>
1/19	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aizer, Anna and Joseph J. Doyle, Jr. 2015. "Juvenile Incarceration, Human Capital, and Future Crime: Evidence from Randomly Assigned Judges." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i>, 130(2): 759-803.</li> <li>• Hansen, Benjamin. 2015. "Punishment and Deterrence: Evidence from Drunk Driving." <i>American Economic Review</i>, 105(4): 1581-1617.</li> </ul>
1/24	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agan, Amanda Y. and Makowsky, Michael D. 2021. "The Minimum Wage, EITC, and Criminal Recidivism." <i>Journal of Human Resources</i>.</li> <li>• Fishbane, Alissa, Aurelie Ouss, and Anuj K. Shah. 2020. "Behavioral Nudges Reduce Failures to Appear for Court." <i>Science</i> 370.</li> </ul>
1/26	Externalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chay, Kenneth, and Michael Greenstone. 2003. "The Impact of Air Pollution on Infant Mortality: Evidence from Geographic Variation in Pollution Shocks Induced by a Recession." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> 118(3): 1121-1167.</li> </ul>
1/31	Social Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handel, Ben, Jonathan T. Kolstad, and Johannes Spinnewijn. 2019. "Information Frictions and Adverse Selection: Policy Interventions in Health Insurance Markets." <i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i> 101(2): 326-340.</li> </ul>
2/2	Social Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Einav, Liran, and Amy Finkelstein. 2011. "Selection in Insurance Markets: Theory and Empirics in Pictures." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 25(1): 115-138.</li> </ul>
2/7	Medicare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Card, David, Carlos Dobkin, and Nicole Maestas. 2009. "Does Medicare Save Lives?" <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> 124(2): 597-636.</li> </ul>
2/9	Medicare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabral, Marika, Michael Geruso, and Neale Mahoney. 2018. "Do Larger Health Insurance Subsidies Benefit Patients or Producers? Evidence from Medicare Advantage." <i>American Economic Review</i> 108(8): 2048-2087.</li> <li>• <b>Due date for referee report #1</b></li> </ul>
2/14	Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finkelstein, Amy, Nathaniel Hendren, and Erzo F.P. Luttmer. 2019. "The Value of Medicaid: Interpreting Results from the Oregon Health Insurance Experiment." <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> 127(6): 2836-2874.</li> </ul>
2/16		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-class discussion of research proposal ideas</b></li> </ul>
2/21		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-class discussion of research proposal ideas</b></li> </ul>
2/23	Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Krueger, Alan and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. 1992. "The Effects of Social Security on Labor Supply: A Cohort Analysis of the Notch Generation." <i>Journal of Labor Economics</i> 10(4): 412-437.</li> </ul>

2/28	Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gelber, Alex, Damon Jones, Dan Sacks, and Jae Song. Forthcoming. "Using Non-Linear Budget Sets to Estimate Extensive Margin Responses: Method and Evidence from the Social Security Earnings Test." <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i>.</li> </ul>
3/2	Disability Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maestas, Nicole, Kathleen Mullen, and Alexander Strand. 2013. "Does Disability Insurance Receipt Discourage Work? Using Examiner Assignment to Estimate Causal Effects of SSDI Receipt." <i>American Economic Review</i> 103(5): 1797-1829.</li> </ul>
3/7	Disability Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deshpande, Manasi, Tal Gross, and Yalun Su. 2021. "Disability and Distress: The Effect of Disability Programs on Financial Outcomes." <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i> 13(2): 151-178.</li> <li>• <b>Due date for referee report #2</b></li> </ul>
3/9	Unemployment Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leung, Pauline, and Christopher O'Leary. 2020. "Unemployment Insurance and Means-Tested Program Interactions: Evidence from Administrative Data." <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> 12(2): 159-192.</li> <li>• <b>Due date for draft of introduction and lit review on your research proposal</b></li> </ul>
3/14	<b>No Class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spring Break!</b></li> </ul>
3/16	<b>No Class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spring Break!</b></li> </ul>
3/21	Unemployment Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rothstein, Jesse. 2011. "Unemployment Insurance and Job Search in the Great Recession." <i>Brookings Papers on Economic Activity</i>, Fall, 143-214</li> </ul>
3/23	<b>TBD</b>	
3/28	<b>No Class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on your research proposal</li> </ul>
3/30	Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meyer, Bruce D. and James X. Sullivan. 2008. "Changes in the Consumption, Income, and Well-Being of Single Mother Headed Families." <i>American Economic Review</i> 98(5): 2221-2241.</li> <li>• Moffitt, Robert. 1983. "An Economic Model of Welfare Stigma." <i>American Economic Review</i> 73(5): 1023-1035.</li> <li>• <b>Due date for description of your data and empirical models/methods</b></li> </ul>
4/4	EITC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chetty, Raj, Jonathan Friedman, and Emmanuel Saez. 2013. "Using Differences in Knowledge Across Neighborhoods to Uncover the Impacts of the EITC on Earnings." <i>American Economic Review</i> 103(7): 2683-2721.</li> <li>• Hoynes, Hilary, Doug Miller, and David Simon. 2015. "Income, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and Infant Health." <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> 7(1): 172-211.</li> </ul>

4/6	SNAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoynes, Hilary, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Douglas Almond. 2016. "Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net." <i>American Economic Review</i> 106(4): 903-934.</li> <li>• Carr, Jillian and Analisa Packham. 2021. "SNAP Schedules and Domestic Violence." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> 40(2): 412-452.</li> </ul>
4/11	<b>Student Presentations</b>	
4/13	<b>Student Presentations</b>	
4/18	<b>Student Presentations</b>	
4/20	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currie, Janet and Jonathan Gruber. 1996. "Saving Babies: The Efficacy and Cost of Recent Changes in the Medicaid Eligibility of Pregnant Women" <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> 104(6): 1263-1296.</li> </ul>
4/25	Health and Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carpenter, Christopher S., Carlos Dobkin, and Casey Warman. 2016. "The Mechanisms of Alcohol Control." <i>Journal of Human Resources</i> 51(2): 328-356.</li> <li>• Watson, Brett, Mouhcine Guettabi, and Matthew Reimer. 2020. "Universal Cash and Crime." <i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i> 102(4): 678-689.</li> <li>• <b>Due date for referee report #3</b></li> </ul>
4/27	Local Public Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiebout, Charles M. 1956. "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures." <i>The Journal of Political Economy</i> 64(5): 416-424</li> <li>• Black, Sandra E. 1999. "Do Better Schools Matter? Parental Valuation of Elementary Education." <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> 114(2): 577-599.</li> </ul>
5/2	Fiscal Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oates, Wallace E. 1999. "An Essay on Fiscal Federalism." <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i> 37(3): 1120-1149.</li> <li>• Besley, Timothy, and Stephen Coate. 2003. "Centralized versus Decentralized Provision of Local Public Goods: A Political Economy Approach." <i>Journal of Public Economics</i> 87(12): 2611-2637.</li> </ul>
5/4	<b>No class</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Work on your research proposals</b></li> </ul>
5/9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Due date for research proposals (11:59 p.m.)</b></li> </ul>

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*The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*