

San José State University
Department of Economics
ECON 232 - 01, Seminar in Public Finance, Fall 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Patralekha (Pat) Ukil
Office Location:	DMH 131
Email:	patralekha.ukil@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays 3 - 4pm or by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TR 4:30 – 5:45 PM
Classroom:	Dudley Moorhead Hall 166
Prerequisites:	Instructor consent.

Course Description

From the SJSU course catalog: The public sector. Determination of objectives of the public sector; pricing and output in the public sector; taxes, their distribution and allocative effects; public expenditure theory; public debt theory and policy.

This course is a graduate-level course on the economics of the public sector. The focus of this course is on understanding the microeconomic reasons behind public sector involvement in a market economy. We will use microeconomic principles to understand the *reasons for* government involvement and intervention and will also focus on gaining a quantitative and analytical understanding of such topics. We will cover a wide range of theoretical issues relating to public economics with a specific focus on practical issues relating to public goods, education, social insurance, healthcare, redistribution and taxation. This course will also link public finance issues to recent empirical research that use quantitative (quasi-experimental) methods and insights from behavioral economics.

Course Format

This course will follow an **in-person** format where there will be regular in-person classes held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the scheduled class time. This course will also utilize the [Canvas Learning Management System](https://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. All students will require a reliable internet connection and an electronic device for access to Canvas LMS. You can borrow laptops and other equipment from the MLK library. Please visit the library or this website: <https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services>.

Classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in DMH 166 at 4:30 – 5:45 PM. Lecture materials relevant to the course will also be posted on Canvas and you will also receive weekly notifications from me. ***Please make sure that you check your Canvas notifications regularly.***

Course Web Page and Canvas Messaging

All relevant course materials such as the course syllabus, lecture materials, readings, notes, assignments and instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System](http://sjsu.instructure.com) course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas to learn of any course updates.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Understand and apply microeconomic principles to the involvement of the government in a market economy.*
2. *Understand and analytically explain the quantitative methods used in the recent empirical research used in the literature.*
3. *Review and understand the different concepts of public economics and apply those to situations involving social insurance, education, health insurance, redistribution, taxation, etc.*
4. *Read and review recent research on different fields in public economics and develop a research paper on a topic related to public economics (or a very closely related field)*

Required Texts/Readings

Journal articles, lecture videos, and all reading materials posted on Canvas are the required learning material for this course. **There is no requirement to purchase a textbook for this course.**

Recommended reading: *Public Finance and Public Policy, 5th edition, Jonathan Gruber, Macmillan.*

Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practical. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

The course assessment will be based on the following:

1. **Homework assignments**
 2. **Research Paper Proposal (due on Thursday October 26th, 2023)**
 3. **Research Paper (due on Tuesday December 5th, 2023)**
 4. **One final examination** (as per the SJSU Final Exams schedule)
 5. **Participation** in any questions, surveys, and any discussion posts on Canvas
- **Homework assignments** will be assigned on Canvas on a regular basis throughout the semester, and the questions will be based on the lecture/reading materials. These are built to test your understanding of the material covered and to help you apply the theoretical foundations of public economics. They will also help you to prepare for the final exam.

- The proposal of your research paper is due by **Thursday October 26th 2023**. More details related to this research paper and requirements will be announced in class / Canvas. To help you stay on track with this assignment, the topic of research that you will focus on in your paper needs to be conveyed to me by **Thursday October 12th 2023**.
- Your **final research paper** is due on **Tuesday December 5th 2023**.
- Your **final examination** will consist of questions that are similar to the questions asked in the homework assignments, and will be assigned during the Final Examinations week as per the SJSU Fall 2023 schedule.
- **Participation grades** will be based on your engagement in any class/online discussions, surveys, or questions posted on Canvas.

Grading Information

Course grades will be as follows:

Homework Exercises:	30%
Research Proposal:	15%
Final Research Paper:	25%
Final Examination:	25%
Participation:	5%

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	<i>97 to 100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>94 to 96%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 to 93%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D minus</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

Office hours/emails information

I will hold weekly office hours. If you wish to set up a meeting with me outside of office hours, please send me an email. **I also welcome you to submit any questions or doubts via email if you prefer.** I generally respond to emails/messages within 24-36 hours.

Strategies for Success in this course:

1. I will set up the lecture materials to be as comprehensible as possible, **but if you can't understand something, please ask me in class or email me at the earliest.**

2. The homework exercises are a great way to understand and apply the concepts and theories that we will learn in this course. If you have difficulty understanding any of the concepts/questions, **please reach out to me before submitting any assignments.**
3. The final paper deliverable has two related milestones to help you stay on track with the submission. Please make a note of these milestones and their corresponding deadlines
4. I take academic honesty seriously and this is particularly important to keep in mind for the paper proposal, the final research paper and the final exam. Please do not use ChatGPT to create your submissions.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

I will follow the [SJSU policy regarding academic integrity](#) and honesty, and will take it very seriously. Please read and understand what constitutes a violation in this respect and all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported.

Please come and talk to me as soon as you can if you are in need of any course changes, adaptations or any accommodations due to a disability. According to the [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center \(AEC\)](#) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following university policies:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)
- [University Attendance and Participation Policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)
- [University Grading System Policy F18-5](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf>)

You may also find the following information useful:

- [SJSU Cares](#)
- [The SJSU Food Pantry Program](#)
- [SJSU Counseling](#)
- [SJSU Learn Anywhere](#)

ECON 232-01 Fall 2023 Course Schedule

This is the **tentative schedule** for the course, and is subject to change.

If any changes have to be made to the syllabus, those changes will be communicated to all students in Canvas. A timely notice and consideration will be provided to all students if any changes need to be made.

Course Schedule

Week #	Dates relevant	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Important
1	8/22; 8/24	Introduction to the course on Canvas	
		Introduction to Public Economics (The Four Questions of Public Finance)	
2	8/29; 8/31	Markets, Competition and the Government	
3	9/5; 9/7	Externalities – Part 1	
4	9/12; 9/14	Externalities – Part 2	
5	9/19; 9/21	Economics of Addictive Behavior (Health Externalities)	
6	9/26; 9/28	Health Externalities contd.	
7	10/3; 10/5	Theory of Public Goods	
8	10/10; 10/12	Public Goods - Education in the U.S.	Due: Chosen topic for research paper
9	10/17; 10/19	Social Insurance	
10	10/24; 10/26	Social Insurance contd.	Due: proposal of your research paper

Week #	Dates relevant	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Important
11	10/31; 11/2	Health Insurance Theory and Concepts	
12	11/7; 11/9	Healthcare and Health Insurance	
13	11/14; 11/16	Spatial Public Finance and Policy	
14	11/21	Spatial Public Finance and Policy (contd.)	
15	11/28; 11/30	Topics in Taxation	
16	12/5	Impacts of Taxation	Due: Final research paper

SJSU Land Acknowledgement:

San José State University and Surrounding Region Thámien Ancestral Muwekma Ohlone Territory. The San José State University community recognizes that the present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, with an enrolled Bureau of Indian Affairs documented membership of over 550, is comprised of all of the known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who trace their ancestry through the Missions Santa Clara, San José, and Dolores, during the advent of the Hispano- European empire into Alta California; and who are the successors and living members of the sovereign, historic, previously Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County.

Furthermore, the San José State University community recognizes that the university is established within the Thámien Ohlone-speaking tribal ethnohistoric territory, which based upon the unratified federal treaties of 1851-1852, includes the unceded ancestral lands of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the enrolled Muwekma lineages are descended from direct ancestors from the Thámien Ohlone tribal territory whose ancestors had affiliation with Mission Santa Clara.

The San José State University community also recognizes the importance of this land to the indigenous Muwekma Ohlone people of this region, and consistent with our principles of community and diversity strives to be good stewards on behalf of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe whose land we occupy.