

School of Economics and Finance

Econ 341 PUBLIC CHOICE AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Trimester 1, 2015

COURSE OUTLINE

Names and Contact Details

Paul Menchik RH204 paul.menchik@vuw.ac.nz (lecturer)
Vladimir Petkov RH315 vladimir.petkov@vuw.ac.nz (course coordinator)

Alice Fong RH318 alice.fong@vuw.ac.nz (course administrator)

Trimester Dates

Teaching Period: Monday 2nd March – Friday 5th June

Study Period: Monday 8th June – Thursday 11th June

Examination Period: Friday 12th June – Wednesday 1st July (inclusive)

Withdrawal from Course

1. Your fees will be refunded if you withdraw from this course on or before Friday 13th March 2015.
2. The standard last date for withdrawal from this course is Friday 15th May. After this date, students forced to withdraw by circumstances beyond their control must apply for permission on an 'Application for Associate Dean's Permission to Withdraw Late' including supporting documentation. The application form is available from either of the Faculty's Student Customer Service Desks or [online](#).

Class Times and Room Numbers

Lectures: Wednesday, Friday 15:40 – 16:30 in GBLT3

Tutorials: There will be eight tutorial exercises. The weeks without tutorials will be announced later.

Course Delivery

There will be 24 lectures (2 lectures weekly) and 8 tutorials.

Expected Workload

A total of 150 hours of work is expected from students in this course. That consists of 24 hours of lectures, eight hours of tutorials, eight hours per week outside classes during teaching weeks spent reading, studying and writing assignments, and a further 20 hours revising during the mid-trimester break and study week.

Prescription

An introduction to the field of political economy. Topics include the behaviour of voters, candidates, legislatures, interest groups, political parties, and the media; distortion of political decisions; the optimal design and evolution of political institutions.

Course Learning Objectives

- 1 Articulate and interpret the basic assumptions and principles of political economy, and explain the purpose and development of political institutions
- 2 Use game-theoretic techniques to study politico-economic models
- 3 Analyse economic and other models of voting in multi-candidate elections and voting with incomplete information; explain the factors for voter turnout
- 4 Describe the main results of theories of legislatures
- 5 Apply economic models of non-cooperative bargaining to legislative decision making
- 6 Articulate economic explanations of the role of parties in the political system, and analyse economic models of static and dynamic political distortions
- 7 Identify the advantages and disadvantages of alternative electoral systems
- 8 Describe the issues of economic policy assignment between local and central governments.

Course Content

See the lecture programme (to be supplied).

Readings

Although it is not required that they do so, students can benefit from reading selected parts from certain texts, e.g. *Intermediate Public Economics* by Jean Hendriks and Gareth D. Myles (second edition) 2013, Cambridge University Press (H&M), *Public Choice III*, by Dennis C. Mueller, 2003, Cambridge University Press (M), and *Public Finance and Public Policy* by Jonathan Gruber, 2013, Worth Publishers (G).

An excellent (but lengthy) overview piece students might want to look it is *Markets, Governments and the "New" Political Economy*, by Robert Inman, chapter 12, in *Handbook in Public Economics*, vol. 2, edited by Alan J. Auerbach and Martin Feldstein, 1987 Elsevier Press.

Assessment

The Assessment Handbook will apply to all VUW courses: see

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf>.

Mid-trimester test	40%	24 April, 3.40pm-4.30pm (during your lecture)
Assignment 1	10%	date tba
Assignment 2	10%	date tba
2 hour final exam	40%	date tba

Penalties

Late assignments will accrue a penalty of 5% per day for the first three days. After that they will not be marked. Students who copy assignments or allow their assignments to be copied will incur a penalty of 50% of their assignment grade.

Examinations

Students who enrol in courses with examinations are obliged to attend an examination at the University at any time during the formal examination period. The final examination for this course will be scheduled at some time during the following period:

Friday 12th June – Wednesday 1st July (inclusive)

Mandatory Course Requirements

None

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details made available to VUWSA, the course coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the course coordinator on behalf of students.

Communication of Additional Information

Additional announcements will be posted on Blackboard.

Student feedback

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php

Link to general information

For general information about course-related matters, go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/studenthelp/general-course-information>

Note to Students

Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and academic audit. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of VBS programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.
