

University of Colorado at Boulder
Department of Economics

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Economics 4231
Syllabus and Schedule
11 January 2023

Welcome! I am Prof Jeffrey S. Zax. This is Economics 4231, a course for examination

economic activity. It then provides a description of the structure and procedures of the Colorado General Assembly (the official name of the Colorado State legislature). It continues with detailed discussions of the basic principles of public finance, the economic justifications for government action and the context of specific Assembly bills.

Throughout the semester, students individually choose current Assembly bills, review relevant economic literature and apply the implications of that literature and our economic principles through briefing papers, in-class presentations and testimony at Assembly hearings. In addition, we conduct a cooperative project in which we rate the economic content of the bills considered during the first half of the Assembly session, with the intention of distributing these ratings to the Assembly and the public.

This course explores the challenges of integrating informed economic analysis into the legislative process. It allows students who are interested in issues of public policy to learn both

policy subsequent to graduation, either through their employment or as citizens. This course is also of benefit to the State of Colorado, because it improves the quality and consistency of economic analysis available to the General Assembly.

Course structure:

This course will meet on Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. throughout the semester in Economics 119. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, assignments, discussions of Assembly procedures and individual presentations. You should expect to attend every class. I will drop any student who does not attend the first class, on 19 January, even if the student did not enroll in the course prior to that class.

I will hold regular office hours between 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and 12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays in my office, Economics 114 and via Zoom (<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/jeffreyzax>). Appointments may be made for meetings at other times, if these are inconvenient.

Course information will be posted regularly on Canvas. Notifications will be posted there as well, and sent to a campus email. It is your responsibility to monitor both.

Course prerequisites:

This course requires previous completion of Economics 3070, Intermediate Microeconomic Theory or its equivalents. These prerequisites will ordinarily be enforced. If you have questions in this regard, contact me at the email address above.

This course requires excellent auditory comprehension in the English language. Much of the important course material is presented orally in lectures. The ability to follow the discussion and participate in it is essential for successful course completion.

This course requires excellent reading comprehension in the English language. The remaining course material is presented in Assembly by textbook chapters and journal articles. The ability to understand their content and extract what's most important is essential.

Finally, the ability to write effectively in the English language is essential. Elements of the course that are based on essays constitute four-fifths of the final grade. One-tenth of the final grade is comprised of a final examination whose questions require original answers of approximately one to six sentences in length will provide substantial guidance with regard to writing skills throughout the semester.

Course requirements:

Performance in this course will be judged on the basis of four bill projects and two credit graded assignments. Each student will choose four bills before the Colorado General Assembly during the course of the semester. Any bill can be chosen by only one student. Assignments related to these bills will constitute 80 points, or 80% of the course.

The project for each of these bills will be worth 15 points, or 15% of the course. Each project will consist of three assignments.

The first assignment will be a briefing paper. Once a bill is chosen, the student has one week in which to submit a first draft of this paper. If a first draft is not submitted within one week, the bill becomes available for other students to choose.

The paper must consist of no more than five pages, with additional pages only for reference lists. The paper will summarize the relevant literature and present original economic analysis in language and, if useful, figures that would convey the essence of the material to a general audience.

You are welcome to consult with other resources and individuals for the purpose of formulating your arguments. In addition, the Writing Center in the Office of Undergraduate Education (<https://www.colorado.edu/program/writingcenter/>) may be able to assist with composition, prior to submission for my edits. However, each draft must be substantially your own work, in substance.

the Adobe pdf format. Only pdf files will be accepted. Speak with me in advance if you anticipate difficulty with this requirement.

The second and third assignments of the project for each bill can be undertaken only if the final draft of the paper attains a grade of at least 6 points out of 8. If the final draft does not attain this standard, the grades for the second and third assignments will both be zero.

The second assignment of each bill project will consist of confirmed distribution of the briefing paper to appropriate members of the General Assembly. I must approve each paper for distribution. Distribution should occur via email, with myself as one of the recipients. Papers must be distributed after the receipt of approval, and within five

The final graded assignment is the final examination. It will examine the material in the formal lectures and readings, as well as the experience of interacting in the Assembly. It will be worth 10 points, or 10% of the final grade.

The final examination is scheduled to take place on Monday, 8 May from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Any student who has three or more final examinations scheduled on 1 May has the right to reschedule all exams following the first two. Any student wishing to invoke this right must do so by 24 March.

If we are not able to meet in person at this time, the final examination will take place in Canvas. In this case, it will be monitored by Proctorio. I will provide further details if they are needed.

The course as a whole is valued at 100 points. The score attained by each student is evaluated relative to those of other students and to the score which would be attained by an intelligent student of economics at this level, will determine final letter grades.

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10 April	Assignment: Third paper due
13 April	Taxation Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 14-16 Assignment • Third paper due today
20 April	Government structure and legislatures Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
27 April	Government structure and legislatures Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
1 May	Assignment: Fourth paper due
4 May	To be announced Readings: • To be announced Assignment • Fourth paper due today
8 May	Final examination, 1:30p.m.-4:00p.m.

Additional policy statements

- The University adheres to the standards for student privacy rights and requirements as stipulated in the Federal Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.
- I am available to discuss any issues of individual or group treatment in office hours or by appointment.
- The following pages present the University's required "Syllabus Statements", which apply to this course in their entirety.

² A description is available at <http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/resources/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>
