

# Public Economics (ECON30190)

**Lecturer**

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## Course Description and Learning Outcomes

**Description** Public economics studies the role of government in the economy. The aim is to provide an understanding why governments intervene in an economy (for example through taxation and spending), how people and firms react to these interventions and the implications of interventions for the distribution of incomes as well as overall welfare.

**Learning outcomes** By the end of this course, students will have learned to

- articulate and evaluate theories about the role of government in the economy,
- assess potential consequences of government interventions with respect to equity and efficiency,
- apply the knowledge to analyse public policies in Ireland and elsewhere.

**Prior knowledge** I assume students have knowledge of microeconomics equivalent to at least Micro 1 (Econ 20010), preferably Micro 2 (Econ 30110), as well as mathematics knowledge equivalent to at least Econ 10030 (preferably Econ 20030).

## Logistics

**Lectures** Lectures take place on Mondays (1-2pm, Theatre Q) and Wednesdays (1-2pm, Theatre M) from 1-2pm. There will be no lectures between March 5-22 (study period) and on April 13 (Easter Monday).

**How to email** I ignore emails that are not addressed to me. I have no preference whether students use my first name or last name, my title or no title when they address me. But my first or last name should be somewhere in the first line so I know that the email is for me.

**Office Hours** During term time, my office hours are Wednesday 2-3pm in G208 ART. Office hours are by prior appointment only. Students who want to attend my office hours need to email me by Tuesday evening.

**Questions about the material/logistical questions** Email is my least preferred communication channel. Instead, please ask questions:

- after the lecture ,
- on Brightspace under “Discussions”
- during office hours.

**No Laptop Policy** I have a no laptop policy. Laptops can be disruptive in class, and there is research showing that students retain less information from notes they took on their laptop compared to notes taken by hand. Notetakers are exempt from the policy. If you require an exemption for other reasons, please let me know.

**Mentimeter quizzes** I will run *mentimeter* quizzes about every other lecture. The quizzes are anonymous and will not be graded. To participate, please download the mentimeter app on your smartphone or tablet or, alternatively, visit the *mentimeter* website.

## Reading Materials

Much of the course material will be based on **Public Finance and Public Policy** by Jonathan Gruber, published by Macmillan. The textbook is currently in its 5th edition. It is available in the Campus Bookshop. Earlier versions may differ in the empirical material, but should work just as well.

The textbook, the internet and newspapers (!) are complements, not substitutes. In times when almost infinite amounts of information are available on the internet, investing in a good textbook is more important than ever. Nowhere else will you see all the information presented in an intuitive, coherent and concise manner. This does not mean that you cannot look for information on the internet. The same goes for newspapers, which provide you with the link between the theoretical material covered in the course and the real world.

## Assessment and Grading

Your grade will be the result of continuous assessment (30%) and a final exam (70%).

**Final exam** The final exam will last two hours. The standard UCD grade scale (standard numeric scale; see table below) applies.

**Continuous Assessment** Continuous assessment will be based on online tests. After a practice run in week 1, we will have 6 online tests.

- Tests are in an MCQ format.
- They are provided on Brightspace.
- I will announce at what date and time a test goes online. You have three days to complete the test. The deadline will be on the third day at 11:30pm Irish Standard Time. At this time, Brightspace will automatically shut down the test.
- Within the three days you can repeat the test as often as you want. The last test before the deadline counts.
- For your continuous assessment grade I will count the best 5 out of 6 tests. This means that you can miss one test without this impacting your grade.

TABLE 1 – GRADE SCALES

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>Online tests</b>
<i>Weight</i>	70%	30% in total
<i>Scale</i>	<i>Standard Numeric Scale</i>	<i>Alternative Numeric Scale</i>
A+	90.00-100	95.00-100
A	80.00-89.99	90.00-94.99
A-	70.00-79.99	85.00-89.99
B+	66.67-69.99	80.00-84.99
B	63.33-66.66	75.00-79.99
B-	60.00-63.32	70.00-74.99
C+	56.67-59.99	65.00-69.99
C	53.33-56.66	60.00-64.99
C-	50.00-53.32	55.00-59.99
D+	46.67-49.99	50.00-54.99
D	43.33-46.66	45.00-49.99
D-	40.00-43.32	40.00-44.99
E+	36.67-39.99	35.00-39.99
E	33.33-36.66	30.00-34.99
E-	30.00-33.32	25.00-29.99
F (or FM)	20.00-29.99	20.00-24.99
G	0.01-19.99	0.01-19.99
NG	0	0

## Tentative Schedule

You can find a tentative schedule in the table below. We may deviate from this schedule in case we need more time for certain topics.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Week(s)</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	
1) Introduction/Logistics	20	Jan 20	Ch. 1	
2) Tools of Public Economics/ Welfare Economics	20 21	Jan 22 Jan 27, 29		Trial online test Test nr 1
3) Public Goods	22 23	Feb 3, 5 Feb 10	Ch. 7	Test nr 2
4) Externalities	23 24 25	Feb 12 Feb 17, 19 Feb 24	Ch. 5, 6	Test nr 3
5) Income Distribution and Welfare Programs	25 26	Feb 26 Mar 2, 4	Ch. 17	
Study period	27, 28			
5) Income Distribution and Welfare (cont'd)	29	Mar 23		Test nr 4
6) Taxation	29	Mar 25	Ch. 18-24 (fragments)	
Guest lecture Dr. Karina Doorley (ESRI)	March 30			
6) Taxation (cont'd)	30 31	1 Apr 6 Apr		Test nr 5
7) Social Choice and Voting	31	8 Apr	Ch. 9	
<i>Easter Monday (no lecture)</i>	April 13			
7) Social Choice and Voting (cont'd)	32	15 Apr		Test nr 6
Buffer & review sessions	33	Apr 20,22		