

**ECON 337: Public Finance**  
**MW 3:30 PM - 4:45 PM (ST 110)**

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Instructor: Dr. Shantanu Bagchi  
Office: ST 101-A  
Email: sbagchi@towson.edu  
Textbook: Gruber, Jonathan, *Public Finance and Public Policy*,  
Worth Publishers, 4<sup>th</sup> edition.  
Office hours: MW 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM and by appointment.

**This syllabus is our contract, so please read it carefully.**

• **Course Objectives:**

Public Finance is the field of economics that is devoted to the study of how government policies, especially tax and expenditure policies, affect the economy and the welfare of its citizens. In this course, we will learn how to use basic economic analysis to understand the effect of various policies, such as health-care financing, Social Security, unemployment insurance, and taxation and redistribution on the U.S. economy. At the end of this course, you should be able to analyze books, articles, blogs, news publications, and government press releases and their conclusions using the concepts that you have learned in this course.

• **Textbook:**

There is one textbook for this course: *Public Finance and Public Policy*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by Jonathan Gruber. We will primarily follow the sequence of topics as laid out in the textbook, but I will skip some and add more material on some topics because of their relevance. In addition to the textbook, I will assign you reading from news websites, blogs, and academic articles, which we will analyze using the concepts that we learn in this course.

• **Blackboard:** It will be your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly for any class updates. Two major functions will be handled through Blackboard:

- Announcements will be posted on Blackboard.
- Course documents, e.g. Slides, assignments, and solution sets will be available for download on Blackboard.

As you will notice throughout this course, I will break down material from every chapter into slides. These slides will only be a summary of the material, and they will simply serve as pointers to the concepts and examples that I want you to learn. These slides are **NOT** a substitute for the textbook, and you will **NOT** pass this class if you do not read the textbook and the other assigned reading material.

• **Cell Phone Policy:** No cell phones are allowed in class. If a cell phone rings or vibrates in class, or if I see you using it, I will make a note of it and take 20% off of your next graded work. There are no exceptions. If you need to have your cell phone in the “on” position because of an out-of-the-ordinary situation, then you will need to let me know in advance.

• **General Classroom Policies:**

The following rules will be enforced in the classroom:

1. No entry after 5 min. into class time. **NOTE:** Any violation of this policy will lead to the student being marked absent for that day.

2. No cell phone calculators during tests; only regular calculators allowed.

- **Assignments and Exams:**

There will be three (3) exams in this course, each worth 100 points. In addition, I will also give out a homework assignment at the end of every chapter. Based on your progress, I may make some extra credit opportunities available to you near the end of the semester. There are also participation credits for this course: participation will count for 15% of the overall points, and will be awarded to only those students with **3 (three) or less** absences.

**NOTE:** late homework assignments will receive **zero** credits with absolutely no exceptions.

- **Exam dates:**

The exams will be held in class on the following dates:

Exam	Date
Mid-term 1	October 7, 2015
Mid-term 2	November 18, 2015
Final Exam	December 15, 2015, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

- **Grading Policy:**

Item	Weight
Exams (3)	60% (20% each)
Homework assignments	25%
Participation	15%

- **Grade Scale:**

Percentage score	Grade
100-93	A
92-90	A-
89-87	B+
86-83	B
82-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-70	C
69-60	D
59 or less	F

- **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning as well as to evaluating academic performance. While I encourage cooperation and study groups, you must abide by Towson University's Student Academic Integrity Policy.

- **Students with Disabilities:**

In accordance with university policy, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations in this course, you will need to contact me at the beginning of the semester, and also before any assignment for which you will require an accommodation. Students with disabilities must verify their eligibility through the Student Disability Support Service (DSS) office, located in the Administrative Building.