

Economics for Public Policy & Administration SPP 605, Fall 2019

Contact Information & Office Hours

Lenore Palladino, Assistant Professor of Economics & Public Policy
218 Gordon Hall
lpalladino@umass.edu

Office Hours: Th 1-2:15p in SPP Faculty Office (Thompson 2nd fl); by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Kerry Shea, kshea@umass.edu

Kerry is a second-year student. Kerry will be available for a scheduled review session and will hold office hours to discuss course materials and assignments.

Kerry Office hours: Tu/Th 5:30-6:30, in the SPP Lounge

Course Syllabus: [Google Sheet](#)

The main text for the course is *Microeconomics for Public Decisions*, by Anne Steinemann (2018). There are many supplementary required readings listed on the syllabus.

Goals and Content

This course will introduce students to microeconomic theory for public policy, and will prepare students for applied public policy courses. The economic content of the course is equivalent to “intermediate microeconomics,” but the course focuses on how to apply economic reasoning to questions that occur frequently when considering the public good. The goals of the course are (1) to have students understand microeconomic tools and (2) to prepare you to apply economic tools to public policy questions, both in future SPP courses and in real-world applications.

Specific economic concepts for policy analysis that we will study include:

- Understanding and critiquing measures of economic costs and benefits
- Elasticities in the policy context
- Analyzing uncertainty with expected values
- Understanding how to conduct cost-benefit analysis
- Analyzing distributional impacts of policy decisions

Assignments and Evaluation

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| Weekly assignments | 35% |
| Problem Sets (2) | 10% each (20% total) |
| Policy Memo | 20% |
| Final exam | 20% |

- We will have weekly assignments drawn from the book and additional readings. Assignments will be due on Moodle by Sunday evenings at the end of that week. Late assignments without a valid excuse will not be accepted. I encourage you to work with classmates and the TA on the assignments; all final work must be your own. I will drop one Weekly Assignment grade.
- We will have three “Problem Sets,” covering different course topics. Memos should conform to academic writing standards. More information about the topics will be given well in advance of the due date.
- Class participation is required, and I reserve the right to adjust your grade based on participation.

Academic Honesty

The University’s policy on academic honesty will be rigorously enforced. Acts of cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade. In accordance with SPP policy, the syllabus reprints the SPP plagiarism policy:

Representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own work in any academic exercise is plagiarism, one of the most serious forms of academic dishonesty. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, the research of another. Students are responsible for complying with the University of Massachusetts plagiarism policy. The University of Massachusetts policy and other information on plagiarism are included in the SPP student handbook. Cases of plagiarism may be referred to official University of Massachusetts channels.

Code of Conduct in Class

Students are expected to collaboratively engage in serious and honest inquiry. Any conduct unbecoming of participants including cheating, harassing of fellow students, or engaging in abusive behavior will be dealt with according to the fullest extent of University policy. Students are also expected to be present and give full attention to classroom discussions and activities. **Students are not allowed to use their cellphones or laptops during class, except for specific in-class activities. If you require an exception, you need to discuss and get permission from the instructor.**

For an explanation of why laptops are not allowed during lecture, read this short evidence-based piece by Prof. Susan Dynarski: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html>

Accommodation Policy

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course.

If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.