Course Description

In this course, we examine the economic roles of government and the tools that governments use to fulfill these roles. We will start with the questions: Under what circumstances is it possible for governments to improve on the outcomes that would occur in their absence? And how do we decide whether one outcome is better than another? The course will continue with an examination of the performance of governments in the United States. The primary questions addressed will be: What policies do governments pursue? How do they spend money to achieve the goals of these policies? How do they raise the money that they spend? And what sorts of undesired “side-effects” might result from taxation and expenditure policies?

Instructor Information

Instructor: Prof. Damien Sheehan-Connor
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Phone: x2531
Office Hours: M 1-2:30pm, W 10:30am-12pm

Readings and Lectures

The required textbook for the course is:


Earlier editions of the same textbook are likely to be adequate, though you will need to check the references I make to pages, figures, problems, etc.

The lectures and readings are intended to be complementary to, not substitutes for, one another. In general, the lectures will cover the same topics as the readings, but will emphasize conceptual understanding and real world examples. The readings will be more comprehensive than the lectures and are important so as not to lose sight of the “big picture” into which the lectures fit. Full understanding of the course material will require both reading the textbook and attending the lectures. Test questions will be drawn from both sources.
**Course Moodle Page**
Course information and documents will be available on the course Moodle page. Announcements will be posted on the page and those that are time-sensitive will also be sent by e-mail.

**Problem Sets**
To help you prepare for the exams (see below), problem sets will be posted on the Moodle each week, but they do not need to be passed in. An answer key for each problem set will be posted the following week and you should plan to use it to “grade” your own problem sets. Because the exams will contain questions similar to (in form and difficulty, but not identical in content) those on the problem sets, it is highly recommended that you come to my office hours with any questions about these problems.

**Class Attendance and Participation**
Attendance of lectures is required and participation in discussions is strongly encouraged. Anything covered in lecture may be included on the examinations. Class attendance and participation will constitute **10% of the final course grade**.

**Examinations**
There will be three midterm course examinations and a comprehensive final examination on the dates listed below. The exams will include questions that require some combination of prose, diagrams, and simple math to answer and will draw on material from **both** the textbook and the lectures. The midterm exams are **not cumulative**, covering only the material covered subsequent to the preceding exam. The final exam is **cumulative**, covering all course material.

Please also see the notes in the “Academic Integrity” section, below, regarding my expectations during exams.

Your lowest midterm score will be dropped in computing your final grade. The remaining two midterm exams will count for **60% of the final course grade**. The final exam will count for **30% of the final course grade**.
Grading
To summarize the above material, the final grade will be determined using the following weights:

- Attendance / Participation: 10%
- Midterm Exams: 60%
- Final Exam: 30%

Key Dates
- Midterm 1: Thursday September 29
- Midterm 2: Tuesday November 1
- Midterm 3: Thursday December 1
- Final Exam: Wednesday December 14, 9am-12pm, PAC 107 (regular classroom)

Academic Integrity
Wesleyan University has an honor code, the full text of which is in the Student Handbook. An overview is provided at:

[http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/facguide/honor.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/facguide/honor.html)

Exams are closed book. Calculators are allowed. No books, notes, cell phones, computers, or electronics other than stand-alone calculators are allowed during exams. Students will be asked to sign the honor code pledge on each exam.

Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Wesleyan University Honor Board.

Disability Resources
Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860/685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.