

Syllabus | Lectures | Resources

[Course Meetings](#) | [Instructors](#) | [Description and Objectives](#) | [Prerequisites](#) | [Course Material](#) | [Weekly Plan](#) | [Evaluation](#) | [Advice](#) | [Copyright](#) | [Accommodations](#) | [Course Policies](#) | [GWU Policies](#)

Course Meetings

Tuesdays

» Section 10: 3:30 to 5:20, Monroe 351

While this class shares the same number as PPPA 6007, Section 11, different instructors teach these courses and cover different material. Material presented in Section 11 is not a substitute for what you learn in Section 10.

Instructors

Professor: Leah Brooks

Media and Public Affairs Building, Room 601F.

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30 am to 12:30 pm and Mondays 8:00 to 9:30 pm. By zoom unless we arrange otherwise.

Use the scheduler to book these times. A zoom link is included in the confirmation email. The scheduler requires you to book at least four hours in advance.

lfbrooks at gwu.edu -- but use Blackboard email

Contact policy: I strive to answer emails within 24 hours during weekdays, or within 24 hours on the soonest weekday if you email on the weekend. If you do not hear from me within this time frame, you should assume that your email has been lost and you should re-send.

If you have missed a class, your first line of defense to ask what you have missed is another student or to discussion board.

Graduate Assistant: Huang Chen

huangchen at gwu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 3 to 5 pm. Book appointments here. Zoom link included with confirmation email.

Contact policy: Huang responds to emails within 48 hours.

Course Description and Objectives

Description

Policy decisions are usually motivated by economic conditions, mediated by economic conditions, or yield economic consequences. To be a policy-maker or offer coherent policy advice, you must understand the likely economic motivations for and economic consequences of policy actions. This course is the first step toward analyzing the economic factors that motivate decisions, and gives you a framework to anticipate likely consequences of policy choices.

Objectives

As a result of completing this course you should be able to

- » Appreciate the role of economics in policy
- » Explain how the market arrives at a price
- » Use the graphic logic of supply and demand to trace out consequences of policy choices
- » Predict how a new tax will impact the equilibrium price and the distributional consequences for market participants
- » Explain why public goods are different than private goods and what this means for their provision
- » Critically evaluate economic arguments in media and policy sources
- » Understand micro economic theory at an intermediate level

Prerequisites

None. If you have already taken microeconomics elsewhere, I suggest that you skip this class and enroll directly in Microeconomics for Policy II (PPPA 6014). If you have never taken economics and are a MPP student, this course is required. If you are unsure whether this course is for you, please consult the FAQs about which econ course to take. If you remain unsure after carefully reading this FAQ please email me.

This course requires a basic knowledge of linear algebra. Specifically, you need to know how to graph linear equations of the form $y = mx + b$, and how to solve two linear equations for two unknowns (this means find y and x in terms of a , b , c , and d , given $y = ax + c$ and $y = d - bx$). If you have not mastered these skills before the beginning of class, it will substantially hinder your ability to understand the economics. I want to be sure that you spend the class thinking about how math helps you tell an economic story, and not trying to understand how to manipulate algebra.

If you are concerned about your algebra abilities, or if you would like a refresher, use the link you received in your welcome email from the school.

Course Material

1. Required textbook: Goolsbee, Levitt and Syverson, *Microeconomics*, Third Edition
 2. Required reading packet: Selected chapters from Gruber, *Public Finance and Public Policy*, Second Edition (Chapter 7, pages 184-189; Chapter 19, pages 557-586) and from Rosen and Gayer, *Public Finance*, Tenth Edition (Chapter 4, pages 54-64).
- (1) should be available at the bookstore and elsewhere online. (2) is on order; you don't need these materials until early October.

You are welcome to use earlier editions of the Goolsbee et al textbook, but it is your responsibility to figure out which sections in the first and second editions correspond to those in the third. Similarly, you are welcome to find alternative sources for the material in the reading packet. Whether or not you purchase the reading packet, you are responsible for the material it contains.

Weekly Plan

Before Class

- » You do the assigned reading.

During Class

- » Administration overview
- » Ripped from Headlines presentations
- » Interactive lecture

After Class

- » Work on problem sets to review material covered in class
- » Ask questions of classmates, instructor or TA if problem sets pose difficulties

Online

- » I expect that you will attend the majority of classes in person. Research suggests that in-person attendance creates better learning outcomes.
- » If there are one or two weeks when you cannot make it to class, you are welcome to attend via zoom using the link posted on Blackboard. You do not need to tell me in advance. If you miss more than two in-person classes, you should start to be concerned about your ability to pick up the material and your participation grade.
- » By default, mute yourself.

Evaluation

1. Midterm Exam (30%)

- » This is an in-person exam covering all material in the course through this point.
- » The exam is timed, and is held during the course session.

2. Final Exam (35%)

- » This is an in-person exam covering all material in the course through this point, but with an emphasis on the latter half of the class.
- » The exam is timed, and GW does not confirm a date for the final exam until late in the semester.

3. Using Numbers (15%)

- » During the course, we have three assignments that ask you to use data to illustrate the economic principles we learn in class
- » These assignments consist of two parts
 - » Problems based on a dataset I give you and help you work through
 - » Problems based on a dataset I provide or that you find
- » Late assignments receive half credit after an hour grace period and zero after 24 hours.

4. Class Participation (5%)

- » We use at least two methods to assess participation
 - » Attendance in class
 - » Responses to questions on Piazza, as a bonus

5. Ripped from the Headlines (5%)

- » This assignment asks you to find and reflect on articles that relate to the course content
- » During the semester, you will be both a finder and a presenter; both count toward your grade on this assignment

6. Problem Sets (10%)

- » Problem sets are designed to practice the skills we learn in this course and prepare you for the exams
- » We grade weekly problem sets as zero, check minus (B+), check (A-) or check plus (A, very rare)
- » We will drop the three lowest problem set grades.

Advice for Success

- » Complete the assigned reading before class and search the internet for clarification of concepts that you might not initially grasp.
- » Ask questions if something doesn't make sense.
- » After class, re-write the answers to problems that we went over in class. Treat your notes during class as a first draft, not a final one.
- » Do or re-do problems with a group if you find this helpful.
- » Review your work and discuss differences with fellow students or TAs. If you don't understand the answers, speak with the TAs or instructor.
- » Use the TA and instructor office hours.
- » Sign up for the peer educator program at any point to work one-on-one with a peer. If you receive a B or lower on an assignment, consider contacting Gregory Nelson to sign up to work with a peer educator.
- » Do practice problems in preparation for exams. Use the starred problems in the textbook and the previous exam.

Course Material Copyright

Course materials posted on this website, Piazza, or elsewhere are intellectual property belonging to the author. Students are not permitted to buy or sell any course materials without the express permission of the instructor. Such unauthorized behavior constitutes academic misconduct.

Accommodations

We want to provide an environment that helps every student in this course succeed. If you have accommodations of which the instructor should be aware, please inform the instructor

no later than the first week of the course so we can plan together for a successful semester. In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, you'll need to provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services, Student Center 436, 202-994-8250. We accommodate students based on the recommendations of the DSS Office.

Course Policies

» *The Syllabus*

This syllabus is your guide to the course. If any questions arise, please check the syllabus before contacting me or the TA. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and I may revise content and requirements during the semester.

» *Inclusivity*

Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

» *Student Support*

If you need technical support, other student services, help in obtaining a GWorld card, or any other student service, start at online.gwu.edu/student-support

» *Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings* Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

» *Late or Missed Class*

If you are late or absent from class, it is your responsibility to obtain all announcements, assignments, and handouts from this website or from your classmates. As participation is part of your grade, and because attendance in class helps you learn, missing many classes

will be detrimental to your final grade. Missing one class should have no effect. You do not need to notify me in advance if you are going to miss class.

» *Exam Dates*

Please notify me in the first two weeks of class if you are aware of a pre-existing conflict, such as a religious holiday you observe, that will preclude you from taking either exam at the assigned time. To the extent possible, we will work together to reschedule the exam as close to the original date as possible.

» *Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom*

It is your responsibility to ensure that I receive your assignment on time. If you encounter difficulties with an online portal or submission, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor or TA immediately.

» *Collaboration on Assignments*

You are welcome to work in groups; however, you are expected to write up your answers individually. This means that no phrases on your assignment should mimic phrases on any other student's work.

» *Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date*

All work must be submitted by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit. Only extreme circumstances warrant exceptions. Late assignments are marked down for each day that they are late.

» *Incompletes*

You must consult with me to obtain an incomplete no later than the last day of classes in the semester. At that time, we will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit this link for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.

» *Changing Grades After Completion of Course*

No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

GWU Policies

University Policies

» *Academic Integrity Code*

Academic integrity is an essential part of the educational process, and all members of the GW community take these matters very seriously. As the instructor of record for this course, my role is to provide clear expectations and uphold them in all assessments. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and otherwise violate the

Code of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about whether or not particular academic practices or resources are permitted, you should ask me for clarification. If you are reported for an academic integrity violation, you should contact the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) to learn more about your rights and options in the process. Consequences can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the university and may include a transcript notation. For more information, please refer to the SRR website (<https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity>), email rights@gwu.edu, or call 202-994-6757.

» *University policy on observance of religious holidays*

Students must notify faculty during the first week of the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, or as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls within the first three weeks of class, the student must inform faculty in the first week of the semester. For details and policy, see “Religious Holidays” at provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines.

» *Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings*

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

» *Out of Class Learning*

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of- class, learning expected per week: In a 15 week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of- class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a minimum total of 2.5 hours a week.

Academic support

» *Writing Center*

GW’s Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing

process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online at gwu.mywconline.

» *Academic Commons*

Academic Commons provides tutoring and other academic support resources to students in many courses. Students can schedule virtual one-on-one appointments or attend virtual drop-in sessions. Students may schedule an appointment, review the tutoring schedule, access other academic support resources, or obtain assistance at academiccommons.gwu.edu.

» *Coaching*

Coaching, offered through the Office of Student Success, is available in a virtual format. See studentsuccess.gwu.edu/academic-program-support

Support for students outside the classroom

» *Disability Support Services*

202-994-8250

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

» *Counseling and Psychological Services*

202-994-5300

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services.

» *Safety and Security*

- » Monitor GW Alerts and Campus Advisories to Stay Informed before and during an emergency event or situation
- » In an emergency: call GWPD/EMeRG 202-994-6111 or 911
- » For situation-specific actions: refer to GW's Emergency Response Handbook and Emergency Operations Plan
- » In the event of an armed Intruder: Run. Hide. Fight.

Course Schedule

Lecture	Class Materials	Assignments and Deadlines
1 8/29 Intro, Supply and Demand	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none">» GLS, Chapters 1 and 2, skimming 2.5» multiple equilibria in the vanilla market, courtesy of NPR» Supplemental<ul style="list-style-type: none">» More detail on vanilla» Returning to equilibrium: Hall, Jonathan, John J. Horton and Daniel T. Knoepfle, “Ride Sharing Markets Re-Equilibrate”, NBER Working Paper No. 30883, February 2023. [link]	Handouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Problem set 1» Use Numbers 1 of 3» Ripped from Headlines
2 9/5 Elasticity	Read <ul style="list-style-type: none">» GLS, Section 2.5» Alvarez et al, “Price and income elasticities of demand for cigarette consumption...” <i>Public Health</i>, 2020. [link].<ul style="list-style-type: none">» read only introduction, discussion at end» look at Figure 1 and Table 1» skim the rest as useful	Handouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Problem set 2 Due <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Problem set 1

3	Read	Handouts
9/12	» GLS, Chapter 3, but not 3.4 or 3.5	» Problem set 3
Supply and Demand and Policy	» Consumer surplus from Wikipedia: “Net Benefits: How to quantify the gains that the internet has brought to consumers”, <i>The Economist</i> , 2013 [link], and GW [subscriber version] that requires vpn	» Use Numbers 2 of 3
	» Supplemental	Due
	» Planet money podcast on cheese price floor	» Problem set 2
	» Estimates of consumer surplus from Uber: economist and layperson versions	» Use Numbers 1 of 3
4	Read	Handouts
9/19	» GLS, Chapter 4	» Problem set 4
Consumer Behavior		Due
		» Problem set 3
5	Read	Handouts
9/26	» GLS, Chapter 5. Omit income Engel curves from 5.1, and skip Section 5.3.	» Problem set 5
Individual and Market Demand		Due
		» Problem set 4
6	Read	Handouts
10/3	» Gruber, Chapter 19, pages 557-586	» Problem set 6
Tax Incidence	» limited coverage of 19.4	Due
	» Read introductions	» Problem set 5
	» Chetty, Looney and Croft, “Salience and Taxation” NBER Working Paper 13330, 2007. [link]	
	» Bradley and Feldman, “Hidden Baggage: Behavioral Responses to Changes in Airline Ticket Tax Disclosure” <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> , 2020. [link]	
	» Supplemental	
	» great policy example of sugary drinks	
	» the corporate tax as yet another application of the policy importance of this topic	

7	Read	Handouts
10/10	» GLS, Chapter 6, but not 6.5 or 6.6	» Problem set 7
Firms and Profit	» Supplemental » <i>The Economy</i> , 7.1 to 7.7	Due » Problem set 6
8	Midterm: in person	Due
10/17		» Problem set 7
9	Read	Handouts
10/24	» GLS, Chapter 7, but not 7.5; we return to 6.5	» Problem set 8
Costs	» Supplemental » On variable costs in The Office » On opportunity costs: Demsas, Jerusalem, “Buses Shouldn't Be Free”, <i>The Atlantic</i> , December 9, 2022. [link] » Economies of scope vs. economies of scale: Hufford, Austen, “A Soap Maker Cracks the Code to 'Made in America'”, <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , July 25, 2023. [link] » <i>The Economy</i> , 7.8 to 7.13	» Use Numbers 3 of 3 Due
10	Read	Handouts
10/31	» GLS, Chapter 8, but not 8.5.	» Problem set 9
Competition		Due » Problem set 8
11	Read	Handouts
11/7	» GLS, Chapter 9; omit Lerner Index	» Problem set 10
Market Power	» Helpful examples » Summary of recent research on competition, or lack thereof, in the generic drug market » For those interested in price fixing	Due » Problem set 9 » Use Numbers, 3 of 3
12	Read	Handouts
11/14	» GLS, Chapter 10	» Problem set 11
Pricing	» Dean, Sam, “The truth about LA's most notoriously expensive gas stations,” <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , March 9, 2022. [link]	Due » Problem set 10

Thanksgiving

Break

11/21

13	Read	Handouts
11/28	» GLS, Chapter 17, sections 17.1, 17.2, and 17.3	» Problem set 12
Externalities and public goods	» Gruber, Chapter 7, pages 184-189; Rosen and Gayer, Chapter 4, pages 54-70.	Due
	» Two podcasts on public goods	» Problem set 11
	» Lighthouses, Autopsies, and the Federal Budget, [link]	
	» How to Stop an Asteroid, [link]	
	» Supplemental	
	» Leape, Jonathan, The London Congestion Charge, <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 2006	
14	Read	Due
12/5	» Sichel, Dan. “The Price of Nails Since 1695: A Window Into Economic Change,” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 2022. [link]	» Problem set 12
Public Goods and Economic History of Nails	» Supplementary	
	» Podcast with Sichel	
Final	Date to be decided first day of class if possible	
In person		
Done!	Enjoy your break.	

Ripped from the Headlines

- » Assignment instructions
- » Google sheet with sign-up and linked articles

Exams

- » Midterm
 - » Midterm review TBD
 - » I will not be posting answers, but please ask questions
- » Final
 - » Final review session TBD
 - » I will not be posting answers, but please ask questions